

Delayed Consequences

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- [0 : 0 0] Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone, and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church. And it's my joy to bring God's Word to you today.
- A special welcome if you are new or visiting with us. We're glad that you're here. And we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community.
- And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced that there's no one so good. They don't need God's grace, and no one so bad that they can't have it. Which is why we come back week after week to hear what God has to say to us in His Word.
- We're continuing our series in the book of Judges, and you'll remember that the book of Judges is about a number of things. It's about the need for constant renewal and revival among God's people.
- And it's about the need for a true and faithful king. A king who can do what no human can do, which is to change the hearts of men. It's about the power of spirit-filled leadership.
- [1 : 0 0] And it's about God's mercy to hard-hearted people, people like you and me. Over the last several weeks, we've been looking at the story of Samson.
- And we are now coming near the end. We just have chapter 16 left, which we'll break up into two parts, the first of which we'll tackle this morning. And we're going to see that Samson's behavior finally catches up with him.
- So our question is simple. Where is God's grace when our sin finally comes home to roost? With that, that we turn now.
- I'm going to invite you to turn with me to Judges chapter 16. You can turn in your worship guide. You can turn in your phone. You can turn in your Bible. No matter where you turn, remember that this is God's word.
- And God tells us that his word is more precious than gold, even the finest gold. And it's sweeter than honey, even honey that comes straight from the honeycomb. And so that's why we read now Judges chapter 16, starting at verse 1.
- [2 : 0 3] Samson went to Gaza, and there he saw a prostitute, and he went into her. The Gazites were told, Samson has come here. And they surrounded the place and set an ambush for him all night at the gate of the city.
- They kept quiet all night, saying, Let us wait till the light of the morning. Then we will kill him. But Samson lay till midnight, and at midnight he arose and took hold of the doors of the gate of the city and the two posts.
- And he pulled them up, bar and all, and put them on his shoulders and carried them to the top of the hill that is in front of Hebron. Verse 4. And we will each give you 1,100 pieces of silver.
- So Delilah said to Samson, Please tell me where your great strength lies and how you might be bound, that no one could subdue you. Verse 7.

Samson said to her, If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings that have not been dried, then I shall become weak and be like any other man. Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh bowstrings that had not been dried, and she bound him with them.

[3 : 31] Now she had men lying in ambush in an inner chamber, and she said to him, The Philistines are upon you, Samson. But he snapped the bowstrings as a thread of flax snaps when it touches the fire.

So the secret of his strength was not known. Then Delilah said to Samson, Behold, you have mocked me and told me lies. Please tell me how you might be bound.

And he said to her, If they bind me with new ropes that have not been used, then I shall become weak and be like any other man. So Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them and said to him, The Philistines are upon you, Samson.

And the men lying in ambush were in an inner chamber. But he snapped the ropes off his arms like a thread. Verse 13. Then Delilah said to Samson, Until now you have mocked me and told me lies.

Tell me how you might be bound. And he said to her, If you weave the seven locks of my head with the web and fasten it tight with the pen, then I shall become weak and be like any other man.

[4 : 39] So while he slept, Delilah took the seven locks of his head and wothed them into the web. And she made them tight with the pen and said to him, The Philistines are upon you, Samson.

But he awoke from his sleep and pulled away the pen, the loom, and the web. Verse 15. And 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 you have not told me where your great strength lies. And when she pressed him hard with her words day after day and urged him, his soul was vexed to death.

And he told her all his heart and said to her, A razor has never come upon my head, for I have been a Nazarite to God from my mother's womb. If my head is shaved, then my strength will leave me and I shall become weak and be like any other man.

When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up again, for he has told me all his heart.

[5 : 46] Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hands. She made him sleep on her knees, and she called a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head.

Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him. And she said, The Philistines are upon you, Samson. And he awoke from his sleep and said, I will go out as at other times and shake myself free.

But he did not know that the Lord had left him. And the Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes and brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze shackles.

And he ground at the mill in the prison. But the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaved. I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word.

Our Father in heaven, we do thank you for your word. We thank you again that you come and you speak to us. And we ask that you would do that this morning. That you would soften our hearts.

[6 : 50] You'd clear our minds. You'd open our eyes. You'd unstop our ears. That we would be able to see and hear and understand and believe everything that's written about you in your word.

And we ask these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen. Amen. Many years ago, maybe five or six years ago, it was a Saturday.

And I was in my church office finishing things up for Sunday morning. And a soldier in distress dropped by our church and rang our doorbell.

And so he came in and talked to me for a little bit. And he was in distress because he had gotten a DUI. And so his military career was on the line.

And his hope and his dream after his military career was that he would become a police officer. And he shared with me that that would likely be in question too. And so we talked for a little bit.

[7 : 48] And I encouraged him to join us that next day in worship to come on Sunday morning. He said that he would. I didn't see him that Sunday. And I have never seen him since.

But one of the things that he shared with me during our time together was that driving under the influence was actually his regular practice. This was something that he did over and over again.

It's something that he had become numb to until one day there were lights flashing behind him. Of course, that's consistent with what we know in general, that on average, someone drives drunk a total of 80 times before the first time that they're caught.

I tell you this because it highlights a principle that's important for us as we come to Judges 16, which is this. You can escape the consequences of foolishness for a time.

You cannot escape them forever. The rent really does come true. We collect the dividends on the choices that we make in life at some point.

[9 : 00] Sometimes they're positive and sometimes they're negative. Consequences, in other words, are a lag indicator, not a lead indicator. If you were with us back in the summer of 2020, you'll remember we were in the book of Proverbs.

And when we were in the book of Proverbs, we talked many times about what it means to be wise versus being foolish. And fundamentally, the foolish person, the simple person, just does not know how to connect present actions with future consequences.

They just cannot connect the dots on that one. The wise person, on the other hand, they know how those things are related. They know that what they do in the present will come due in the future.

And so there's this time delay when it comes to foolishness, that it takes a while for consequences to catch up with us. And they will catch up with us.

Samson has been foolish now for a number of chapters. And here in chapter 16, his lust, his arrogance, his disregard for his Nazarite vow all finally comes home.

[10 : 17] In verse 1, the beginning of the chapter, he's able to escape one last time. We're told, verse 1, that he goes into a prostitute. And we're reminded, again, that as a Nazarite, Samson should have this special dedication and focus to God.

He should call to this level of holiness that is even higher than the average Israelite. And once again, when he should be taking senior level classes, he fails 101.

Samson, again, entertains his lust, once again gives in to his urges. We find out, verse 2, he is infamous. He's been building a reputation.

The people in Gaza know about Samson somehow. And so they immediately surround the place and set an ambush for him. It's a little unclear what's happening here.

It's unclear what is being surrounded. It's unclear how it is that Samson is able to make it past these men who have set an ambush for him. How it is that he's able to just walk away carrying the gates of the city on his shoulders.

- [11 : 24] What is clear here, though, is that we see in this passage the first record in world history of a CrossFit workout. Samson performs some sort of clean or deadlift.
- And then he does some sort of overhead carry or high carry. He has this great feat of strength. And he doesn't just do this for a short amount of time. Verse 3 tells us he carries it all the way to the top of the hill that is in front of Hebron.
- The top of the hill that is in front of Hebron happens to be 40 miles away from Gaza. In other words, Samson puts David Goggins to shame.
- He has great power, but once again it is wasted. Samson uses his strength not to free Israel from the Philistines.
- That's his calling. He uses it to escape an ambush because of a prostitute. And this is the last time that Samson will escape.
- [12 : 30] Verse 4, we meet Delilah who is very different than a prostitute. And she's different in this way. We are told what we've never been told before about Samson. He loved her. Samson has a relationship with Delilah beyond perhaps what he's had with anyone ever before.
- A problem though is we find out that while he loves Delilah, Delilah does not love him. Samson has become such a threat to the Philistines that these leaders come to her.
- Again, this is verses 5 and 6. And they say, look, all we need you to do is deliver the secret. If you can do that, you will have enormous wealth.
- You'll be set up for the rest of your life. All you need to do is deliver Samson. So what does she do? She realizes a once-in-a-lifetime offer when she sees it, and she immediately gets to work.
- If you've been with us, you should recognize the pattern here. This is not the first time that a woman has worked at Samson to find the truth. Remember chapter 14.
- [13 : 41] Samson goes down to the Timnite woman. He marries her. She becomes his wife. Then he sets out that riddle, the riddle about the honey coming out of the lion. The Philistines are upset about it, and so what do they do?
- They threaten his wife. She persists. She gets the secret. Samson should have learned his lesson last time.
- Samson should know exactly how this story ends, and we see again how vulnerable Samson is. He's vulnerable to women.
- He lacks self-discipline. And so Delilah in 16 does what his wife did in 14. She needles the truth out of him.
- Now, she has to do it in four different cycles. In verses 7 through 9, we see the seven fresh bow strings. Verses 10 through 12, the new ropes show up. And then, perhaps the silliest, the most ridiculous of all, in verses 13 and 14, she actually weaves his hair into a loom.
- [14 : 49] And the question in all of this is, what in the world is Samson thinking? I mean, in the very first episode, right, the fresh bow strings, there are these Philistines waiting to come out and grab him.
- This wasn't the case in chapter 14. He didn't have this reoccurring pattern where he could catch on to what the intention of the woman was. He should know after the bow strings that this is not the game for him to be playing.
- And yet he continues. He goes on for cycle after cycle. Does Samson realize what is happening? Of course, there's multiple theories here about what exactly is going through his mind.

Maybe some people think Samson thinks this is a game that they're playing. This is just, you know, ha-ha, funny-funny, right? Maybe Samson does know that this is for real.

Maybe he doesn't care. Maybe he knows it's for real, and he assumes that it's going to be okay regardless of what happens. No matter what is in Samson's mind, we find the key to this passage in verse 20.

[16 : 01] He awoke from his sleep and said, I will go out as at other times and shake myself free. If Samson knows what's happening, it doesn't matter because Samson is convinced that he is invincible.

Samson may have the body of a man. Samson has the mind of a child or an adolescent. Samson may be a strong man.

He is not a smart man. Samson loves the gift that God has given him, and he ignores all the instructions that come with it.

Samson loves the gift. He forgets the giver. Samson begins to believe that it's all in his own strength.

Samson is a smart man. Samson is a smart man. He is Samson. Samson, of course, nothing bad will happen. That helps us understand the final cycle here, verses 15 through 17, where he reveals the secret of his hair.

[17 : 21] Delilah comes to him with what is actually quite a compelling argument. In verses 15 and 16, she says, How can you say I love you when your heart is not with me?

And what she's appealing to here is the same principle that's actually set in law. There's a reason why legally a husband and a wife cannot testify against each other in court.

Because there's supposed to be this intimacy and trust and connection, right, that nothing can get at. That there's not just a union physically.

There's this union mentally, spiritually, emotionally. That we don't want anything interfering with free exchange. That's why we wouldn't want someone to testify against their spouse.

And so Delilah here is saying this. Hey, I don't want just our bodies to be one. I want our minds and our hearts to be one as well.

[18 : 17] And so that's why she tells him, verse 15, Your heart is not with me. He gives in, verse 17, He told her all his heart.

Now there's a lot more than this going on in chapter 16, but I don't want us to miss the warning that's here, which is this. Our sexual relationships cause us to lower our guard and to trust the person we're with.

That's part of God's design. It's meant to do that, right? It's meant to build this trust and intimacy and community between a husband and a wife.

And it can be used against us. There's a reason why spy agencies know that the honeypot is an effective strategy. Even more than that, this is the reason the Bible warns us over and over again about marrying someone who's not a Christian.

Because if anyone has power to draw us away from the Lord, it is them. If anyone has power to build us up in our spiritual life and draw us closer to Christ, it is them.

[19 : 36] It is hard to remain faithful to God if your sexual partner is pushing you away from Him.

Of course, we can go many places in the Scriptures to find that type of warning. We could focus this morning as we look at Samson on his sexual sin, and that's here. But then we would miss Samson's great arrogance, right?

Of course, we could focus on his arrogance, but there's even more in this passage than that. If we focused on just sex and arrogance, we would miss Samson's foolishness. And if we focus just on his foolishness, we would miss what's at the heart of Samson's betrayal here.

There is more than just foolishness. There is something even deeper in why Samson does this. The root is this. Samson wants God's blessing without God's holiness.

Samson wants God's gifts without obedience. Samson wants what's right in his eyes, not what's right in God's eyes.

[20 : 56] Samson believes his strength comes from the inside and not the outside. He has forgotten that it is not by power nor by might, but by the Spirit of the living God.

Samson wants God's gifts. He does not want to walk in God's ways. And finally, God tells him enough.

You cannot have my blessing without me. This helps us understand the punishment that we find in verse 21.

Why is it that Samson has his eyes gouged out? There's many things the Philistines could have done. Maybe they could have cut out his tongue. I don't know. Maybe they could have chopped off his ears. Well, thankfully, the author of Judges is a talented storyteller, and so we can track back little by little to understand why it is that this happens.

He told us in verse 1 of chapter 16, what did Samson do? He saw a prostitute. Think back to chapter 14.

[22 : 14] Samson is drawn to the Timnite woman, the Philistine woman, and his parents say, Son, what are you doing? Cannot you find an Israelite that you like?

Do you remember what Samson says to his parents? Get her for me because she is right in my eyes.

Why are Samson's eyes gouged out? The man who did what was right in his own eyes now has no eyes.

The punishment fits the crime. God will not be mocked.

A man will reap what he sows. You cannot ignore God or use God without consequence.

[23 : 17] Samson, unfortunately, does not learn the easy way. He learns the hard way. Samson, of course, here is meant to be an image of what the problem is with Israel in the book of Judges.

They want to be God's people with God's blessing, and they want to be just like the nations around them. They want God's great gifts, and they like being ruled by the Philistines.

They love being set apart, and as we'll be told more and more as we get to the end of the book, they want to do what's right in their own eyes. So Samson is a warning to God's people as we face the temptation to long for God's blessings without obedience.

We see this if we exercise the gifts and abilities that God has given us, and we don't cultivate a deep or rich relationship with Him. And so we become surprised when we participate in compromises, big and small, and suddenly it all comes crashing down.

We experience this when we set our hopes on the consumption that our culture models to us, and then we're surprised when we don't have the peace and joy and freedom that comes from putting our hope in Christ.

[24 : 48] This happens when we believe that if we just have the political power that earthly men worship, everything will be okay. And then we're surprised when we find ourselves disappointed, filled with anger, we lose our character.

We face Samson's temptation when we use worldly strategies of control and efficiency and pragmatism. And then we're surprised.

And then we're surprised. And we find ourselves surrounded by strained relationships. We experience victory, but at what cost?

If we play with sin long enough, if we disregard God for long enough, one day we will find ourselves like Samson.

Slaves to sin and our strength gone. We can escape the consequences of sin for a time.

[26 : 09] We cannot escape them forever. And Samson's rent finally comes due. Of course, I could give you a warning like this if we were in a mosque, and I could give you a warning like this in a synagogue.

Right? This is a principle of life that you can't outrun your actions forever. And so what is it for us that's different as Christians? What is the hope and the future that we have?

What is it that we bring to this conversation because of our faith in God? Well, I told you that verse 20 was one of the keys to this passage.

The other key is verse 22. But the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaved.

Samson is at the bottom. His consequences have caught up with him. And God's grace is still at work.

[27 : 29] Samson is doing maybe the most humiliating thing he could do. He's grinding mill in the prison. And God has not forgotten him.

Samson is facing the end of his career. And Samson's story isn't over.

The hair of his head began to grow again. What is powerful enough to bring us back when we've gone off the map?

What is powerful enough to draw Samson back from the many mistakes and failures of his life? Well, we're told this in Romans chapter 2.

The apostle Paul reminds us it's God's kindness that leads us to repentance. I shared with you the story of that soldier who most likely was over in the army.

[28 : 35] His possibility of serving as a police officer potentially off the table as well. The good news, Christian, is this.

God's grace is still at work. No matter how deep you have fallen. No matter how great of a failure you face, if you are in Christ, the future is not gone.

No matter what a mess of your life you have made, God's grace is still at work.

No matter where you have traveled, no matter who you've hurt, no matter how many mistakes that you have made, your future is not taken away.

God's children always have a future and a hope. I'm not telling you that sin doesn't have consequences.

[29 : 43] I'm telling you that God's promise in Psalm 27, verse 13 is true. I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

I'm not telling you that there won't be hard days ahead. I am telling you this, that God's promise in Psalm 23 is true. Surely goodness and mercy will follow you all the days of your life.

I don't know what your story is for all of you. I don't know what your past contains.

And I do know this, that if you're a Christian, what's true of Samson is true of you. God is not finished.

Christian, that's the nature of our God.

[30 : 54] That's what it means that we have a God who redeems, that he co-walks into the greatest failures, and he brings out of it even greater redemption.

God hasn't given up on Samson. If you're his child, God has not given up on you.

Why? God has not given up on you because of Christ.

God has not given up on you because he gave his one and only son so that those who believe in him would not perish but have eternal life. God has not given up on Samson, not because Samson deserves a second chance.

He doesn't. But because Jesus earned for Samson, and he earned for you his great mercy and grace. What is it that enables us to come back to God?

[32 : 12] What is it that draws us and Samson's back? It's that God's story is not over. And that is true, Christian, and it is only true because of Christ.

And so that's why we sing together, Hallelujah, all I have is Christ. Hallelujah, Jesus is my life.

Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we praise you and thank you that our past does not define us, that your grace and mercy are real, that you didn't give up on Samson.

You haven't given up on us. We ask that you would remind us of this truth, that you drive it deep into our hearts, that it would lead us to great praise and joy and honor of you. We ask these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[33 : 23] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.