

HOW TO BE A SELFISH PIG (Judges 15:1-20)

Years ago, when my daughter was in 6th grade at the Sunnybrook Christian school in Stillwater, I taught a Christian worldview class. I was pastoring fulltime, but since the class was held just once a week, I felt I could take that assignment. The school provided all the curriculum I needed to teach the course. There was a companion book we read from periodically. It was written by the daughter of Francis Schaeffer. He was a famous American philosopher, theologian, and Presbyterian minister. Her name was Susan Schaeffer Macaulay, and the name of her book was, *How to Be Your Own Selfish Pig*.

I have taken the title of that book as inspiration for the title of today's message. Our text is Judges 15. In this chapter we have several interesting episodes from the life of Samson. Samson was the supreme example of what it means to be a selfish pig. If you desire to attain the heights of piggishness, Samson is the perfect guide.

Samson can be thought of as an anti-hero. In books and movies there is often a character who is capable of doing heroic deeds but because of certain and obvious character flaws, he can't really be viewed as a hero that you want to be like. Such a character is an anti-hero.

For instance, Hans Solo, of the Star War movies was an anti-hero. He trafficked in stolen goods; he was a smuggler; he ran afoul of authorities; he was helping the rebels only for the reward, and he was more than a little egotistical.

Captain Jack Sparrow of the *Pirates of the Caribbean* movie franchise would be another example of an anti-hero. He's a pirate. He's usually inebriated. He is a selfish pig, but he's a loveable selfish pig, someone you want to root for.

Using Samson as our model, I want to teach you in four easy lessons how you, too, can become a selfish pig.

Lesson #1: Pretend That Your Actions Don't Matter.

Let's read vv. 1-2. To understand 15:1, we have to remember what happened in the previous chapter. Against the wishes of his parents, Samson gets married to a Philistine girl who caught his eye. There is a seven-day feast that is somehow connected to the wedding. It kind of looks like a stag party to me, but Samson's wife shows up in the story; so, I don't know really know what part the feast plays.

At the feast, Samson proposes a bet with 30 men who were to serve either as his groomsmen or more likely his guards. They are not there to protect Samson. They are there to protect everyone else from Samson. Either way, Samson says to them, "If you solve my riddle in seven days, I will give you 30 changes of clothes, and if you can't, you have to give me 30 changes of clothes." He tells them the riddle, and of course they can't figure it out. To win the bet, however, they threaten the bride. They warn her that if she doesn't give them the answer to the riddle, they will kill her and her father.

She goes to work on Samson. She turns on the water works. She cries, "If you really loved me, you would tell me the answer (Boo-hoo)." She succeeds in wearing Samson

down. He finally tells her. She takes that privileged information to the 30 men. Just before the seven-day deadline arrives, they solve the riddle, and Samson loses the bet.

Samson knows exactly what has happened. He delivers the famous line found at the end of Judges 14:18, "If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have found out my riddle."

One preacher said that statement contains two important truths for men. One, don't ever let another man plow with your heifer, and two, don't every call your wife a heifer. That's wise marital advice right there.

Samson stomps off, and everyone thinks the wedding is off and the marriage is over, everyone except Samson. Samson pays his betting debt, and then disappears. Life goes on in Timnah but without Samson. No one thinks they will be hearing from him again any time soon or ever.

Then, we come to 15:1. Guess who shows up at the door of the unnamed woman who married Samson? That's right. It's Samson. Most men who want to make up with his wife might bring roses or a box of chocolates. Samson brings a young goat. I'm sure that sounded romantic to him, but we don't get to hear of her reaction, because before he can knock, her father steps in front of the door. From the text, it appears that Samson has never consummated the relationship, and that is what he has in mind. The father-in-law nixes that idea. He nips it in the bud.

Listen to what he says to Samson (v. 2). That sure put a damper on Samson's romantic, weekend plans. Apparently, Samson isn't interested in his wife's little sister. Anyway, no one tells Samson who to marry. He hadn't followed his parent's counsel, and he sure isn't going to listen to his would-be father-in-law.

I don't fault the father for giving away his daughter to the best man, but I do fault Samson for coming back pretending that nothing had happened, that everything is just fine.

If you want to become a selfish pig, just pretend that your bad actions don't have negative consequences, that you can say mean things and engage in hurtful actions without burning bridges and damaging or destroying your relationships. You can pretend that if you want to, but that is all it is, make believe. The lies you tell yourself do not change reality.

When you act like a heel, don't be surprised when you get the boot.

In his book, *Holiness by Grace*, Pastor Bryan Chapell tells a story about a man who called his pastor late one night and requested to meet with him. They agreed to meet the next morning at a local restaurant.

It was then and there the young man confessed to his pastor that on a recent business trip he had stayed too late at the hotel bar with a woman colleague. The alcohol, the absence of his family, and the laughter the two shared had led to what you might fear. They ended up in bed together. The man looked at his pastor and asked, "Now what?"

The pastor took a deep breath. He thought of the man's young wife and their small children whose lives could be so terribly affected by his night of indiscretion. The pastor was convinced that, as difficult as it would be, honesty was the path the young man needed to pursue. He asked some tough questions:

- Have you prayed and asked for God's forgiveness and pardon?
- Have you confessed his sin to the young woman involved and told her that the intimacy would never happen again?
- Have you confessed to your wife what you done and asked for her forgiveness?
- And, if you have not done that, have you at least arranged to have an AIDS test? He told the young man that until he had been tested, he could not approach the marriage bed without endangering his wife and the child she was expecting.

Without expression or comment, the young man listened closely to his pastor's questions. When the pastor finished, the young man pushed his breakfast plate away from him. He leaned back in his seat, and replied, "I came for grace, not for discipline. You disappoint me, Pastor."

That man had acted like a selfish pig when he was out of town, and now, he was acting like a selfish pig toward his pastor. When we choose to sin, we will have to face negative and difficult consequences. God can and will forgive you of you sin, but He will not erase the consequences.

Paul warned:

Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

Only selfish pigs think otherwise.

If it is your goal to become a selfish pig, I have a second lesson.

Lesson #2: Seek Revenge Whenever You've Been Wronged.

Let's look at vv. 3-8. Samson was enraged when he learned that his wife was no longer his wife. Look at the ominous threat he made in v. 3. He promised to harm the Philistines, and he felt completely justified in doing so.

Samson thought of a creative way to wreak havoc on the Philistine economy. According to v. 1, this was the time of the wheat harvest. Samson thought of an ingenious way to destroy the crops in the fields without stepping into the fields himself.

I don't know how he did it, but Samson captured 300 foxes. He tied the tails of the foxes into pairs; so, now he has 150 pairs of foxes. In between the tails of each pair, he inserts a torch and lights it. Then, he releases the foxes into the adjacent fields that are ready to be harvested. By this time, the fields are dry and easily combustible.

What do you think happened when each torch bearing pair of foxes ran into the wheat fields? Both the fields and the Philistine economy went up in smoke. It didn't do the poor, little foxes any good either.

When the Philistines learned it was Samson who had done this dastardly deed, they didn't immediately go after Samson. Instead, they took out their frustration and anger on Samson's wife and her father. They put them to death by fire.

Look at Samson's response in v. 7. Verse 8 describes what he did. The text uses a

Hebrew idiom. Idioms are expressions that are not easily understood just by looking at the words that make up the expression. For instance, “It was raining cats and dogs.” If you were from another country and heard someone say that, you would scratch your head, and have no idea what that meant. “Scratch your head” is another idiom. We have countless idioms in English.

Verse 8 is translated, “And he struck them hip and thigh.” The NLT gets at the meaning by rendering the verse, “So he attacked the Philistines with great fury.”

Samson was fooling himself if he really thought he could get in one last shot, and the Philistines wouldn’t respond. Of course, they responded. We see what happened next in vv. 9-17. The Philistines launched a surprise attack on Lehi, a Jewish settlement in Judah. The men of Judah ask, “What’s going on? What is this all about?”

The Philistines say, “We want Samson. Hand him over, and we will leave you alone.” The good folks of Judah want to be left alone; so, they send 3000 men to hunt down Samson with the intent of binding him and handing him over to the Philistines.

They find Samson and tell him their intention. Look at v. 12. Samson is okay with that, but he makes them promise they will not kill him. They assure Samson, “We mean you no harm. We just want to hand you over to the Philistines so they can kill you.”

Samson gives the forces from Judah a thumbs up.

Look at what happens next (15:14-17). Each act of revenge brings further acts of aggression and that just serves to keep the cycle going.

Do you remember being a little kid and how your brother or sister would tap you, and you would hit them back, maybe a little harder, and that would just keep going back and forth until mom or dad intervened.

I think that is why both kids and adults identify with the old Bugs Bunny cartoons. Bugs would be on the receiving end of some kind of mistreatment. He would look straight at the camera, so to speak, and say, “Of course, you realize, this means war,” and Bugs would plan his own response only bigger and better.

If you want to be a selfish pig, keep it up; keep those acts of retribution going.

Lesson #3: Go It Alone; Don’t Involve Others.

The odd thing about Samson is that unlike other Judges that we have seen in this book, he never organized the people and waged an armed response. He never led them into battle. He never trained his countrymen to march against their oppressors.

When the 3000 men from Judah came to get him, Samson could have said, “Fellas, boy is good to see you! Let me tell you what we should do, and what God would do for us, if we just band together.”

There was never a William Wallace moment where Samson painted his face, gave a rousing speech about freedom, and cried out, “Let’s go get ‘em.”

Who knows? They might have joined him, but we will never know because he never tried. He was content with just waging his one-man war against the Philistines.

Unfortunately, the people of God were so far gone, they saw Samson as the enemy. Look at what they said to Samson in v. 11. They were content with the Philistines being

their rulers. Samson needed to change their perspective, but he didn't even try to do so.

If you want to be a selfish pig, let Samson be your model, and totally avoid the example of the apostle Paul. Paul was all about partnership. Paul rarely went anywhere by himself. He had traveling companions. He took a team approach to ministry. When he started new churches, as soon as possible, he appointed people to be elders in those churches. An elder is the same office as that of a pastor, and those churches didn't just have one pastor; they had a multiple number of pastors. Some may have focused on teaching and others on administrative matters, but together they did the work of ministry.

Historically, Baptists have always stressed the importance of cooperation and partnership. We have organized ourselves into associations and state conventions. We believe we can do more together than we can do separately. We fund missionary work through what we call the Cooperative Program. On our own, Liberty Southern would not be able to send and support a single missionary, but when we band together with over 47,000 Southern Baptist churches, we can do great things and support thousands of missionaries in North America and across the world.

In addition to working with other churches, we can work with one another in this local fellowship. You can do things I can't do, and I can do some things you can't do, and working together we can do things none of us could do all alone.

The Bible speaks of one putting a 1000 to flight and two putting 10,000 to flight. That is synergy at work where two or more people multiply the work of the others.

We gave a choice to make. We can choose to be selfish pigs or we can choose to be effective.

If you really want to be a selfish pig, I have one last lesson for you.

Lesson #4: Make Yourself the Center of Your Prayers.

Let's read the final three verses, vv. 18-20. If you want to become a selfish pig, make your prayers all about yourself.

Toward the end of Judges 15, Samson prays. This is the first time we find Samson talking to God. While it may be encouraging that Samson is finally communicating with God, what Samson says in his prayer isn't. Look at v. 18. Basically, Samson complains. He practically accuses God of the need he is facing, and demands that God do something about it.

Apparently, Samson has forgotten that God has been there again and again for Samson. God rescued him from the lion. God had rescued him from his lost bet. God rescued him from the 1000 Philistines whom he faced.

Still yet, Samson prays as though God has been absent, and amazingly, God answers the prayer of his selfish servant. Look at v. 19.

Daniel Block wrote, "His prayer is as narcissistic as his manner of life . . . this prayer is purely personal." In other words, Samson was all about Samson. He did not seek to glorify God. As far as we can tell, he was not concerned about the welfare of his people. He demanded that God meet his own, personal needs.

We would do well to inventory our own prayers. About what things do we pray?

There is nothing wrong with praying for personal needs. God invites us to do that, and He promises to answer our prayers. Our prayers, however, need to be beyond just ourselves. We need to get beyond the “us four and no more mentality.”

Are we praying for the Afghani people? Are we praying for the Americans and others left in Afghanistan? Are we praying for the people of New Orleans and Louisiana and those terribly impacted by Hurricane Ida? We may have sharp disagreements with our President, but are we praying for him and those in his administration? I would say that we have no right to complain about him if we are not praying for him.

It used to be that the only person who would take your temperature would be a nurse, a doctor, or your mother. Now, perfect strangers take your temperature whenever you walk into a building. Why all this temperature taking? One of the first signs that you are not well and that you might be contagious is that you are running a fever.

One of the best ways of taking your spiritual temperature to determine if you are well or not is to look at your prayers. What are you praying for, and who are you praying for? If all of your praying is focused on self, you have come down with a bad case of selfitis.

Every selfish pig suffers from selfitis. It is not a fatal disease, but it will make you and those around you miserable.

You can be a selfish pig if you want to, but I don't suggest it. So, how do we keep from becoming selfish pigs. Just do the opposite of everything I have said:

1. Realize that your actions do matter.
2. Don't seek revenge whenever you've been wronged.
3. Don't go it alone; involve others.
4. Don't make yourself the center of your prayers.

If you can't remember all of those points, let me simplify it for you. If you don't want to be a selfish pig, be like Jesus.

I looked back on my sermon notes, and I found the passage we examined back on Easter Sunday. As I close out this message, I want to read a portion of that text. I invite you to look at Philippians 2:3-8. Let's be like Jesus.