

To Strong to Fail?

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[0 : 0 0] Here at Church of the Messiah, we preach through books of the Bible, and what I'm going to continue to do, while God gives me strength until Jesus comes back, and while I'm still the rector of this place, we're going to preach through books of the Bible, and we're going through Judges, which is what I'm going to preach on today.

But by the providence of God, the text that we look at today actually has an awful lot to say about our current crisis in Canada, and I won't say, and in many parts of the world.

By the providence of God, it has a lot to say. Judges 16 has a lot to say about what's going on in Canada and how we are reacting to it. So I encourage you to turn to it, and just as you're turning to Judges 16, just a couple of things.

Judges is that book in the Bible which covers the time between Israel entering the Promised Land under Joshua. Joshua has died, and the time between his death and basically the first kings of Israel, Saul and then David.

That time period is the time period covered in the book of Judges. And Samson, the book of Judges, is organized around 12 judges, and Samson is the last of the judges.

[1 : 1 3] And next week and the week after, we look at the two-part conclusion to the book. And Samson, I mean, he's one of the characters that many non-Christians know about him and know about Samson and Delilah.

And that's what we're going to look at today, the story of Samson and Delilah. But here's the interesting thing. If you go back or if you remember, in Chapter 13, we see the first part. We see the birth of Samson.

And we see both quite a remarkable miracle that authenticates that God's going to use this man. He says very directly, God is going to use this boy that will be born to begin to deliver Israel, God's people, from their enemies, from those who oppress them, from the idols and gods that bind them. And then in the birth story, we see that the Holy Spirit begins to move in Samson's life as he grows up. And we have very, very high hopes for him. But then in Chapter 14 and 15, which is the second part of the Samson story, all of those hopes are dashed.

It's actually, I think I was sharing with you last week that for many, many years, I had fears about trying to preach on the Old Testament. Because I sort of grew up in a church context that we're always trying to find good moral lessons from the Old Testament stories.

[2 : 2 9] But if you're intellectually honest, you can't find good moral lessons from Chapter 14 and 15. Samson's a despicable man. And in fact, part of the mystery of the story is that the Holy Spirit comes upon Samson and he uses, the Holy Spirit's power comes upon Samson, but Samson uses that power for evil.

I mean, it begins with Samson going to get married to a Philistine. I mean, rather than delivering people, Israel, from the Philistines, he wants to marry them.

And he figures out a way to rip off his 30 companions who are Philistines by telling them a riddle.

And after that attempt to rip them off fails, he goes to pay off his debt.

And then he goes to another city and murders 30 innocent people and steals their clothes to pay off the debt. And then it gets worse.

There's this cycle of vengeance and he kills other people and his people betray him. And he kills a thousand people with a jawbone. Just every time the Holy Spirit comes upon him, in a sense, Samson uses his free will to use that spirit's power for violent, selfish ends.

[3 : 4 0] And now we come to chapter 16, the end of the stories of Samson. It's the story that we'll talk about the death of Samson. And here's how it begins. Chapter 16, verse 1.

Samson went to... Oh, I should put up the scripture text. We can do that for those of you who are here and don't have Bibles. There we go. Samson went to Gaza and there he saw a prostitute and he went into her.

Just pause here for a very fraction of a second. And I haven't mentioned this, but I'm going to mention it right now. Christians, just by being Christians and trusting the Bible, end up having a side on the Palestinian Jewish question.

Because for many of the Palestinian leadership in around what we now call in the Canaan area, and I'm trying to think of the right word.

The word's gone from me. In that whole contested area, they basically say that the Jewish people have no historic connection to the land. And these texts that we're going through, just by being intellectually honest, show that, in fact, the Jewish people have had a connection to this land that goes back thousands and thousands of years.

[4 : 52] We, in a sense, just by trying to be... By being intellectually honest and being faithful to the Bible, both at the same time, we end up undercutting one particular side of a current political debate and supporting another side.

Doesn't mean we have to support everything else that goes on. But the Philistines aren't Arabs. The Philistines are, if you know a little bit about English history, in the British Isles, what is now called England, there were these constant raids by the Norsemen, the Danes.

And they would come to England and they would pillage and steal, eventually setting up more permanent settlements. But the Philistines are like the ancient Vikings. They're a sea people. And they're not Arabs. They're a sea people. And they've come from somewhere in the Mediterranean. They come in waves to steal, to set up their own colonies. And at the time of this writing, there's sort of five different groups of Philistines, five sort of families or tribes or movements, and they each have a center of power.

And Gaza is one of the five centers. So these are like Vikings. They're seafaring invaders somewhere in the Mediterranean, not entirely clear where they've come from. And they've settled here in Gaza.

[6 : 18] Go back to read chapter 16, verse 1 again. Samson went to Gaza, and there he saw a prostitute. Remember I told you, this man doesn't live an exemplary life.

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, and 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 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.

Now, here's what's going on in the story. It's very, very important. The Philistines hate Samson. They keep attacking him. They're trying to find him. They want to kill him. And Samson goes right into one of their principal cities, inside a walled city with a closed gate.

[7 : 24] And he goes there just because he wants to satisfy his desire for sexual intercourse. I mean, this is an unbelievably foolish and reckless thing to do.

And it comes, it's a little bit of a picture, a window into the soul of Samson. Samson is arrogant in his power, and he believes he is too strong to ever fail, too strong to ever be defeated, too strong to ever have his world collapse.

And the story shows his great strength. The archaeological evidence from the time period suggests that in a walled city like this, the gates were two stories high.

So I don't know how high that would be. It might be at the top of the arch here from the bottom to the arch. Two huge gates. And he picks them up and he carries them 75 kilometers. It's an unbelievable, well, I shouldn't say unbelievable.

It's an immense feat of strength. And for his attackers, it must have just been a jaw-dropping, gobsmacking, mind-blowing demonstration of his great power.

[8 : 48] Which is why they don't attack him. They just look at this. He just rips these massive gates out of the way they're held and carries them 75 kilometers and drops them in the middle of a Jewish majority area.

And in doing this, he's also completely and utterly humiliated the principal city of the Philistines. A walled city without a gate is, in a sense, defenseless.

He's shamed them, he's humiliated them, and he's profoundly weakened them until they're able to finally try to get those gates either back or fix them themselves back and fix them.

So part of the story is showing the fact is he does have this unbelievable strength and power, yet at the same time that goes with it, he has this arrogant belief that he is too strong to fail, too strong to be defeated, too strong to ever have his world collapse.

And because he is so strong and so powerful, he can do whatever he wants in his own world. And if he feels like going into a walled city of his enemies because he has a sexual need that he wants to gratify with a prostitute, he'll do it.

[10:11] And to common morality and to God be, well, I don't care because I'm strong, I'm powerful, and my world will never collapse. It's in this context, you see, one of the things which is so wise about the Bible is the Bible continues to have these profound stories that are, if we read them, are meditations upon the mystery of arrogance and the mystery of strength and the mystery of power.

They're profound meditations and stories which help us to think about arrogance and power and people who don't think their world can collapse. So right after this remarkable display of strength, Delilah is introduced.

Verse 4, After this, he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, which is in Philistine-majority territory, whose name was Delilah. And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, seduce him and see where his great strength lies and by what means we may overpower him, that we may bind him to humble him.

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 one could subdue you.

And in the original language, it's very clear that there are five principal tribes or movements or centers of Philistine power, and it's describing all of them.

[11:47] So it's all five of the lords, and whatever sub-lords and under-lords that there are, it's the lords as a whole of all of the Philistines who come together to speak to Delilah to see if they can figure out a way to overcome him.

So he thinks he's too powerful and too strong to collapse, but he doesn't realize that his doom is upon him. It begins as yet just another sexual conquest on his part.

He doesn't think of Delilah seducing him. He thinks of it as yet another sexual conquest to satisfy his appetites.

Well, what happens? We're just going to read the first one because, and we're not going to read all three of them, but there comes to be three different sort of moments with Samson and Delilah where Delilah bugs Samson.

Well, let's look at this story, and I'll tell you what they are. Samson said to her, verse 7, if they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings, blah, blah, blah, blah, bowstrings that have not been dried, then I shall become weak and be like any other man.

[12:56] And if you go on later on, it's going to be the same thing happens. Next, it's going to be if you take some ropes that have never been used, and then after that is if you weave my hair in a certain way and hold it with a certain type of pin.

But it's always the same thing. So he says if you do all of these things, and here's the really important thing. It's going to be important later on, and I'll mention it, but notice what he says again in verse 7. If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings that have not been dried, then I shall become weak and be like any other man.

This phrase is going to be repeated four times. I shall become weak and be like any other man. But she goes ahead. Verse 8, Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh bowstrings that had not been dried, just as they'll later on bring ropes and a man to weave his hair.

And she bound him with them. 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.

And this thing's going to happen three times. And once again, see this is where the Bible is this, through this simple story, it invites us to enter into a profound meditation upon arrogance and power and the blindness that comes with arrogance and power.

[14:19] Like, for any single one of us, if we had a friend, and they told you of the first story, you'd say to them, one moment, like, time out.

Your girlfriend or your boyfriend, they tried to weasel out one of the deepest secrets of your life, and then they used it to betray you, so that people could capture you and destroy you?

And then the next day you went back to her or him? Like, what's wrong with this picture? You see, Samson's arrogance and his belief in his power is making him weak.

So if you just skip down, skip down after it's happened three times and we skip down to verse 15, and here's how it goes. I have to turn the page.

So now, verse 15, and she said to him after the third time that it hasn't worked, how can you say I love you when your heart is not with me?

[15:34] 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 the fourth time and I shall become weak and be like any other man.

Now, one of the things here about this, we're going to talk about this a tiny bit more. It's not, we shouldn't believe Samson here because the fact of the matter is is that he's been violating his Nazarite vows constantly.

I mean, the fact of the matter is he's having sex with a woman he's not married with, which violates his Nazarite vows. He's been drinking and getting drunk and he's been not only, how do we know he's got to touch dead bodies?

Because he killed the people and you can't kill them without touching a dead body. Like, his whole life has been a complete and utter disregard of the Nazarite vows and it's not as if, this story isn't as if, isn't about, that it isn't a story about religion.

[16:48] You see, how religion works is it's all right if you do this and you do this and you do this but you can't get your hair cut. What? Like, that's not what the Bible teaches. That God's sort of happy with him or doesn't have any consequences to his action but if he gets his hair cut then there's consequences.

No. It's going to become obvious in the next little bit. Look what happens. I move it along. Andrew, help me if I didn't move it correctly because sometimes I press the button and it doesn't work.

So what happens? He tells her what he thinks is going on and then in verse 18, 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.

Now, he has told her all his heart, by the way, but that's, it's not dependent upon that. 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.

[17:57] And she said, the Philistines are upon you, Samson. And he woke 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.

Now, just sort of notice here how the story works. It isn't when his hair is cut that his strength leaves him. It's after his hair is cut as she torments him.

And then we discover that it's all about the Lord leaving him, that his strength is gone. So the fact of the matter is, is his great strength was never his.

It was never his. It was the Lord's presence that made him strong. It was the Lord's blessing. It was the Lord's gift. It was the Lord's undeserved favor to him that made him strong.

He was made strong so he would deliver Israel and he has not done that with his strength. He's used his strength to show off, to be arrogant. And his strength has led him, the blessing of God has led him to the belief that he, his world, can never collapse.

[19:06] He can never be defeated. His plans will always work. And the Lord's blessing has led him to puff himself up in such a way without ever understanding that it came from the Lord, not from him.

And the fact of the matter is, is he is weak like any other man. He is frail and mortal like every other human being. And so the hair is cut, she torments him, then the spirit leaves, and then we discover the reason is that the Lord has left him.

And then we see the terrible state that his arrogance has brought him. Look at verse 21. 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 and the prison.

But the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaved. Now once again, the issue isn't the hair. The issue here is, those some of you might remember if you heard me preach last week, is that if you look at the chapter 14 and 15, nobody comes out good in the stories.

The Philistines don't come out good either. It's not as if this is a story about these nasty Israelites or this powerful Israelite and the Philistines are all very, very humble and godly. No, everybody in that story looks terrible.

[20 : 33] And the same thing is here. As we're going to see, this thing about the hair growing long is a bridge thing which is what's going to happen next and it shows that in fact the Philistines are just as arrogant and believe that their God means that they have a God that gives them power which means that their world won't collapse.

And so they can be completely and utterly disregarding of things like hair. Why? Because, as we're going to see in a moment, it's because they have a far more powerful God and they're far more powerful and technologically advanced people and so their world can never collapse.

They will ultimately triumph over all of their enemies and this text is a bridge not to make you think there's something magic about long hair but to show that the arrogance and the problem of believing that your world can never collapse is a human problem.

It's a human problem. See what happens next. Verses, so Samson's humble. Verse 23.

Now the lords of the Philistines, it's the same type of idea that I mentioned earlier with Delilah. It's all of the lords and the underlords. The lords of the Philistines gathered to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon, their God, and to rejoice and they said, just by the way, just before I read this, you know, you don't have to read Christopher Hitchens to have a great critique of religion.

[22 : 02] The best critique of religion in the world is the Bible. The Bible constantly critiques religion and here's how it critiques religion. Just listen to it.

I'll read verse 23 again. Now the lords of the Philistines, now the lords of the Philistines gathered together to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon, their God, and to rejoice.

They said, our God has given Samson our enemy into our hand. You know, because religion is just used for your own power.

That's why they worship Dagon because he makes them more powerful. They think they're special. Isn't that the critique of Christopher Hitchens? People believe these fairy tales about gods but it's all about hypocrisy.

It's all about their power. It's all about looking down their nose of people and that's just what the Bible's teaching. It's revealing the religious spirit, the spiritual spirit of the human problem.

[23 : 04] And it's emphasized. Look at verse 24. And when the people saw him, that's Samson, they praised their God for they said again, our God has given our enemy into our hand.

the ravager of our country who has killed many of us and when their hearts were merry they said, call Samson that he may entertain us. So they called Samson out of the prison and he entertained them and they made him stand between the pillars in the very, very central place.

So we here have in a very subtle way a critique of religion. And now we see this once again just as in Samson and he meets Delilah who's just a woman.

I mean, this isn't being sexist but this is just imagine, like just imagine a guy who's strong enough. Just picture the most macho guys you see portrayed.

A guy able to pick up two story things and carry them 75 kilometers. What does he have to worry about? A mere woman. Smaller than him. Weaker than him. And we see here that the lords of the Philistines do not know that their doom is upon them.

[24 : 23] They see a man who's weak like any other man who has had his eyes gouged out that they can humiliate him in public and they can make merry of him and they can laugh at him and they do not realize that their God is not real and their arrogance is masking the reality that they are weak and frail like every other human being.

look what it says verse did I move it? 26? Yes. And Samson said to the young man who held him by the hand let me feel the pillars on which the house rests that I may lean against them.

The house was full of men and women all the lords of the Philistines were there and on the roof there were about 3,000 men and women who looked on while Samson entertained. And to try to put

it in the context of Canada it's imagine that you have the cabinet and in fact you have the house of commons you have the senate you have the supreme court you have the privy council you have the editors and the owners and the producers of the elite media you have the elite academics of the country you have the elite business people of the country and those are who are all there and not just for Gaza but for all five.

all five of the centers of Philistine power they're all there and their key officials and their family 3,000 of them all of the elites of the elite are all there to mock Samson.

And now we have this very very simple and often very misunderstood verse. Then Samson called to the Lord and said O Lord God please remember me and please strengthen me only this once O God that I may be avenged on the Philistines from my two eyes.

[26 : 23] Now just before I try to open this text up and it's not going to be on the screen those of you who actually have Bibles in your hand turn to Hebrews chapter 11 Hebrews chapter 11 verse 32 and I haven't talked about this at all but it's always been in the back of my mind and I knew as I was preparing these looking through the three stories of Samson that I was going to eventually deal with it and probably today and I am dealing with it today.

Those of you who have remembered how I've summarized Samson how he uses his power to murder innocent people steal their clothes wage war how he's a despicable human being look at this very very odd verse Hebrews chapter 11 verse 32 and Hebrews chapter 11 for those of you who don't know the Bible very well or you're just listening in for the first time because you're puzzled about the Christian faith Hebrews 11 is the famous chapter on what faith is and heroes of the faith and look what it says and what more shall I say for time would fail to tell me he's talking about heroes of the faith of Gideon Barak Samson what?

how does he make it on the list? this guy who murders innocent people heaps on the list? read it again for time would fail to tell me to tell of Gideon Barak Samson Jephthah David and Samuel and the prophets who through faith conquered kingdoms enforced justice obtained promises stopped the mouths of lions quenched the power of fire escaped the edge of the sword and here's the thing that refers to Samson we're made strong out of weakness we're made strong out of weakness became mighty in war put foreign armies to flight just go back to the story in Judges chapter 16 remember I said four times in this story I will become weak like any other man he was a ladies man nobody would think he's a ladies man now two eyes gouged out they wouldn't have done it pretty by the way probably would have just been some big thing to make two gaping holes right there and his strength is gone he'd be dirty he'd be filthy it's an odd prayer and people puzzle over this thing about his two eyes the thing to do when read the story is that this isn't the arrogant

Samson this is Samson filled with melancholy and regret you know for those of us who have had failures and disappointments in life and we have what I call the three o'clock and four o'clock in the morning moments when we can't sleep because it's as if some demonic being just keeps bringing our failures to our attention and that would have been Samson's life for this undisclosed length of time failure failure failure failure failure failure and now for the first time in the entire story if you look again at what he says he calls out to the Lord and says O Yahweh Adonai see we only have the word God in Canada but in the ancient world for the Jewish people there was a general name for God which was Elohim which he's going to say in a moment but they had a name which was only for Jewish people it's it's not just Elohim

God in general God in the abstract it's Elohim it is my God it is as if when Jesus tells Christians that have become Christians to learn to pray to their father in heaven as dad it's daddy it's the personal intimate name and for the first time in the story he calls out in his weakness in his failure by the way the Bible never encourages deathbed conversions but this is a very very very powerful text for those who understand themselves to have been a failure no failure no person is so broken so failed such a wreck or a ruin that God does not love them and so Samson wrecked and ruined and a failure calls out to the God of the covenant the forgotten God that he now calls in a sense as dad you are dad of all who put their trust in you you are the one who desires to be in covenant with human beings ordinary human beings like me and when we enter into covenant with a human being like you unworthy as we are you invite us to know you not as God in the abstract or a mere force or nature but as dad as God that I know you by name and Adonai means you are sovereign

[31 : 36] I stand here amidst the mocking cries of 3,000 devotees to an idol who believe that their illusory their idol they believe the illusion and the delusion that their idol is actually real and a God and they are singing his praises and I am shackled in their presence and I have been a failure but

you are my father and you are in heaven and despite all appearances you are sovereign you are Adonai and the word remember is a humble word it's not a word of memory techniques learning how to remember things better in the original language it's a humble word it's saying have mercy upon me and worthy as I am that you would note me

I have nothing that I can bring all I have is failure and all I have is weakness and all I have is frailty and you are sovereign but you are not just a distant God you are Yahweh you are the God who desires to be in covenant with me and as he stands and calls out in such a place to such a God he says I ask for justice out of humility he only asked for justice in regards to his two eyes how does the story continue verse 29 and Samson the word grasp is a good word but it really just means he's put his hands on the two middle pillars on which the house rested and he leaned his weight against them his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other and by the way he would have probably felt as he's leaning on them he realizes gosh I have no strength to knock these things over not there not there he's putting his hands on them as a reminder that he is like any other human being he is mortal he is weak and he is frail and he prays again and Samson said let me die with the Philistines asking the source of strength for strength it's not an argument for doctor assisted suicide it's a humble acknowledgement that he doesn't want to have that superhuman arrogant making delusion that comes from arrogance type of power that means that I can knock these pillars down through your strength but somehow or another

I will not share the fate of all other human beings who are mortal I'm not asking for some type of vindication of my person that the rocks will hit me but just bounce off me and I will be able to walk out of the rubble strong and triumphant again he is saying Lord you are the source of my strength give me this one strength one time of strength again and let me die like any mortal frail human being in the midst of the rubble and it has nothing to do with his hair verse 30 then he bowed with all his strength and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people who were in it so the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he had killed during his life and his brothers and all his family came down and took him and brought him up and buried him between Zerah and Eszital in the tomb of Manoah his father he had judged

Israel 20 years I have to wrap things up just a couple of things you know one of the big problems in modern thought is the problem of evil and people basically saying how can a good God and an all-powerful God let evil happen to people and the Bible has very very powerful resources to talk about that but it's been pointed out by many people that the Bible doesn't actually have an argument against the problem the problem of evil it has profound resources about it you can read Job and in particular you look at Jesus and his life and death and his crucifixion and his resurrection and you realize there's profound resources to think about it in terms of the problem of evil but if you think about it underneath as part of the problem of evil there's in fact a different type of an argument which is this that if God really exists if God really is all-powerful he's really good then what he should always do is bless us that's what he should do he should bless us he should bless good people but you see the Bible takes is the only book that very wisely deals with a different problem and that is the problem of blessing you see if you think about it for a second what's happened to Samson is he's been blessed and blessed and blessed and blessed but what's happened to him is his blessing has led to his arrogance his blessing has led him to be contemptuous an abuser of women and a murderer his blessing has led him to the delusional belief that his world can never collapse his blessing has led him to not help other people or be generous but to only feed his own ego and his own project and we tend not to think about that but you think about it for a second and I'm not casting down rich people but do we really think that the richest people in the world and the most powerful people in the world are the nicest people in the world do we really think they're the kindest the gentlest the most generous the most self-effacing the most concerned for the good of others don't we in fact constantly recognize that people with profound gifts have problems of deep arrogance and self-centeredness and a sense of entitlement isn't that in fact a profoundly Canadian problem problem I'm going to make a slight political statement how is it that people think that we can shut down all mining and they'll still have iPhones it's the definition of delusion how is it we think that we can shut down shut all gas and still drive cars that is the definition of delusion connected to arrogant entitlement and isn't it in fact a regular thing for us to look in the paper and see that some beautiful movie star or musician who's profoundly rich and profoundly talented and profoundly praised has committed suicide out of a deep inner despair or that you have radio contests occasionally because we ten years ago the person who's talked about everywhere and

praised and now we don't even know if they're still alive and only the bible talks about the fact we think that if god only blessed us that would show that god exists but there is a far more deep human problem of blessing turning into arrogance and believing that your world will never collapse so just a couple of thoughts to run through very quickly being blessed with great power can make you arrogant foolish and contemptuous of the triune god who is the source of blessing being blessed with great power can in fact make you arrogant foolish and contemptuous of the triune god who is the source of blessing and by the way one of the characteristics of arrogant people is they don't think they're arrogant and one of the characteristics of proud people is they don't think they're proud and one of the characteristics of entitled people is they don't think they're entitled they notice we notice arrogance and pride and entitlement in others and are blind to it in our own lives you see you and i easily believe that we are too powerful that you are too powerful to collapse one of the things that this bible is the bible text is pointing to is this the bible wants to make us aware of the problem of mere blessing feeding our arrogance the bible time and time and time and time again reminds us that we human beings are frail and we are mortal and that death comes to all but it does not tell us these stories to depress us but to wake us up that we might connect with the true and living god and so it is that we see that this jesus is the true and greater samson that in chapter 14 verse 4 when it says that god was going to use samson to begin to deliver the people of israel we see that he does begin to deliver the people of israel by the end of samson's life as i talked about last week israel is once again understanding itself as distinct from the philistines he's removed the philistine leadership and he's preparing the day for the one who will defeat philistines which is david but then when you go and you look at the story of david you realize david has the power to defeat the philistines but he cannot defeat his own sin and his own death and david himself points down the lines of history to the day when he will say oh lord my lord when he acknowledges that through his line god will send one

[42 : 43] who will look at our mortality and our frailty and our foolishness but just as yahweh entered into the old testament people out of love to desire to be in a relationship with us that yahweh that god himself will send his very son to take into himself the frailty of our human nature and as a fully human being only with and tempted in all ways as we are only without sin that he would die upon a cross bearing all that separates us from god that he would not come amongst us frail but never die that he would come amongst us to die as the lamb of god who takes away the sin of the world despised and rejected and that he would be the one who would defeat what david could not defeat that he would be the one to defeat our sin and our arrogance and our inability to save ourselves and death itself and that jesus comes as god with us to be amongst us and with us as a community and as individuals in the midst of our weakness and our frailty and the power of the gospel is to remind us day by day that i george am weak and frail but i have a savior who has defeated sin and a savior who has defeated death a savior who did this because he loves me and as a result of my putting my faith and trust in jesus i live in my father's world i have a father who loves me and who cares for me and a savior who will walk with me through the valley of the shadow of death and even into death and beyond to be in life with the father and it is the father's world and the gospel is there to both constantly humble me as it grips me and constantly reassure me that my life does not depend upon me being strong and powerful enough so that my world will never collapse but that the final word about me is welcome into my kingdom my beloved son whom i've loved you and saved you out of my love not weighing your merits but pardoning your offenses and i will i have never left you i have never abandoned you i have never forsaken you i never will welcome the lord takes no delight in the death of a sinner he delights when you turn and call on him to redeem you as his own and in the real world the triune god is present powerful active sovereign and never needs a contingency plan and that's how the gospel invites us to live in a world that has a lot of fear to live knowing that the triune god he never has a contingency plan nothing catches him by surprise he's always working on plan a and that little weak frail mortal me and little weak mortal frail you when you reach your hand out to such a god in the name of jesus and you cannot possibly reach him he can reach you and he will take your hand and he will never let you go he will hold your hand through all your trials and all your temptations and all your success and all your failure and he will never let you go to the moment of your death and beyond

his hand is life and it is offered to you invite you to stand let's bow our heads in prayer father thank you for your word thank you that you confront us like samson with our mortality our weakness our frailty that you confront us of our arrogance and of our delusion not to humiliate us not to shame us

not to make us live as defeated human beings but to help us to wake up to who we are and who you are that you are real that you are true that you are mighty that you are strong that you are just that you are good that you are the source of blessing and that you bless us by redeeming us despite ourselves and making us your children when any person calls out to you like samson that you will be their god that jesus will be their savior and you never turn anyone away and we thank you father for this and we ask if there's any who are here any listening to this online or listening to it later on audio that the holy spirit father that they will give in to the holy spirit and allow you to grab them and take their hand so that they will know jesus as their savior and you as their father in heaven and we ask father that you do a mighty work in us that we live not out of fear but out of faith that you are the sovereign god you hold our hands and will never let us go day by day and all god's people said amen