



Week 5: “True Strength is in Humility”

Text: Judges chs. 13-16

Summary:

The greatest danger to the church is becoming just the same as the surrounding culture, as Samson’s life shows us. The only hope for the church is Jesus’ rescuing death, which Samson’s death foreshadows.

The life of Samson is exciting, full of sex, violence, death and power. But it is also disturbing and disappointing. He is the last of the twelve judges, and sadly, the worse one of the bunch. Although his birth story is as miraculous as Jesus — and therefore just as hopeful — it is tragic to find him violent, impulsive, sex-driven, ungodly, and arrogant. He uses his Spirit-given strength selfishly to deliver himself out of the consequences and trouble his weaknesses and sin put him in, instead of using his gifts to serve God and others. Therefore, Samson is the peak of human pride, who arrogantly believes God will always bless him even in rebellious disobedience. The climax of Samson’s story comes when God allows the consequences of his pride to humble and humiliate him. However, the best of Samson’s life comes at the very end, with a humble prayer, and a new-found strength to give his life to rescue the people.

In both his birth and death, Samson is a foreshadow of the Lord Jesus, whose birth was also miraculous and whose death rescued his people from sin and death. Yet of course, Jesus’ death achieved far more than Samson’s; and while Samson’s story ends with his burial, Jesus rose from his grave to rule his people. A rule achieved not by prideful, selfish strength, but done by sacrificial humility.

Discussion Questions for Study:

1. Read 13v1. Notice the repeated verse of Israel’s evil, but also notice that a cry for help is now absent. What does this suggest about Israel’s spiritual state? And what does raising up a hero with extraordinary powers say about God’s heart for his people?
2. Read 16v18-20. Samson believes he will always enjoy God-given strength no matter what he does or how he uses it. Do these verses say that the source of Samson’s strength was his hair, or because something else had left him?
3. In 16v22-31, how does Samson at last show faithful reliance on God?

Discussion Questions for Application:

1. Why is the church adopting the values and beliefs of the world more dangerous than the world oppressing and persecuting the church? What have been the specific dangers to your particular local church and what are the actual and potential consequences?
2. What does Samson teach us about how NOT to follow God?
3. Isn’t it wonderful that when Samson gives his heartfelt, humbled prayer, he is heard and answered and used? What does this teach us about the kindness of God? How do you need this same kindness in your life?