



Lesson Twelve: Strength and Weakness

Judges 15:14-20; 16:1-6, 18-30

Paul Goebel – April 19, 2022

15 ¹⁴ When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting to meet him. Then the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him, and the ropes that were on his arms became as flax that has caught fire, and his bonds melted off his hands. ¹⁵ And he found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, and put out his hand and took it, and with it he struck 1,000 men. ¹⁶ And Samson said,

“With the jawbone of a donkey,
heaps upon heaps,
with the jawbone of a donkey
have I struck down a thousand men.”

¹⁷ As soon as he had finished speaking, he threw away the jawbone out of his hand. And that place was called Ramath-lehi.

¹⁸ And he was very thirsty, and he called upon the LORD and said, “You have granted this great salvation by the hand of your servant, and shall I now die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?” ¹⁹ And God split open the hollow place that is at Lehi, and water came out from it. And when he drank, his spirit returned, and he revived. Therefore the name of it was called En-hakkore; it is at Lehi to this day. ²⁰ And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years.

16 ¹ Samson went to Gaza, and there he saw a prostitute, and he went in to her. ² 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.” ³ 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.

⁴ After this he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. ⁵ 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.”⁶ So Delilah said to Samson, “Please tell me where your great strength lies, and how you might be bound, that one could subdue you.”

16¹⁸ 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.” Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hands.¹⁹ 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.²⁰ 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.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 in the prison.²² But the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaved.

²³ Now the lords of the Philistines gathered to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to rejoice, and they said, “Our god has given Samson our enemy into our hand.”²⁴ And when the people saw him, they praised their god. For they said, “Our god has given our enemy into our hand, the ravager of our country, who has killed many of us.”²⁵ 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. They made him stand between the pillars.²⁶ 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.”²⁷ Now 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.

²⁸ 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 for my two eyes.”²⁹ And Samson grasped 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.³⁰ And Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines.” 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.

Discussion Questions:

1. How does our culture define strength? How does our culture define weakness? Why?
2. Give some examples of people in your life who have exhibited great strength. What made them strong?
3. Samson was widely known for his great strength. In what way was Samson strong?
4. Though Samson was incredibly strong, he was also desperately weak. How did Samson demonstrate weakness? Do you see any of these weaknesses in your own life?
5. Why did Samson’s strength leave him? What does this teach us about Samson’s strength?
6. Why did the Philistines gouge out Samson’s eyes? How was Samson already blind? How can we stay on guard against the same kind of blindness?
7. How did God show Samson grace at the end of his life? What does this reveal about where true strength is found?