

THE NIGHT OF SIN (Judges 16:1-22)

When I was young, I remember hearing a story about an elderly couple who lived in the country. The wife always went to church on Sunday. Her husband never did, but when she came home, he always asked her what the preacher preached about that morning. One Sunday, upon her return, he asked, “What did the preacher preach about today?”

She simply replied, “He preached about sin.”

He nodded his head and inquired further, “Well, was he for it or agin it?”

This morning, I’m going to preach about sin, and at the outset, let me be clear, I’m agin it. I agree with what the evangelist Billy Sunday said. He thundered:

I’m against sin, I’ll kick it as long as I’ve got a foot, and I’ll fight it as long as I’ve got a fist. I’ll butt it as long as I’ve got a head. I’ll bite it as long as I’ve got a tooth. And when I’m old and fistless and footless and toothless, I’ll gum it till I go home to glory and it goes home to perdition!

We’ve been looking at the life of Samson. It is easy to see that Samson has a sin problem. His sin is fueled by his lust, his anger, and his pride. The writer of Judges never uses the word *sin* in his presentation of Samson; he employs a more artistic way of showing us Samson’s struggle with sin.

A couple of weeks ago we learned that the trajectory of Samson’s life was downward. In chapter 14 we saw how the word *down* was used again and again in reference to Samson. He went down to Timnah (v.1), he went down with his father (v. 5), his father went down to the woman Samson planned to marry (v. 10), and Samson went down to Ashkelon (v. 19). The writer illustrates that Samson’s sin took him down, down, down.

Our focus today is Judges 16 and in this chapter the writer uses the word *night* repeatedly in regard to Samson. Look with me at the first three verses. *Night* shows up four times in that passage. The words *slept* and *sleep* are also found four times in Judges and all four are in this 16th chapter. They are found in vv. 14, 19, and 20. Sleep is something done most often at night. Night is also associated with darkness, and in v. 21 Samson’s eyesight is taken from him. His sight is never restored; he remains in darkness.

Scripture often uses *night* and *darkness* as a symbol for sin. Paul told the believers in Thessalonica, “For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness” (1 Thessalonians 5:5).

When Isaiah foretold the coming of the Messiah, he wrote, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light” (Isaiah 9:2).

Paul took that metaphor further. When he wrote to the Church at Ephesus, he said to them, “For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8). It is not just that they were in darkness. Instead, the darkness was in them. Without Christ, we go from bad to worse. We go from walking in the darkness to being darkness

As we look at Samson and Judges 16:1-22 we will consider, “The Night of Sin.” I want you to notice three truths.

The Night Is What We Use to Cover What We Do

Solomon, this strong man, had a glaring weakness; his weakness was women. In chapter 14 he decided to marry a woman before he had ever even spoken to her. She caught his eye and captured his heart just because she was pretty. She may have been pretty, but their relationship turned ugly rather quickly.

Chapter 16 begins with Samson being where he shouldn't be, in Gaza, the capital city of the Philistines.

- When you go where you shouldn't go, you will likely see what you shouldn't see.
- When you see what you shouldn't see, you will likely entertain thoughts you shouldn't entertain.
- When you entertain what you shouldn't entertain, you will likely do what you shouldn't do.

If Samson had not gone to Gaza, he would not have seen the prostitute. If he had not seen the prostitute, he would not have entertained the thought of being with her. If he had entertained the thought of being with her, he would not have gone in to be with her, but he did all of those things. That was the repeated refrain of Samson's life—doing what he shouldn't do.

You have heard the phrase “the strong-willed child.” Well, Samson's problem was not that he had a strong will. His problem was that he was still a child with a weak will. Whenever temptation called his name, Samson said, “Here I am. Bring it on.”

In 14:8 we find a phrase that I failed to touch on earlier. That phrase, however, serves to characterize the way Samson lived his life. It is the phrase, “he turned aside.” God was in front of him beckoning him, but Samson kept turning aside because he was driven to and fro by his lust, and his anger, and his pride. Samson was a strong man with a weak will.

I am convinced there are many men in our world today who are Samsons. They are strong men with weak wills. Some are strong physically, or financially, or politically, or educationally, and yet they are 90-pound weaklings morally and spiritually. They are strong men who are absolutely ruled by their lust, and by their anger, and by their pride. And their weak wills will put them in great danger.

When you go to the wrong place and do the wrong thing, don't be surprised when your enemies surround you. That is what happened to Samson. While his enemies waited for daylight to come, Samson used the darkness of the night to his advantage.

Years ago, I was at a gift shop in Kansas City looking at post cards. There were beautiful post cards featuring Kansas City attractions such as their Museum of Art that has a huge shuttlecock on the front lawn and their iconic, red and yellow Arrowhead Stadium. I picked up one postcard that was solid black. At the bottom were the words, “Kansas City at Night.”

At night, the city of ancient Gaza was solid black. There were no street lights, and there were no search lights. In that inky blackness, Samson crept to the city gates, stealthily avoiding the men who were awaiting the break of day. In that midnight darkness, Samson grabbed hold of the city gates, tore them from their foundation, heaved them onto his back, and marched up the hill toward Hebron, an Israelite city almost 40 miles north and east from Gaza. The darkness of night covered Samson's escape, and he left a gaping hole.

Jesus spoke about sinners using the cover of darkness for their own purposes. Do you remember Nicodemus coming to Jesus for a private conversation? When did Nicodemus come? What time of day was it? It was night. This was the very first Nick at Night. It was during their conversation that Jesus said:

And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and the people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed (John 3:19-20).

Author and counselor Paul Tripp shared about the time he gave his teenage son permission to spend the weekend at a friend's house. During the weekend, Paul received a call from the friend's mother, informing him that his son was not at her home. Her own son had felt guilty about covering for Paul's son and confessed to his mom. Paul told his wife about their son's deception, and he recalled, "Luella could feel my anger, and she said, 'I think you need to pray.' I said, 'I don't think I can pray for him right now.' She said, 'I didn't mean for you to pray for him; I think you need to pray for you.'"

Paul wrote:

I went to my bedroom to pray for God's help, and it hit me that, because of his love, God had already begun a work of rescue in my son's life. God was the one who pressed in on the conscience of my son's friend, causing him to confess to his mom. God was the one who gave her the courage to make that difficult call to me. And God was the one giving me time to get a hold of myself before my son came home. Now, rather than wanting to rip into my son, I wanted to be part of what this God of grace was doing in this moment of rebellion, deception, hurt, and disappointment.

Paul gave his son a couple of hours to relax after he returned, and then Paul asked him if they could talk.

"Do you ever think about how much God loves you?" Paul asked.

"Sometimes," his son answered.

"Do you ever think how much God's grace operates in your life every day?"

His son looked up but didn't say anything

"Do you know how much God's grace was working in your life even this weekend?"

His son asked, "Who told you?"

Paul said to him:

You have lived your life in the light. You've made good choices. You've been an easy son to parent, but this weekend you took a step toward the darkness. You can live in the darkness if you want. You can learn to lie and deceive. You can use your friends as your cover . . . You can step over God's boundaries. Or you can determine to live in God's light. I'm pleading with you: don't live in the darkness; live in the light.

Paul wrote, "As I turned to walk away, I heard his voice from behind me saying, 'Dad, don't go.' As I turned around, with tears in his eyes, he said, 'Dad, I want to live in the light, but it's so hard. Will you help me?'"

Your heavenly Father wants to help you turn from the darkness and live in His light. That begins with a simple prayer. I encourage you to pray, "Lord, I confess that I've been trying to cover my sin with the darkness. I ask you to cover my sin with Your grace."

He will answer that prayer.

The Night Is When We Face and Fight Our Hidden Foes

In Gaza, there were Philistines waiting quietly ready to pounce on Samson and kill him when he showed himself in the daylight. They never got the chance.

In the story that follows, Delilah, Samson's new girl-friend, has a secret meeting with the lords of the Philistines. They offer her a bundle of money if she will find out the secret to Samson's strength and pass that information on to them. Delilah accepts their offer.

She is not very secretive about her intentions. She asks him straight up in v. 6, "Please tell me where your great strength lies, and how you might be bound, that one could subdue you."

I realize that Samson may not have been the brightest bulb in the box, but I think he was able to see she had an ulterior motive in asking that question. That may be why, on three separate occasions, he gives her a false answer.

Much like his wife in chapter 14, Delilah nags Samson. Look at v. 16. By using that word *death*, the author may be doing a little foreshadowing because that is where the story is heading and where it will end—with Samson's death.

Samson's enemies were hiding, waiting for the right time to strike (vv. 9, 12, 21). There was one enemy who was hiding in plain sight, and that was Delilah. Delilah did not love Samson, and I don't think Samson really loved her. I think both were using one another. Delilah was using Samson to enrich herself. There were five major cities in the Philistine world, and it stands to reason that one lord from each of those five cities offered Delilah 1,100 pieces of silver each (v. 5). That would be 5,500 silver coins, an enormous sum. Notice also the end of v. 18. While Delilah used Samson for money, Samson was using Delilah for physical pleasure. He didn't love Delilah, he loved how Delilah made him feel.

There is one word that shows up four times in vv. 15, 17, & 18, and that is the word *heart*. Unlike Samson, you and I need to be careful who we give our heart to and with

whom we speak all our heart. It is not wise to give your heart to just anyone. It is not wise to speak all your heart to just anyone. It is possible that the person you view to be a friend is really an enemy, and you simply haven't seen their true colors, yet. You can't trust your secrets with everyone because there are some people who will betray your trust.

When I was in college, I had a friend who was a member of a student drama group that would put on skits at various college or church functions. One year, I went to Student Week at the Glorieta Conference Center located in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains of New Mexico, and this drama group from OBU performed for this large gathering of college students from all over the country.

I remember this one skit that was really a pantomime, no words were spoken. My friend is smitten with a girl. She asks for his heart, and he gives her his heart. She caresses his heart, and he feels wonderful inside, but then, she begins to toy with his heart. She missuses and abuses his heart. She dribbles it on the ground like a basketball. My friend is in anguish. She finally walks away from him leaving his broken and shattered heart on the ground. He walks over and gingerly picks up the pieces of his fragmented heart.

Jesus enters the scene. He motions that he wants my friend to give Him his heart. My friend is ashamed and protective. He is fearful of what Jesus might do. Finally, in desperation, he gives the many pieces of his heart to Jesus. Miraculously, Jesus transforms that broken heart into a healed and whole heart and gives it back to my friend.

Has life shattered your heart? Give it to Jesus. Not only can Jesus heal broken hearts, He can also do heart transplants. He can take your heart of stone and replace it with a new heart that beats in accord with His.

There were hidden enemies that Samson faced that night. Some were hiding in side rooms. There was another hiding in plain sight—Delilah. There was, however, one more enemy there that fateful night. Samson was his own worst enemy. It seems as if Samson was an adrenaline junkie. He was hooked on danger. He thought of himself as invincible. Nothing could touch him. He felt he could extricate himself from any and all jams. Foolishly, Samson had been playing with fire, and finally, Samson got burned.

What enemies are you facing? Who is that means you harm, and who can do the most harm? Is your chief enemy external or internal?

In Ecclesiastes 3, Solomon writes, "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven." He then gives us a series of pairs—something and its opposite. For instance, he starts with "a time to be born, and a time to die, a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted." He gives us 14 pairs. That is 28 things that each have their time. The last is "a time for war, and a time for peace."

Brothers and sisters, I think it is a time for war, and we will not get to peace until we fight this war. Our chief enemy is not the Democrats or the Republicans. It's not the far left or the far right. We have two chief enemies—Satan and self.

I want to let you in on a little secret. Like Superman, Satan has his own form of Kryptonite that weakens him. Satan's Kryptonite is the name of Jesus. If you and I will make much of Jesus, if we will **speak** the name of Jesus, **sing** the name of Jesus, **declare** the name of Jesus, **proclaim** the name of Jesus, and **praise** the name of Jesus, we will put

Satan to flight. He cannot and will not hang around when we extol the name of Jesus.

Our fleshly desires, sinful tendencies, and unholy habits also have their own Kryptonite that will weaken their hold on us. Their Kryptonite is the Word of God. If we will **read** God's word, and **memorize** God's word, and **study** God's word, and **listen to** God's word, and **do** God's word, we will vanquish our sinful selves, and our new nature will win the victory.

The Night Cannot Extinguish the Grace of Our God

Samson was a gambler. His opponents, however, didn't play fair. They cheated. At his wedding feast, the 30 men used his wife to extract the information they needed, and Samson lost the bet. Here in chapter 16, Samson gambled with his life. He bet on himself. He was certain he could beat the odds. Once again, his opponents didn't play fair, and again, they used a woman to wrangle out of Samson the information they needed, how Samson could be subdued.

It is quite possible that Samson did not meet Delilah by accident. By this time, the Philistines knew that Samson had a roving eye and a weakness for beautiful women. They may have planted Delilah and used her as bait to catch Samson. They may have arranged for the two to meet one another.

Whether or not it happened that way, you can be assured that your enemy knows your weaknesses. He knows which of your buttons to push to get the reaction he wants. Satan has been at this a long, long time. He knows what works, and he doesn't fight fair; so, don't take him on alone. When Satan rings your door, ask Jesus to answer it. When He does, Satan will mumble, "I think I got the wrong house," and Jesus will say, "You got that right. Move along."

Verse 20 is one of the saddest verses in the Bible. Verse 21 is equally sad. Because Samson lost his foolish bet, his opponents bound him, blinded him, and burdened him.

Samson, the man who used to do what was right in his own eyes, is now the man whose eyes have been gouged out. Samson, the man who used to come and go as he pleased is now the man who is made to walk in circles grinding grain. Samson, the man who humiliated others is not the object of humiliation. Samson, the man who was called to deliver His people has been defeated by the enemy of His people.

The writer of the Samson's story holds him up as a mirror and says to the people of God, "Look, look into the mirror." When they do, they see that just as Samson was seized, blinded, exiled, imprisoned, and humiliated with forced labor, they, too, will face those same consequences for their disobedience towards God.

While vv. 20 & 21 are exceedingly sad, verse, v. 22 holds out great hope. This is a sliver of light in what has been a dark, dark story. The night has been black, but the sun is just beginning to peak over the horizon.

In the fifth verse of his gospel, the Apostle John wrote: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:5).

I don't carry how dark your story is, it cannot extinguish the light of God's grace. God's grace is shining today. Step out of your darkness, and step into His light.