

# un·compromising faith

IN THE DAYS OF THE JUDGES

SERMON TITLE: Living into God's Story

DATE: April 3, 2022

SCRIPTURE: Judges 15:1-16:31

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The days of the judges were not happy and hopeful. They were dark and despairing. Israel was called to be a holy people – faithful to their God and showing the nations his power and love. Sadly, rather than bless the nations, Israel became like the nations. They bowed to idols and embraced pagan lifestyles. In short, they compromised. As the last line in Judges puts it: “Everyone did what was right in their own eyes.” Thus, these stories serve as both a warning and an invitation to us. They warn us against conforming to cultural narratives and they invite us to hope in the face of despair. They ask us, “What does it mean to have an uncompromising faith in a faithful God?”

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## SERMON SUMMARY

As we pick back up in Samson's story, we continue to see a deeply flawed man, both morally and spiritually. In chapters 15-16, he continues his own 'downward spiral' of immorality and revenge-taking. With all his giftedness and blessings, Samson never woke up to the fact that God had called him to play a major role His amazing Story of redemption. That's one of our greatest temptations, isn't it? ...to live for our own little stories rather than live into and out of God's Big Story. The question is—*Who's story will you live for? Yours or God's?*

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## SERMON SCREENSHOTS & KEY POINTS

Review last week — In Judges 13-14, the first part of Samson's story, God's grace shines bright—the angel of the Lord comes and announces his birth—he is specially chosen by God to live out a certain manner of life (as a Nazirite) and he's called to live for a certain mission in life (“to begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines, cf 13:5). Also, Samson is divinely blessed and empowered by the Spirit. But with all those divine advantages, Samson constantly does what is “right in his own eyes.” He ignores his Nazirite regulations, and that causes much conflict and loss for this ungodly man who time after time gives into vindictiveness and sensual pleasures.

Judges 15:16-31 — This week we see in even more gruesome detail Samson's vengeful “Golden Rule” in action—“Do unto others like they do unto you” (15:11). ...He makes a bet that his Philistine groomsmen couldn't solve his riddle; they cheat him and beat him at the riddle; *in retaliation* he kills 30 Philistines in a far-away town; *in retaliation* the father won't let him see his Philistine wife; *in retaliation* he burns their fields; *in retaliation* they kill his wife; *in retaliation* he kills 100s more—in *retaliation* his own people turn him over to the Philistines; *in retaliation* he kills a 1000 more—in *retaliation* the Philistines employ Delilah to seduce him and find out the secret of his strength. And Samson caves in and completely repudiates his call from God. The Philistines gouge out his eyes and force him to grind their grain (remember, he used the flaming foxes to burn their grain fields). The man who did only what was “right in his own eyes” is now blind—a symbol that he had been blind to his own blindness all his life. Not even aware that God had left him, he finally dies, killing more Philistines in his death than in his life. But still, God will use that event to create even more unrest between Israel and Philistia. Yes, things are going according to God's plan (cf 14:4) in spite of Samson and Israel's unwillingness to cooperate.

Samson was invited to play a major role in God's huge, big, amazing story of redemption. But he chose to live in the little, itty-bitty, teeny-tiny story of himself. That's our default mode as well. Every day, we are constantly tempted to play the starring role in our own little stories rather than live into and out of the Story that God has written for us and is writing for this world.

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## COMMUNITY GROUP QUESTIONS

Review — Ask someone to summarize the story of Samson so far? (chps 13-14). ...Ask the group what stuck with them after last week's study in the life of Samson. ...What discussions about Samson have you had with others since last week?

Read chp 15 —

- Samson had serious moral and spiritual flaws despite having the power of the Spirit come over him at times. How is that possible? ...How is it possible to be “ungodly” and yet “God’s power” at work in your life? ...
- As believers, we have the power of the Spirit indwelling us and yet we still fall into sin. How is that possible?
- The people of Israel were very upset that Samson had “disturbed the peace” of their slavery. In what ways do we sometimes become complacent with cultural conformity, (cultural idols), today? ...How can we “be in the world, but not of the world” today? ...
- Name of our most prominent cultural idols today—personal choice and freedom to be and do whatever makes “me” happy—rejection of the idea of absolute truth—truth that applies to everybody, rather than “you have your truth and I have my truth” mindset—sex and self-indulgence—comfort and security—looking for a Savior in politics—What else? ...Which of these is the easiest for you to be drawn into?
- How do we see Samson’s spiritual immaturity in his prayer for God to quench his thirst? ...How do we sometimes pray the same way? ...

#### Read chp 16 —

- What does the first part of chp16 tell us about Samson’s personal “downward spiral”? ...How does the brief story of Samson going to a prostitute in Gaza set up the final act of the story with Delilah?
- Why does Samson tell Delilah the secret of his strength when he knows Delilah will do to him whatever he tells her will make him weak?
- How could Samson think—v20—he could defeat the Philistines as he did before? ... What does it say about Samson that “the Spirit of Yahweh left him” but he didn’t know it?
- Where did his strength come from?
- Why is God’s grace toward Samson not an excuse to do as he did?
- What does it look like to pray, “God, not my story, but Your Story” and then live each day in God’s Story?
- What would have to change in order for us to be more consistent in making God’s Story the main story of our lives?

Guided Prayer — Spend some more time together talking about then praying about the prayer—“God, not my story, but Your Story.”