

October 19, 2025 (Lesson 7)

UNUSUAL STRENGTH: SAMSON

1. **Born for God's Purpose** (Judges 13:1-14)
2. **Enticed Away From God** (Judges 16:4-22)
3. **One Final Victory** (Judges 16:23-31)

Central Truth: Christians should be singularly focused on fulfilling God's purpose for their lives.

Focus: Perceive and pursue God's purpose, resisting sinful enticements.

Evangelism Emphasis: By believing in Christ, lost people can be redeemed.

Golden Text: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16).

Have you ever known someone who had great potential, but that potential went nowhere?

Perhaps they were very intelligent, or had great talent, or possessed useful skills that should have led to great success, but this did not happen. It is especially sad when this occurs because of the mistakes, even moral failures, of such individuals. It is a tragedy to see a life wasted.

This week we consider a Biblical example of wasted potential: *Samson*. Samson is one of the most interesting characters in the Scriptures. Most of us learned about his great strength and amazing feats in Sunday school and VBS. Yet, there is a sad reality here. Samson could have done so much more. As it was, his strength was too often used for personal reasons or to impress the wrong sort of people. He could have been a mighty warrior for God. He could have led Israel into great military victories and brought peace to the land. Instead, he was reduced to doing "parlor tricks" and acting the joker. Let us learn a lesson from this judge of ancient Israel. Let us strive to achieve our greatest potential for the Lord's glory.

1. BORN FOR GOD'S PURPOSE

A. Promise to a Childless Couple (Judges 13:1-7)

³ And the angel of the Lord appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son. ⁴ Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing: ⁵ For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.

As we have already seen in the Book of Judges, Israel repeatedly fell into sinful rebellion against God. Verse 1 says they “did evil again.” The implied evil is *idolatry*. This time the Lord sold them into bondage to the Philistines. The Philistines were relative newcomers to the region. In ancient texts, they are called the “Sea Peoples.” They came from the west and settled along the Mediterranean coast around 1200 BC. They plagued Israel for many years.

After forty years of oppression, God had compassion on His people and gave them a deliverer. Our text tells us there was a man of the tribe of Dan named “Manoah” (v. 2). He lived in the town of Zorah, located in the Judean lowlands, about eight miles west of Jerusalem. His wife, who is unnamed, was barren. In ancient cultures, this was considered a tragedy. The Scriptures present several accounts of barren women who had children through divine intervention, including Sarah, Rebekah, Hannah, and Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist.

“The angel of the Lord appeared” to Manoah’s wife (v. 3). As was noted in lesson 6, the Angel of the Lord was an appearance of God himself in angelic form. This is evident in this account by the way the Angel speaks of himself. When Manoah asks for his name (v. 17), the Angel says his name is “secret” (v. 18) or “wonderful” (NKJV). *Wonderful* is the same description given to the Messiah in Isaiah 9:6—the One who is “the Mighty God.”

The Angel tells this woman that she will bear a son, and her child will grow up to be a deliverer for Israel (Judg. 13:5). Specifically, the message is Samson “shall begin to deliver Israel.” History bears out Samson’s role as the one who initiated resistance against the Philistines. The Philistines will harass Israel, and there will be conflict with them after Samson’s death through the time of Samuel and Saul, with final deliverance only coming through David.

The Angel leaves, and the woman goes to her husband with her news. She explains “a man of God” with “the countenance of an angel of God” had come to her (v. 6). The term *man of God* is

often used for prophets in the Old Testament. Perhaps the woman used this term because of the prophetic nature of the announcement to her. It is appropriate in this instance, since angels usually appeared in human form. However, angelic beings can appear in other forms, such as the cherubim (see Ezek. 10:14; Rev. 4:6-8). The woman then explains that the man of God said their child is to be a Nazarite, dedicated to the Lord (Judg. 13:7).

§ *Compare the prophecy about Samson (Judg. 13:5) with the prophecy concerning Jeremiah (Jer. 1:5).*

B. The Nazarite Vow (Judges 13:8-14)

¹² And Manoah said, Now let thy words come to pass. How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?

¹³ And the angel of the Lord said unto Manoah, Of all that I said unto the woman let her beware. ¹⁴ She may not eat of any thing that cometh of the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing: all that I commanded her let her observe.

A Nazarite was someone consecrated to the Lord in a special way. Indeed, the Hebrew word *nazir* means “separated” or “dedicated.” Usually, someone took a vow to be a Nazarite for a set period of time. However, Manoah’s child was to be a Nazarite for his entire life. He was to be wholly given to the Lord. A Nazarite had to follow certain restrictions as part of his separation to God. These include not drinking alcohol, not touching dead bodies, and not cutting his hair (see Num. 6). The prohibition against the cutting of hair was specifically indicated for Samson (Judg. 13:5).

Manoah seemed uncertain about how to react to all this. An angel appearing to his wife? His wife was going to have a child? The child would be a Nazarite? How could all this be? Seeking for confirmation of his wife’s story, Manoah prayed the “man of God” would return, and he also prayed for instruction on how to raise the child (v. 8). God heard his prayer, and the Angel returned. Again, he appeared to the woman without Manoah being present (v. 9); perhaps because she had exhibited immediate compliance and faith in the words of the Lord. She raced to get her husband, and

Manoah saw the Angel for himself (vv. 10-11). For him, seeing was believing. Manoah affirmed his faith in what the Angel had promised and again asked for instructions on raising the child (v. 12). He was told to observe all that had previously been told to his wife (v. 13). The Angel then added further instruction. Since the child was to be dedicated to the Lord from birth, Manoah's wife must also abstain from alcoholic drinks and eating anything ritually impure (v. 14).

Manoah responded by offering to fix him a meal (v. 15), still not recognizing him as the Angel of the Lord (v. 16). The Angel refused and told Manoah to make a sacrificial offering instead (vv. 16-20). Finally, Manoah realized he had been talking with God himself (vv. 21-22), so he and his wife fell to the ground in worship (v. 20). Soon after, the woman gave birth to a son and named him Samson (v. 24), a name which refers to the sun or brightness.

Consecration

Consecration is not the act of our feelings but of our will. . . . Consecration is only possible when we give up our will about everything.—F. B. Meyer

2. ENTICED AWAY FROM GOD

A. Samson's Lust and Lies (Judges 16:4-14)

⁵ And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength lieth, and by what means we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him; and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred pieces of silver. ⁶ And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee. ⁷ And Samson said unto her, If they bind me with seven green withs that were never dried, then shall I be weak, and be as another man.

Samson was a man vulnerable to his own weak nature. He repeatedly gave in to his flesh and, in the process, broke his Nazarite vows. He killed a lion and then touched its dead body (14:8). He married a Philistine woman and celebrated with a “feast” (v. 10). The Hebrew word for *feast* (*misteh*)

implies “a drunken party.” Finally, as we shall see, his hair will be cut off in an affair that brought about his downfall.

Samson’s greatest weakness was in his affairs with women. This happened repeatedly. It happened again when he fell in love with a woman named “Delilah,” who lived in “the valley of Sorek” (16:4). Zorah, Samson’s hometown, was at the northern end of this valley; Delilah’s home was at the southern end. Samson may have met her on one of his trips to and from the land of the Philistines. We don’t know much about Delilah. She may have been a Philistine, but the text does not tell us that. She likely was a harlot, but this is uncertain. She was certainly willing to do anything for pay (see 16:5).

The Philistines lived along the Mediterranean coast in five cities. Each city was an independent kingdom ruled by a “lord.” The five lords of the Philistines administered a loose confederation of their respective city-states. For years they had been harassed by Samson and his feats of strength. Hearing of his infatuation with Delilah, they saw an opportunity to defeat him. They approached her and offered her 5,500 pieces of silver (shekels) if she could persuade Samson to reveal the secret of his great strength. This was an enormous sum of money. If the price paid for Joseph was standard for the purchase of a slave (Gen. 37:28), then Delilah could have bought 275 slaves with this bribe!

Delilah did not seem to have had any hesitation. She used Samson’s affection for her to entice him to reveal his secret. This is a tragic commentary on Samson’s low view of his calling and mission. His strength lay in his commitment to God, as evidenced by keeping the Nazarite vow. He knew this. To play with this sacred trust was not only foolish, it was a contemptuous violation of his consecration to God. He should have guarded this “secret” with his life, for it defined his life.

Samson constantly acted as a prankster in his dealings with the Philistines. He was more of a jokester than a judge. Now he displayed the same playful irreverence as he sparred with Delilah in

the matter of his Nazarite vows. “Bind me with seven fresh bowstrings,” he said (Judg. 16:7 NKJV). Then when the Philistines assaulted him, he broke the bowstrings like they were nothing. Next, he did the same thing with new ropes (v. 11). Then he had Delilah weave his hair into a loom (v. 13). Now he was getting dangerously close to the truth. We can sense his arrogance. Yet, once again, he broke free. After repeatedly being accosted by the Philistines, it seems he would be wary of playing this game with Delilah. Yet he foolishly continued.

The Parrot’s Purpose

A wealthy man desired to give his mother a gift above all others. He read about a parrot that had a 4,000-word vocabulary, spoke several languages, and could sing all of Handel’s Messiah. He paid \$10,000 for the bird and had it delivered to his mother. The next day he phoned her. “What did you think of the bird?” he asked. “It was delicious,” she replied. Lesson: Not understanding something’s purpose can be disastrous!

B. Samson’s Imprisonment (Judges 16:15-22)

¹⁵ And she said unto him, How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me? thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength lieth. ¹⁶ And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death; ¹⁷ That he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man.

²⁰ And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him.

Delilah now cunningly used her wiles. You can almost see her pout and say, “You don’t really love me! If you did, you would tell me your secret.” Again and again, she pressed him until he finally gave in. He told her a razor had never touched his head. She had finally earned her fee! Delilah called for the Philistine lords and got ready to entrap Samson.

Carefully, she lulled him to sleep and had his hair cut off. When Samson awoke, he tried to throw off the Philistines as before, but he could not. His strength was gone (v. 19). Then follows some of the saddest words in the Bible: “He did not know that the Lord had departed from him” (v. 20 NKJV). As believers today, if we are negligent in our spiritual commitment, sin can creep into our hearts and, without realizing it, we may find our strength is gone and the Lord has departed from us.

Now deprived of the Lord’s presence and his divinely gifted strength, Samson was no match for the Philistines. They would now not only enslave him, but also humiliate him. They blinded him by gouging out his eyes (v. 21). This was a common practice in ancient times. It not only incapacitated their prisoner, it debased him. They dragged him to Gaza, one of the five Philistine cities. Here, where he had previously performed an amazing feat of strength (vv. 1-3), he was now bound in chains. He was made to labor by pushing a millstone to grind grain (v. 21). This was not uncommon work for a prisoner. At this time, men would use two stones for grinding—a loaf-shaped upper stone and a larger, slightly concave stone. The grain would be poured onto the larger stone. Then the upper stone would be pushed back and forth over the grain, grinding it into meal. Samson spent his days kneeling before the lower stone and pushing the upper stone back and forth repeatedly.

But, in the midst of his humiliation, Samson experienced changes that would alter his final days. First, his hair slowly began to grow (v. 22). The outward sign of his Nazarite vow became evident again. More importantly, a new spirit arose up within him. Samson turned his heart to God.

\$ *Do you suppose Samson believed he would lose his strength if his head were shaved? If so, why did he tell Delilah his secret?*

3. ONE FINAL VICTORY

A. Samson Mocked (Judges 16:23-27)

²⁵ And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison house; and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars. ²⁶ And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them. ²⁷ Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines were there; and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport.

After Samson's capture and degradation, the Philistines were in a festive mood. They decided to host a feast to celebrate. The focus of the celebration was to honor *Dagon*, a deity associated with fertility and vegetation. He was particularly the god of grain. Their celebration took place in the temple of Dagon.

Their festivities consisted of two things. First, they praised Dagon for giving them victory over Samson (v. 23). To attribute victory to a national deity was common in the ancient world. They saw what had happened to Samson as revenge for all the Philistines he had killed. Second, they celebrated by making "merry" (v. 25). Their festivities included lots of alcohol, eating, dancing, and music. Finally, drunk with both pride and wine, they decided to enjoy themselves at Samson's expense.

Samson was brought from prison and made to stand in the middle of the temple. He was placed between two pillars. There "he perform[ed] for [them]" (v. 25 NKJV)—he was forced to amuse them. Taunted with jeers and mockery, Samson was made to act the part of a fool, like a toy for their entertainment.

Sometime during all this, Samson had an opportunity to rest for a moment. A young boy stood near him, apparently assigned to guide him. Verse 26 says he was holding Samson's hand. Samson asked the boy to help him to "feel" the two pillars he was standing between so he might lean on them. This would be a reasonable request. He was tired from the exertion of being the Philistines' plaything.

To understand what happens next, consider how Dagon's temple was constructed. While archaeologists have not found this exact temple, other Philistine temples have been excavated near Tel Aviv. One of these temples is from Samson's time period. It was constructed with two pillars about seven feet apart. The supporting columns were made of cedar wood set in stone bases. There was nothing holding them in place but the roof itself. Since the text speaks of people standing on the roof watching Samson (v. 27), there was probably an open courtyard. There would have been a flat roof around this open area where people could stand. It is reasonable to believe a very strong man could topple the two pillars and cause the building to collapse.

Ask Samson

Sin is more dangerous than wild bears, more deadly than blazing forest fires. . . . Ask Samson, who was reduced to a pathetic shred of a man because he never got control over the lusts of his flesh.—Nancy L. DeMoss

B. Samson's Prayer (Judges 16:28-31)

²⁸ And Samson called unto the Lord, and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes. ²⁹ And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left. ³⁰ And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life. ³¹ Then his brethren and all the house of his father came down, and took him, and brought him up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the buryingplace of Manoah his father. And he judged Israel twenty years.

For most of his life, Samson had not displayed much faith in God. Amazingly, God used him anyway. We know we can be most effective for the Lord by living a godly life full of dedication and obedience. Yet, God is not bound by our failings. Sometimes He will accomplish His will despite us.

Samson's life illustrates this. Through him, God began the process of delivering Israel from the Philistines.

Now at the end of his life, Samson turned his heart and his prayers to God. He called out to the Lord, using all three of His most common names: *Adonai*, *Yahweh* (Jehovah), and *Elohim*. He asked the Lord for one last burst of supernatural strength so he could avenge himself on his enemies. He asked God to remember him and strengthen him (v. 28). However, for Samson, this was also a very personal matter. He wanted revenge for the loss of his eyes; his blinding and humiliation demanded retribution.

Samson was not a great man of faith, but he displayed faith here at the end of his life. He asked to die with those who had punished and mocked him (v. 30). Then, in faith, he grabbed the pillars with his hands. He pushed with all his might, trusting God had heard his cry and put strength in his body. And the Lord had. The pillars toppled, and the roof came crashing down. All those in the temple were crushed, including the Philistine lords. In addition, there were 3,000 men and women on the roof (v. 27). These came plummeting down. Thousands died within just a few moments. As verse 30 comments, Samson slew more of the Philistines in his death than in the rest of his life put together. In his death, he was more purpose-driven than in his life.

After this momentous event, Samson's family came to retrieve his body (v. 31). There is no indication the Philistines attempted to hinder them in any way. Probably they were fearful because of what had happened. The God of Israel had not only wiped out their rulers and killed a multitude at one blow, but He had also destroyed the temple of their god. With quaking hearts, they allowed Samson's family to take his remains and leave. The family returned Samson's body to the family homeland and buried him alongside his father.

§ *In what sense did Samson see more clearly after he was blinded?*

PERCEIVE AND PURSUE GOD’S PURPOSE

Samson squandered his call and his divine empowerment. He seemed to take his role as a judge with a casual disdain, even contempt. He never raised an army to throw off the yoke of Israel’s oppressors. Instead, he acted like an ancient Israelite version of Rambo—a one-man army waging his own private war.

Samson’s life began with supernatural events announcing his birth. From the beginning, it was obvious God had a plan and purpose for him. This was fulfilled in a moderate way. God sovereignly used him despite his failings. Yet, his sinful cravings and moral weaknesses hindered him from becoming all God wanted him to be. May the Lord use the life of Samson to challenge us to seek His will, fulfill His purposes for our lives, and end life to His glory.

Daily Devotions

- M. Chosen and Anointed by God (1 Samuel 16:7-13)
- T. Rewards of Seeking God (2 Chronicles 7:11-18)
- W. Sin Separates People From God (Isaiah 59:1-8)
- T. A Son Repents (Luke 15:17-24)
- F. Remove Sin (1 Corinthians 5:1-8)
- S. Enabled by God (1 Timothy 1:12-17)