

Face the Issue:

This week in our series on David, the bottom line is that God can turn devastation into celebration, but we must seek reconciliation. This statement is not unique to the story of David and Bathsheba but history is full of stories of people that make bad choices that seem to separate them from God who then reconcile with Him and turn things around. One of these stories is the story of Samson. His story reads like that of some scandalous high profile “man of God” that we hear about who is caught leading a double life. Except that Samson didn’t hide his lustful appetites. The Spirit of God stirred Samson up to fearless feats of strength involving roaring lions, donkey jawbones, fiery foxes, and structural demolition that left thousands of Philistines dead. You can see why he led Israel for 20 years. In the end, though, clever and strong Samson would be undone by the female company he kept. His lust and uncontrolled passions left him blind, shackled, weak, and shamed in the hands of the Philistines. This could have been curtains for Samson’s story, but God performed an encore act of grace in response to Samson’s prayer—an act of grace that worked justice and even restored some dignity. In the end, Samson’s story—like all stories—is the story of God’s sovereign grace.

What do you think of when you hear the name Samson?

What stories of extreme giftedness and moral failure have you witnessed? Do the two seem to go together? Why or why not?

How does the story of Samson affect you? In what ways are we like Samson?

What does the story of Samson tell you about God? Why would God use him?

What would our church do with a leader like Samson?

Into the Word:**Read Judges 16:4–22.**

Samson ends up blind in this passage. In what ways was he spiritually blind even before he lost his eyesight? What was his failure?

What did he see in Delilah? What was her motivation to be with him?

Why does Samson toy with Delilah like he does? And why does he finally give in? At what point do you think he knew the end of the story?

When do you toy with temptation? What keeps you from giving in?

What does it say about Samson’s condition that “he did not know that the Lord had left him” (v. 20)? Would you know if the Holy Spirit had left you? What would be different?

In what ways is giving into temptation like being ensnared, blind, shackled, and humiliated (v. 21)?

What's the lesson here for us? Make a list of all you could lose due to a lack of self-control in the area of lust, anger, or whatever.

Read Judges 16:23–31 and Hebrews 11:32–40.

Is this a sad story? A story of victory? A bad joke? Where would you file the story of Samson at a library?

How did God fulfill the plan for which he had set Samson apart? Do you think Samson understood his calling? Why or why not?

What do you think was going through Samson's mind as he reviewed his life in the final moments?

How could Samson pray so boldly in light of his failure (Judges 16:28)?

What does his prayer tell you about his relationship with, or understanding of, God?

In what ways does God redeem Samson in this final act?

How does Samson make it into the hall of faith in Hebrews 11? Can we hold on to our sin and still be faithful in God's eyes?

How does the description in Hebrews 11:32–40 fit Samson? What does the description tell you about the nature and desire of faith? The worth of God?

What do you desire to be the final chapter of your story? What steps do you need to take with God today in order to get to that point in the future?

What will be your final prayer to God?

Apply The Word

“[Samson] killed many more when he died than while he lived” (Judges 16:30). God brings Samson's story full circle. From chosen deliverer of Israel to champion of Israel, even in death. God fulfills his purposes. Samson's story is really a story of God's sovereignty and grace. When we are able to see this truth, by faith, we can be fearless, redeemed failures before God. For our good and His glory.

What is your response to the life of Samson? What challenged you most? What difference will it make in your life?

What does the story of Samson tell you about your God?