

I. Intro

A. We have been reading through Judges

1. Last week, we read about Samson
  - a) He was very gifted, but his personal holiness was very shallow
2. His life warned us:
  - a) Just because God uses you doesn't mean He is pleased with you

B. This warning is echoed in the New Testament as well- **1 Corinthians 13:1-3**

1. *If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.*
2. These warnings remind us to check our heart on a regular basis; how?
  - a) Understand the Biblical distinction between gifts and fruit
    - (1) You are born with gifts; fruit grows over time
    - b) Spend time doing things that cultivate fruit growth
      - (1) Pray. Study the Bible. Put down deep roots in a Christian community

C. Last week in Judges

1. Samson lost a bet he made with some Philistines
2. He killed some other Philistines to pay off his debt
3. When he returned, his wife had been given to his best man
4. This is where the story picks up in Judges 15

II. Text

**A. Judges 15:2-8**

1. We know God is using Samson to drive a wedge between Israel and the Philistines
  - a) In these verses, God is using Samson's immature desire for revenge
    - (1) Samson loses his wife, so he sets their fields on fire
    - (2) The Philistines lose their fields, so they kill the girl and her father
    - (3) Samson seeks more revenge by killing the men

- b) While God is using Samson's immaturity, this is not a pattern for your life
  - (1) Remember, we follow Jesus' examples not Samson's examples
  - (2) However, this is an issue that we struggle with...the desire for revenge
- 2. You probably didn't lose your bride to your best-man or watch foxes with flaming tails destroy your field, but there are things in your life that stir a desire for revenge
  - a) Revenge is our attempt to right a wrong
    - (1) The problem with you *righting a wrong* is you always use your scales
    - (2) Your scales are weighted for your happiness, not true justice
    - (3) So, whatever revenge you serve only escalates the issue
    - (4) And, with every escalation is a new offense
  - b) Revenge is birthed out of offense (aka "I'm offended")
    - (1) Process: Someone wrongs you → You take offense → You seek justice → You use your scales of justice and actually seek revenge → The other person is wronged → They take offense → Rinse and repeat
      - (a) BTW, what I've just described is social media in a nutshell
  - c) There is a way out of this cycle, but it must be broken at the *offense step*
    - (1) Commit this to memory: Offense can't be given, it can only be taken
      - (a) Nobody has the power to offend you
      - (b) Only you have the power to be offended
    - (2) When someone wrongs you, don't take offense, give forgiveness
      - (a) Forgiveness lets the other person off the hook
      - (b) Forgiveness allows *the wrong* to be weighed on God's scales
- 3. Why do we extend forgiveness instead of taking offense?
  - a) Because we are following Christ's example, not Samson's
  - b) Offense is the currency of the world; forgiveness is the currency of Heaven
  - c) Don't become wealthy with the wrong currency

#### B. Judges 15:9-20

- 1. Summary
  - a) The Philistines sent men to capture Samson

- b) Samson hid in a cave and pretended to be bound
  - c) He broke the bonds and killed 1,000 men with the jaw bone of a donkey
  - d) Nazarites couldn't touch dead things, and that jaw bone was dead
2. Samson compromised his convictions to get the win
    - a) Could he have beat the men with a different weapon? Yes.
    - b) Then why did he compromise? Because it was convenient
  3. Convenience will always tempt you to compromise your convictions
    - a) When you compromise your convictions, you rob yourself of spiritual growth
      - (1) Physical growth comes from time: *look at the growth spurts in teenagers*
      - (2) Intellectual growth comes from learning: *you study and you learn more*
      - (3) Spiritual growth comes from obedience: *James 1:22 - "Be doers of the word" / John 14:23 - "If you love me, you will obey me"*
    - b) Combine this what we said at the beginning:
      - (1) You are born with gifts, but you grow spiritual fruit
      - (2) When you stop growing spiritual fruit (*maturing*) you look for ways to justify
      - (3) All you have left is gifts, so you value gifts over fruit
  4. Compromise kills your spiritual growth, and it tells you "things are fine!"
    - a) This is what is happening to Samson
    - b) This is what is happening to many Christians

### **C. Judges 16:1-6**

1. Samson went deeper and deeper into sin
  - a) Chasing prostitutes in the Philistine capital city
  - b) Fell in love with a woman (*Delilah*) that wanted to exploit him

### **D. Judges 16:7-19**

1. Delilah asked three times to learn Samson's secret of strength
  - a) He lied and told her "if I'm bound with 7 fresh bowstrings"
  - b) He lied and told her "if I'm bound with new ropes"
  - c) He lied and told her "if my hair is weaved into loom"
2. Delilah was very upset with all the lies, so she cried

- a) Samson caved and told her "if you cut my hair..."
- b) She cut his hair, and the Philistines rushed in to capture him

**E. Judges 16:20-30**

1. Samson was immature, arrogant, compromising, and valued the wrong things
  - a) His story was tragic and it mirrored the story of Israel
  - b) Many theologians think Samson's life was simply a parable of Israel for Israel
2. However, with all his faults, he is recorded in Hebrews 11 as "one who conquered kingdoms through faith"
  - a) What does this say to us?
  - b) What can we learn about God by studying Samson?

III. Conclusion

A. Two important truths about God's character from the story of Samson

1. God will use you even when you are weak and immature
  - a) Don't use that truth as a way to excuse your weakness and immaturity
  - b) You that truth as a way to fuel your worship, to fuel your gratitude
2. It is never too late to cry out to God
  - a) Maybe, you think you wandered too far from God to ever feel at home again
  - b) Maybe, you think you made too big of a fool of yourself and embarrassment is keeping you away
  - c) Maybe, you were charged with leading people, and you failed, and now you are gun shy
  - d) Wherever you are, whatever excuse you have, it's not too late
    - (1) Cry out to God in repentance and turn back to obedience
    - (2) Don't let your past compromises and immaturity be the end of your story
    - (3) Get back up and ask God to put you back to work building His kingdom