

Samson

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 31 May 2026

Preacher: Craig Dowling

[0 : 00] He said, I'm going to my wife's room, but her father would not let him go in. I was so sure you hated her, he said, that I gave her to your companion.

! Isn't her younger sister more attractive? Take her instead. Samson said to them, This time I have a right to get even with the Philistines. I will really harm them.

So we 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, lit the torches and let the foxes loose in the standing grain of the Philistines.

He burned up all the shocks and standing grain together with the vineyards and olive groves. When the Philistines asked, Who did this? They were told. Samson, the Timnite's son-in-law, because his wife was given to his companion.

So the Philistines went up and burned her and her father to death. Samson said to them, Since you've acted like this, I swear that I won't stop until I get my revenge on you.

[1 : 04] He attacked them viciously and slaughtered many of them. Then he went down and stayed in a cave in the rock of Etam. The Philistines went up and camped in Judah, spreading out near Lehi.

The people of Judah asked, Why have you come to fight us? We have come to take Samson prisoner, they answered, to do to him as he did to us. Then three thousand men from Judah went down to the cave in the rock of Etam and said to Samson, Don't you realize that the Philistines are rulers over us? What have you done to us?

He answered, I merely did to them what they did to me. They said to him, We've come to tie you up and hand you over to the Philistines. Samson said, Swear to me that you won't kill me yourselves. Agreed, they answered. We will only tie you up and hand you over to them. We will not kill you. So they bound him with two new ropes and led him up from the rock. As he approached Lehi, the Philistines came toward him shouting.

The spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon him. The ropes on his arms became like charred flax and their bindings dropped from his hands. Finding a fresh jawbone of a donkey, he grabbed it and struck down a thousand men.

[2 : 22] Then Samson said, With a donkey's jawbone, I have made donkeys of them. With a donkey's jawbone, I have killed a thousand men. When he finished speaking, he threw away the jawbone and the place was called Ramath-Lehi.

Because he was very thirsty, he cried out to the Lord, You have given your servant this great victory. Must I now die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised? Then God opened up the hollow place in Lehi and water came out of it.

When Samson drank, his strength returned and he revived. So the spring was called En-Hakori and it is still there in Lehi. Samson led Israel for twenty years in the days of the Philistines.

Amen. May God bless this reading from his word. Okay. So. There is an old, true story.

That goes as so. In the year 1882, a New York businessman named Joseph, Joseph Richardson, owned a very narrow strip of land.

[3 : 47] It was 104 feet long, but only five feet wide. So, not much to do with it.

Now, another businessman, Hyman Sarnar, owned a normal, decent-sized lot, adjacent to Richardson's skinny one.

And Sarnar had plans to build apartments on his. Apartments that would have a nice view overlooking the city of New York.

But the only issue was Richardson's narrow strip would always and forever be right in front of the apartments.

So, he offered him one thousand dollars for the slender plot. Richardson, as any good businessman, was offended and demanded five thousand.

[5 : 00] And Sarner refused. Some hard words were shared and the two fell out. Though, Sarner assumed the narrow strip would simply remain vacant.

After all, what could one do with a five-foot-wide field? And so, he instructed his architect to design and get the apartment buildings up with the windows overlooking the city right across that narrow strip.

However, when Richardson saw the buildings going up, he was furious. He resolved to block the view.

No one was going to enjoy a free view over his lot. So, 70-year-old Richardson built a new house. Five feet wide, 104 feet long, four stories high, two suites on each floor.

Upon completion, he and his wife moved in into one of the suites. Only one person at a time could ascend the stairs or pass through the hallway.

[6 : 26] The largest dining table in any suite was 18 inches wide. the stoves were the very smallest ever made. A newspaper reporter of some girth actually got stuck in the stairwell and after two tenants were unsuccessful to release him, he had to be emergency rescued.

Now, given the building's reason for going up, it was soon dubbed the New York Spite House. for it was really only built as a way to have revenge.

To have revenge on his fellow businessman. Richardson spent the last 14 residents that seemed to fit his rather narrow state of mind.

We hear that the Spite House was torn down in 19... Carol writing about it says, which is odd, for he distinctly remembers spent here and a few weeks there some years back.

And if his memory serves him right, he says, mulling through the hallway. Revenge bills with just about enough space for one person are reduced to one goal.

[7 : 58] They make someone else miserable. They make themselves miserable. And the theme of our reading, need revenge.

and its entire 20 verses, we see Samson in the Spite House as he seeks vengeance.

As we heard, Samson takes a gift on a visit to him. But upon arrival, he hears the news, the news from his now married to his friend.

The woman's father suggests Samson married. But Samson was furious at that thought. And so he took his hand as a hole and got revenge.

You see, I've gotten use to a few dangerous things. Dangerous things. things like what he wanted.

[9 : 14] Things like taking matters into his own hands. He had gotten used to taking things into his own hands to get it.

And of course, he was using his God-gifted strength for himself, for his own interests. And so when he was faced with scenarios like this family situation, he didn't go and seek advice.

He didn't talk it over with some peers. He didn't talk it over with some peers. God. He didn't pray. He didn't pray about it. God.

He saw the attack on him and selfishly it did. Strength was from or what his strength is supposed to be for.

and he has the strength to get it right now. And so fight. First thing pops into his head.

[10 : 19] Bind foxes, light them up, destroy the harvest. Of course, all that raped was more warfare.

Tactics from both sides. But God is good. is good. He remembered why he originally called Samson.

Of Samson's foolish acts. The chapter finishes. Finally, Samson now led Israel as the appointed judge.

From the beginning, Samson was set apart by God. but he had largely ignored his vow of devotion to one true living God.

And as his life went on, more he depended on his own strength rather than God's. And so as the story goes on, we have less of God's presence in and with Samson.

[11 : 30] for without little concern for God and the people of Israel. We read how he moves on and uses his status once again for whatever he wants.

The life, the ways, and whatever else he wants. To love revenge. it is indeed an extremely dangerous thing.

So, part two now. And let's see what happens. Know the Samson and Delilah story. Christian or not, the Samson and Delilah, Joseph and Noah, has appeared in songs and whatnot across the years.

So we know that Samson. She takes advantage of him, wears him down the attempt to destroy his God-given strength.

This is what we've just concluded. What we just concluded with in part one there. Samson really rather gives up on God.

[12:48] He's stopped looking after. He's away living with his new lady. He's playing games. He's giving up. He assumes he will be okay because of his strength.

He assumes he will be okay because of his strength. The chapter we read there, chapter 15, well, look at verse 14 there for a moment. Because it says there in verse 14, as he, Samson, came toward him, shouting, came powerfully upon him.

The ropes on his arms became like charred things dropped from his hands. God's name. Okay? So, Barret of the Lord came powerfully upon him.

and we read that same thing in many other passages. But, now that Samson has moved on from the Lord, Samson, so he's moved on from the Lord and depended on himself.

Well, let's go on depending on himself. chapter 16, verse 20. Verse 20.

[14:30] So, this is after. And here on the back of the last one, verse 20, the Philistines are upon you.

He awoke from his sleep. I'll go out as before. I'll feel free. But, he did not that the Lord had left him. And all the great plans for God, all the great plans of God, all apparently fall to rail. All because Samson was taking revenge and thinking only of himself.

Made the choice to ignore his callings, to depend upon himself, and the spirit, the power, the presence of the Lord had slowly taken a backseat in his life.

And the it's so sad to be remembered that might have been, or could have been, or in reality should have been, but they never did.

[15:52] Sad to be remembered for what you could have been, but never did. Had tremendous potential. not many people with credentials like his.

Samson was to do a great, he was to take the lead in delivering Israel from the hands of the Pharisees. God had given him ease.

But Samson wasted his unusual and unique gift from the Lord. He wasted it on impulsive choices, practical jokes, and lustful ways.

he wasted it on getting out of scraps with people that in truth were often of his own making really.

Eventually he gave it up altogether to simply satisfy the woman his eyes had taken, the woman he thought he loved.

[17:09] And so because of those foolish choices, we do tend to see Samson as a failure. We remember him as the judge in Israel who spent his last days grinding grain in an enemy prison.

And we think what wasted potential. Yes, Samson wasted his life. He could have, he should have strengthened his nation, returned his people to the worship of God and wiped out the Philistines.

And although Samson wasted his life and did none of those things, it's interesting to note that God's plan to bring about destruction to the Philistine rulers is indeed still accomplished.

all there in Samson's final act. For having now been captured, been humiliated, blinded, strengthless, Samson finally, finally knew that all his strength and abilities were not his own.

They weren't his own at all. He finally knew that he was fully dependent on God as much as anyone else.

[18:40] And so there he was captured between two central pillars and we are told that the temple was crowded with men and women.

All the rulers of the Philistines were there. All the rulers were there. And on the roof were about 3,000 men and women watching Samson perform.

And then Samson prayed, Sovereign Lord, remember me. Please God, strengthen me just once more and let me of one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes.

Then Samson reached toward the two central pillars on which the temple stood. Bracing himself against them his right and his left and the other.

Samson said, let me die with the Philistines. Then he pushed with all his might and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people.

[19 : 52] And so in his death all the rulers were finally defeated. in the end God's plan was complete.

And in the end Samson recognised his full and utter need to be fully dependent on God. And God turned his failures into defeats into victory.

And I think that's just simply amazing of God isn't it? His grace, his mercy, his love run so deep, so high, so wide that it didn't matter that Samson had failed God in just about every way possible. It didn't matter that he had spent his whole life disobeying and pursuing his own gains. For as soon as Samson said God I'm back with you God straight away said all forgiven all forgotten now let's just finish the job and get you home home to eternal rest.

And so Samson's story teaches us that it is never too late for God to use us.

[21 : 29] However badly we may have failed in the past no matter how far we have fallen whether it be sucked into revenge taken by lust warped in selfishness given over to foolishly or just outright disobedience or anything else at all no matter what Samson's life teaches us that as soon as soon as we say God I'm home God forgives all forgets all and gives us a fresh start even if it's in our final days alive like Samson and so let us pour out our complete trust in God today and watch him accomplish victory through us Samson learned that away from God he could do and he was nothing and

Jesus was also clear about this there in the all important vine and branches teaching he says I am the vine you are the branches if you remain in me and I in you you will bear much fruit but then he says but apart from me you can do nothing that's spoken to us here today Jesus says to us at Wester Hills Baptist Church that if we are apart from him disconnected from him then we can't do anything so to be able to do good works good witnessing to keep the faith acts of righteousness we need to be fully connected to him in the same way the vine and the branch are and in today's life many folk a bit like

Samson have learnt the hard way that we are indeed fully dependent on God but again like Samson we have also learnt as soon as we turn back to him that he without hesitation says welcome home and because of that no matter what our souls are well no matter what we face in this life we can depend on him that he's got our souls and with him as well as our souls let's pray Lord Jesus we worship you we continue to lift praises to your name as we mull over and think about your never ending forgiveness and mercy and peace that you're never ending your pursuing of us you're never ending your mission to rescue us and no matter how far off we go you'll always come back and get us

Lord and we thank you for that Samson's story Lord proves that you will not give up on us we may give up on you Lord forgive us but you will not give up on us and so Jesus as you taught help us stay completely connected to you Lord it's such a simple amazingly well straightforward parable if the branch is connected to the vine it'll grow fruit if it's dark it won't make sure we're connected to you that we may grow the fruits of the spirit acts of righteousness repentance and all such other stuff and I pray that anyone here today Lord who is yet to accept that and get connected to you Lord will do so and I pray for us as Christians Lord that we will go further and further with you in so much happiness and amazement that no matter what our souls are safe with you in Jesus name Amen Amen