

☞ An Incredible Comeback

Last week: Breaking the Pattern... After Joshua, the Israelites followed a repetitive ☞ pattern of **Seeking God; Sinking into sin; and Starting over**. We tend to follow that same pattern today. We can break that pattern: **Rely on God because he always wins. Remember your initial experience with God and walk by faith. Resolve to follow Christ wholeheartedly.** Last week I mentioned Samson as an example of the entire book of Judges. God gave him great power, but he squandered it. He was arrogant, selfish, and independent. And, near the end, he was oblivious to his real weakness and was blinded by the enemy. We can learn a lot from Samson.

☞ Samson is written about in the book of **Judges, chapters 13 through 16**. He's the last of the leaders or "judges" mentioned in the book and was a leader for 20 years. During his time the people of Israel knew about God, but had no personal experience with Him. Joshua's generation had passed away and now the people of Samson's time were stuck in this repetitive pattern.

Judges 2:10

...another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel.

☞ **Personal relationship with God is key to overcoming sin.** They didn't know and rely on God; they didn't remember what he had done in the past. So, they were stuck in the pattern, especially the sinking into sin part of the pattern.

Samson's time was also a time when everyone did as they saw fit. (Judges 17:6) This is much like our culture today. "I can do whatever I want. Don't tell me what to do." There's virtually no standard of right and wrong and no recognition of God.

Samson represents you and me. We are living in the same kind of culture. He knew great conquests but his life was filled with compromises. For many believers, it's just like that. But in the end, Samson had a powerful comeback, and this can also be true of us. Samson is known primarily for his great strength but in reality his story is a mixture of strength and weakness. I think a lot of our stories are just like that.

☞ **Samson's Conquests:**

What are some of the mighty feats Samson is known for?

Judges 14:6 he tore the lion apart with his bare hands

Judges 14:19 He struck down thirty of their men, stripped them of their belongings and gave their clothes to those who had explained the riddle.

Judges 15:4-5 he went out and caught three hundred foxes and tied them tail to tail in pairs. He then fastened a torch to every pair of tails, **5** lit the torches and let the foxes loose in the standing grain of the Philistines. He burned up the shocks and standing grain, together with the vineyards and olive groves.

Judges 15:15 Finding a fresh jawbone of a donkey, he grabbed it and struck down a thousand men.

Judges 15:18-19

Because he was very thirsty, he cried out to the Lord... Then God opened up the hollow place in Lehi, and water came out of it.

Judges 16:3 he got up and took hold of the doors of the city gate, together with the two posts, and tore them loose, bar and all. He lifted them to his shoulders and carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron.

Judges 16 – repeatedly beat Delilah’s efforts to subdue him.

Judges 16:30 he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus he killed many more when he died than while he lived.

His great strength was used to defeat the enemy. We also face a real enemy...

1 Peter 5:8-9

☞ Your **enemy** the devil prowls around **like a roaring lion** looking for someone to devour. **9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith**

In nearly all of Samson’s exploits the scripture reveals that his strength came by the power of the Spirit. We also can have great victories, but not in our own strength.

Philippians 4:13

☞ **I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.**

1 Corinthians 15:57

☞ **But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Many here know what it’s like to experience great victory. With the help of God, you’ve overcome a lot in your life. Some have seen tremendous healings and miracles. You know the power of God. But most have also had many compromises just like Samson...

☞ **Samson’ Compromises:**

14:1 Samson went down to Timnah, which means “the forbidden place.” His compromise began early. He went down instead of up. The other direction was Jerusalem, which

means “possession of peace.” He chose to go after that which was forbidden rather than embracing peace.

14:5-6 Yet, while doing this, Samson killed a lion with his bare hands. Even while in compromise he was empowered by the Holy Spirit. This speaks of God’s faithfulness even when we are not faithful.

14:8-9 Samson took honey from the carcass of the lion, but didn’t tell his parents where it came from. Here is more compromise. As a Nazirite, Samson was never to touch a dead body. And, not telling his parents indicates his guilty conscience. This entire episode occurred after “he turned aside to look;” he showed **curiosity about ungodly things** and **it led to sin.**

Proverbs 4:26-27

Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm. **27** Do not swerve to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.

14:11,16 Samson had thirty companions among the Philistines. He took a wife from among the Philistines. He was to deliver Israel from Philistine oppression, but instead he is becoming joined with the enemy.

1 Corinthians 15:33

☞ **"Bad company corrupts good character."**

The word “Philistine” means “wanderer.” Samson, instead of being set aside and kept pure for God, was straying and wandering from his commitments. He was compromising. He thought he was toying with the enemy, but in reality they were toying with him. They beat him in a battle wits...

14:18 Samson blames the Philistines and his wife, rather than accepting responsibility for his actions. He toyed with sin and it bit him.

Genesis 3:12

The man said, "The woman you put here with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

16:1 Samson went down to Gaza and spent the night with a prostitute. Once again he went the wrong direction; the opposite direction would have led to Bethel, which means “house of God.” He chose the pleasures of the world rather than the presence of God. This was all leading up to his ultimate demise.

James 1:15

☞ after **desire** has conceived, it gives birth to **sin**; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to **death.**

We often follow Samson's example. A little bit of toying with sin doesn't seem to cause any serious trouble, so we continue. But we forget that in the end sin destroys.

16:4 Samson was in the Valley of Sorek and fell in love with Delilah. She was the one who would ultimately subdue him. One compromise leads to another and another until you are defeated. Delilah means "dainty or small." Even little things that aren't in line with God's priorities will lead to trouble.

16:5ff Samson's arrogance is revealed! Delilah is obviously setting him up, but he continued to play along.

Proverbs 16:18

Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

16:19 Finally, Samson's hair was cut off and he lost his strength. When we mess with compromise, sooner or later God's anointing and strength for us will be removed.

Isaiah 59:2

your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

16:20 Samson was still arrogant and was oblivious to God's departure. He mistakenly thought he would defeat the Philistines as before. He'd gotten so accustomed to the pattern of compromise and conquest that he assumed it would always continue. He didn't even know God's anointing was gone!

We've been talking about renewal. And I think for most the need for renewal is related to simply being tired and worn out, so you need renewed in the power of God. However, it's possible that some renewed because you've been riding the fence and have lost your anointing from God.

16:21 The Philistines seized him. When we compromise and toy around with wanderings and with sin, eventually it captures us. Numbers 32:23 says, "your sin will find you out."

16:23ff Samson was completely subdued; they gouged out his eyes, and the enemy ridiculed him. That's the way the enemy is; he entices us with alluring things, but once he has us he makes a mockery of us. Have you ever allowed sin to get a foothold in your life and then become overwhelmed with guilt and condemnation? The enemy loves to lure us in and then he turns on us and loads on the condemnation.

☞ 16:22 But... the hair on his head began to grow again! **God's strength can return!**

☞ **Samson's great Comeback:**

Judges 16:27 Now the temple was crowded with men and women; all the rulers of the Philistines were there, and on the roof were about three thousand men and women watching Samson perform.

☞ We need to **remember who our real enemy is**. He's the one who would love to see us "wander" from the faith. Ephesians 6:12: For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

16:27ff Finally, Samson is willing to die to accomplish God's purposes. His stance when pushing the pillars is a picture of the cross. And his words say it all, "Let me die with the Philistines!" He defeated more of the enemy here in his death than he defeated in his ☞ entire life. There is great power when you are willing to **die to yourself**. Early on Samson indulged himself rather than die to himself. As a result he followed the pattern of conquest and compromise. His victories were limited. But when he finally gave up the self-indulgence and was willing to die he had the biggest victory of his entire life!

Luke 9:23-24

If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. **24** For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.

Galatians 2:20

☞ **I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.**

--Paul Wallace... The one thing that Satan hates is resurrection! He had priests pay soldiers to lie about it. Why? It means he is defeated. What was the chief function of the Apostles? To "bear witness of the resurrection!" And how did they do it? Not only did they say, "Our own eyes have seen death was defeated", but they walked in resurrected power themselves! Imagine the hate Satan has for that! He thought he did away with Jesus, and that death meant Jesus' defeat. Then he thinks he is defeating you and suddenly you choose to die. Oh no, he's seen this before. Once you are dead you'll be back – a dead man walking – resurrected life! He thinks he did Jesus in and now Jesus is everywhere in all these men of God that choose to die and let his life flow through them. Imagine the horror that strikes in his doomed being. He's going to do everything he can to keep you from choosing to die to yourself because the resurrected life of Jesus is the one thing he fears the most.

☞ Are you **Conquering** or **Compromising**? If you've been compromising, the key is in the **Comeback** – be willing to die to yourself!

God has called us to be great conquerors.

Romans 8:37

☞ in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

That's our calling. And God has given us the power to succeed by his Spirit.

2 Peter 1:3

☞ His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness

Yet, there are times when we live in compromise. We settle for less than God's best. Sometimes we even begin to walk away from God. But God is always merciful, if we'll simply turn back to him. If you've been living in compromise; if you haven't been conquering the enemy... you can make a comeback. Turn back to God; die to yourself! Be renewed. Be the man or woman of God that he has called you to be!

Acts 3:19

☞ Repent then, and turn to God, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.

The King is Among Us