

Judges 16:1-17 – More Ways Leaders Endanger their Mission

TSK, HebrewLexicon, Henry, Geneva, Trapp, JFB, Barnes, Clarke, Delitzsch, Handfuls, Gill, Expositor? INT,

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: “If you take fire into his lap you’re going to get burned.” That is the Israelite version of a famous proverb. The meaning of the proverb is clear: You will experience pain if you do risky things. If only men would learn from it! You will see one man who didn’t learn from it and how it endangered his mission as a leader.

Our headings are:

Samson’s Filth

Samson’s Folly

Our goals are: **That you will see the extent that a leader can fall when he compromises with sin and brings shame to Christ, and that you then learn to put high fences against bad behaviour and so preserve Christ’s honor.**

Samson’s Filth

1 Now **Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there**, and **went in to her**.

1. Let’s review: Samson ignored his parents advice and married a wicked woman. He added to his sin by **eating polluted things – honey from a dead animal**. He **became boastful – a show-off about his knowledge**. He **left his wife** without justification. He **murdered 30 men** and took their clothes. When he changed his mind and came back to get his, she was given to another man who wanted to be her husband. **So through revenge-not justice, Samson destroyed many other Philistines and their livelihood**: Their wine, their corn, and their oil. When the Philistines came to arrest Samson, **he killed 1000 of them**.

Even though **Samson was sinful, but God used him to give Israel relative peace**. But that was not the end.

2. One day Samson left his home to visit the foreign Philistine town of Gaza, the capital city of the Philistines. There he saw a prostitute. But instead of walking away at the sight of sin, he entered in. (Some people like to go on foreign holidays in order to live a debauched life, as if God doesn’t see what happens in Thailand.) But why take such risks and endanger not only himself, but his nation as well? But what could one expect from Samson who struggled with lusts of the flesh, lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life? Samson should have been the light to the world, (his name meant “sunny”) but the darkness came out of him. Where was the covenant with his eyes? He dived into a cesspool.

Proverbs 6:26 For by means of a harlot A man is reduced to a crust of bread;
And an adulteress will prey upon his precious life.

Look at another description of his life.

Lamentations 4:7 Her Nazirites were brighter than snow And whiter than milk;
They were more ruddy in body than rubies, *Like sapphire in their appearance.* 8
Now their appearance is blacker than soot; They go unrecognized in the streets; Their skin clings to their bones, It has become as dry as wood.

Look at what he should have done. He should have seen the consequence of sin ahead of time!
Job 31:1 "I have made a covenant with my eyes; Why then should I look upon a young woman?"

2 When the Gazites were told, "Samson has come here!" they surrounded the place and lay in wait for him all night at the gate of the city. They were quiet all night, saying, "In the morning, when it is daylight, we will kill him."

3. Sins have consequences, and the consequence of this sin allowed Samson's mortal enemies to find out where he was and surround him. They hoped that when he left the prostitutes house they could arrest him and kill him. You see, his sins were not forgotten. The consequences of destroying the livelihood of the Philistines were not forgotten. And you see if you live in filth you are likely to limit your ability to fulfill your tasks. Israel's deliverer was in quicksand.

3 And Samson lay low till midnight; then he arose at midnight, took **hold of the doors of the gate** of the city and the two gateposts, pulled them up, bar and all, put them on his shoulders, and carried them to the **top of the hill that faces Hebron.**

4. But God strengthened Samson so that at midnight, when the ambushers were sleeping, Samson left the house and took the doors of the gate of the city and 2 gate posts out of their place, put them on his shoulders, and carried them to Hebron – about 9 miles away (or 20, depending on which Hebron), over many hills. He then left them there on a hill so they were visible—people could see God's power. **God used a sinner to accomplish his task of destroying the Philistines.** And **this was a psychological defeat.** The Philistines stood in the way of Messiah coming, so they had to be removed. God keeps his promises!

4 Afterward it happened that he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.

5. Seeing the danger from the Philistines, one would think that Samson would have learned from his mistakes, but he did not. It got worse. He married a woman named Delilah – seemingly from there. Samson then moved there permanently. (The grass is always greener...) He not only took fire in his lap, he sat on the fire. This was another example of filthy living. It was bad to visit a prostitute and then go home, but Samson move there permanently and joined them.

6. Lessons:

a. You are lights in a dark world. Don't be drawn to shiny things and lose sight of your Light, Jesus. If you become consumed with ordinary things – lights that go out, you won't shine your light like you should.

b. It may not be about the shiny guy or gal, but about other things. So don't take the shiny but bad job because it will give you good money; don't take the shiny but bad university because you will get a good job. Join honorable groups. Choose godly friends. Don't think you are able to take fire in your lap and not get burned.

c. God used Samson, even though Samson did not intend it, to picture the work of Jesus Christ, when he woke at night and broke the gates. (Sometimes we call this an anti-type.) Where is the anti-type? Remember: 1Corinthians 15:55 "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" Death could not trap Jesus. This must make you rejoice, since you were in him when he died and rose. You are now free and safe forever.

Samson's Folly

5 And the **lords of the Philistines** came up to her and said to her, "Entice him, and find out where his great strength lies, and by what means we may overpower him, that **we may bind him to afflict** him; and **every one of us will give you eleven hundred** pieces of silver."

1. Now the leaders of the Philistines then urged his new wife to betray Samson. They wanted to know the source of his strength in order to neutralize him. They did not see great bulging muscles. As an incentive (not threat like what the young men did to get the answer to the riddle) the leaders offered her **1100 pieces of silver each – 5500 in all.** **They were not “ploughing with his heifer” as before. They were sharpening her horns** so she would willingly do the damage. And this is not a new thing. The Chinese government has an agency of beautiful women that they use for spying and seducing the enemy to get other state's secrets. The Russians have used this as well.

2. Specifically, the Philistines wanted to torture Samson. Delilah knew exactly what they planned to do, and she still consciously did it. **This is a sin of mature deliberation.** How cruel! If they simply killed him, that would have been bad, but to torture him? That was a high degree of wickedness and commitment to an awful cause! “Delilah,” whose name meant “feeble,” was not feeble at all!

6 So Delilah said to Samson, "Please tell me where your great strength lies, and with what you may be bound to afflict you."

3. Like a good child of the Devil, Delilah tried to get the secret from her husband to destroy him.

Was it a surprise that she would do that? It shouldn't have been. **Snakes will not grow up to be puppies.** Was there any chance that that she would work for the good of Israel?

7 And Samson said to her, "If they **bind me with seven fresh bowstrings,** not yet dried, then I shall become weak, and be like any other man." 8 So the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, and she bound him with them. 9 Now men were lying in wait, staying with her in the room. And she said to him, "**The Philistines are upon you, Samson!**" But he broke the bowstrings as a strand of yarn breaks when it touches fire. So the secret of his strength was not known.

4. Instead of seeing the writing on the wall, and learning from his bad experiences, Samson started toying with his wife – but it was like a child playing with a firebrand. He pretended that 7 fresh bowstrings could take away his strength. But they couldn't.

10 Then Delilah said to Samson, "**Look, you have mocked me and told me lies.** Now, please tell me what you may be bound with." 11 So he said to her, "**If they bind me securely with new ropes that have never been used,** then I shall become weak, and be like any other man." 12 Therefore Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them, and said to him, "**The Philistines are upon you, Samson!**" **And men were lying in wait, staying in the room.** But he broke them off his arms like a thread.

5. When Delilah realized he had toyed with her, she turned up the screws to pressure him: she started manipulation. But Samson continued to play with fire and continued to tease her, this time using new ropes.

13 Delilah said to Samson, "Until now you have mocked me and told me lies. Tell me what you may be bound with." And he said to her, "**If you weave the seven**

locks of my head into the web of the loom" —14 So she wove it tightly with the batten of the loom, and said to him, "**The Philistines are upon you, Samson!**"

But he awoke from his sleep, and pulled out the batten and the web from the loom.

6. For a 3rd time he mocked her. But he was getting warmer. He started talking about his head. And it was a dangerous thing to have his hair weaved into the web of the loom. (The last part of this verse is missing in some translations.)

When Delilah told him "the Philistines are upon you," did he not think that she was trying to kill him? Surely he did, but he thought he could handle the compromising situation and still deliver Israel. **He saw himself as independent.**

15 Then she said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and have not told me where your great strength lies." 16 And it came to pass, when she pestered 催逼 him daily with her words and pressed him, so that his soul was vexed to death, 17 that he told her all his heart, and said to her, "No razor has ever come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man."

7. Then Delilah pulled out all the stops. She questioned Samson's love and nagged him daily until he, becoming so frustrated with her, gave in, and told her his strength was in his hair.

Passionate lovers **hate when people question their sincerity?** At the same time, Samson knew that if his head was shaved **his strength would be gone**. It was a dilemma: Appear to be insincere to his wife or maintain the work of God with the strength from God!

What would he do? Samson's choice: Break his Naziritic vow. Protect his human reputation.

In doing so, he established his own punishment.

But understand that the power was not in the hair itself, but in the presence of God in him.

His hair was a token of the covenant. It was a badge of his consecration. **His hair was a symbol of God's authority**, and to cut it meant that he was rejecting God. God would not work in a special way with those who did not have the symbol of authority on their head. (A woman whose husband died in war had her head shaved to show she was no longer under his authority. Samson did this willingly.)

8. Samson's betrayal by his first wife was not enough of a warning. (Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me!) A burnt child fears the fire! Listen to what the wise man said about the wicked woman!

Proverbs 7:26 For she has cast down many wounded, And all who were slain by her were strong *men*.

9. Lessons:

a. Your Savior was betrayed for 30 pieces of silver but he rose triumphantly 胜利, and gave that power to you.

Colossians 1:11 **strengthened with all might**, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; 29 To this *end* **I also labor, striving** according to His working which works in me mightily.

And it is a power that you must use effectively... **not a power to give up**, otherwise, you too will become weak.

b. There are sometimes God lets you do what you want so you can see how good his ways are and how foolish your ways are!

c. Remember to care more about the honor of your Savior than your own reputation.

Conclusion:

Samson's love for filthy living caused him to enter into the den of danger –the Philistine city of Gaza. This **posed danger for himself and his mission** – to protect the people of God. God saved him and Israel by giving Samson the strength to lift and carry the gates of the city. This humiliated the Philistines. **Then Samson loved foolishness.** He married a pagan woman and played a dangerous game with her. He lost. **He again endangered his life and his mission.** He endangered the coming of the Savior, for if the Philistines hand conquered Israel, how could the Messiah come?

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Guard your eyes and your mind from the filth of this world that pulls you in like quicksand! Prevent the pressure to act like the world, or dress like the world, or talk like the world – especially among your children!

2. Don't play games with sin, thinking that you can avoid the dangers! Fire in your lap will burn you! Avoid mixed marriages, adulterous lifestyles, dangerous jobs, bad universities, etc. **You may have to cut some of the friends you have!** If you avoid filth and foolishness you will be more effective for the kingdom.

3. In order to guard your eyes and mind, and in order for you to stop playing dangerous games with sin, see what you have next to you...in you! You need to see the saving work of Jesus for a wretched sinner! You need to see him on the cross.

Finally, if you are not a Christian, a word: We don't claim to be better than you. We only claim to be saved from our badness. We are saved because Jesus died for our sins. He offers his death to you. Would you accept it so that you too can be saved from your sins?