

Compromise
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Judges 16:16-31

Opening: Today we look at the story of Samson, one of the most famous and complicated of the Judges God used to deliver Israel from their enemies. Even those with only a passing knowledge of scripture know about Samson and Delilah. Question: Just using words that come to mind, finish this sentence: "Samson was _____."

If we want proof that God can use flawed humans for His purposes, it is Samson. His bad reputation was earned by his dysfunctional, self-indulgent conduct, yet God used him. His life is a study in the law of cause and effect. In layman's terms what is that law?

A light-hearted example: If you eat too many sweets (cause) there will be consequences (effect.) When someone tries to resist sweets people have all these jokes that begin with, "*The calories don't count if...*" Do you know any of the funny reasons they don't?

Apparently, Samson never thought about the reality of the cause and effect of sin when his appetites and sensual desires were involved. You and I can do better.

The Point: We laugh about donuts with no calories because we know that's not how cause and effect work. But Satan has been telling us essentially the same thing about sin since the Garden: "*In your case, the consequences won't apply.*" Scripture tells us otherwise: "*Don't be deceived: God can't be mocked. We will reap what we sow.*" (Gal. 6:7) "You can be sure that your sin will find you out." (Num. 32:23) "Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction." (Gal. 6:8). The good news in 1 Cor. 10:13 is that while temptation is inevitable, giving in is not. God is faithful and always provides a way out.

Here is some context before the text: Samson had been set apart for God as a Nazirite before he was born and given extraordinary strength through the Spirit of the Lord to deliver Israel from the Philistines. Yet Samson repeatedly compromised his calling, especially in his relationships with women. In Judges 16, after visiting a prostitute in Gaza, he fell in love with Delilah, who was also not his wife. The Philistine rulers bribed her to discover the secret of his strength. Three times she tried to trap him, and three times he escaped. Samson knew what she was doing, yet instead of walking away, he stayed and kept playing with temptation. That "cause" led to tragic consequences.

(NLT) — 16 She tormented him with her nagging day after day until he was sick to death of it. **17** Finally, Samson shared his secret with her. "My hair has never been cut," he confessed, "for I was dedicated to God as a Nazirite from birth. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as anyone else." **18** Delilah realized he had finally told her the truth, so she sent for the Philistine rulers. "Come back one more time," she said, "for he has finally told me his secret." So the

Philistine rulers returned with the money in their hands. **19** Delilah lulled Samson to sleep with his head in her lap, and then she called in a man to shave off the seven locks of his hair. In this way she began to bring him down, and his strength left him. **20** Then she cried out, "Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!" When he woke up, he thought, "I will do as before and shake myself free." But he didn't realize the Lord had left him.

- Step one for avoiding temptation to sin: Don't go there! Avoid situations that will tempt you to sin. We know our weaknesses and where we are vulnerable; we should stay away from situations that put those weaknesses to the test.
- Samson knew what Delilah was doing but kept toying with her.
- **2 Timothy 2:22 (NLT)** tells us to "Run from anything that stimulates our lusts."
- Verse 20: Samson woke and thought he was still strong. The end of that verse is sobering: *"...he didn't realize the Lord had left him."*
- Verse 20 says Samson "didn't know God had left him." Scripture says God will never leave a believer. How does that work?
- As we've discussed in recent weeks: Under the Old Covenant, the Spirit's empowering presence could be withdrawn. Under the New Covenant, every believer is permanently indwelt and sealed by the Holy Spirit. We can grieve Him through sin, but He does not leave us. However, persistent sin can rob us of fellowship, blessing, and spiritual power and bring God's loving discipline.ⁱ
- Our Lifeway lesson writers gave a great illustration. Sometimes if a tree is diseased from within, it appears to be tall and strong, but it is hollow on the inside. "Decay starts from the inside and works its way out. It may be slow and unnoticed for a while, but that "hollow" tree will one day fall."ⁱⁱ

21 So the Philistines captured him and gouged out his eyes. They took him to Gaza, where he was bound with bronze chains and forced to grind grain in the prison. **22** But before long, his hair began to grow back. **23** The Philistine rulers held a great festival, offering sacrifices and praising their god, Dagon. They said, "Our god has given us victory over our enemy Samson!" **24** When the people saw him, they praised their god, saying, "Our god has delivered our enemy to us! The one who killed so many of us is now in our power!" **25** Half drunk by now, the people demanded, "Bring out Samson so he can amuse us!" So he was brought from the prison to amuse them, and they had him stand between the pillars supporting the roof.

- One commentator said of this tragic scene, "Ironically, the man who lived his life by the lust of his eyes had his eyes gouged out. The man who could not be restrained was bound in shackles. The man who proudly went wherever he pleased was now forced to grind grain in prison like an animal. And the man who appeared to have little regard for others was now humiliated."ⁱⁱⁱ
- Christ-followers who compromise their faithfulness to God will eventually be put to shame. They won't lose their salvation, but there will be consequences for sin.

26 Samson said to the young servant who was leading him by the hand, "Place my hands against the pillars that hold up the temple. I want to rest against them." **27** Now

the temple was completely filled with people. All the Philistine rulers were there, and there were about 3,000 men and women on the roof who were watching as Samson amused them. **28** Then Samson prayed to the Lord, “Sovereign Lord, remember me again. O God, please strengthen me just one more time. With one blow let me pay back the Philistines for the loss of my two eyes.” **29** Then Samson put his hands on the two center pillars that held up the temple. Pushing against them with both hands, **30** he prayed, “Let me die with the Philistines.” And the temple crashed down on the Philistine rulers and all the people. So he killed more people when he died than he had during his entire lifetime. **31** Later his brothers and other relatives went down to get his body. They took him back home and buried him...where his father, Manoah, was buried. Samson had judged Israel for twenty years.

- God had withdrawn His empowering presence but was not finished with Samson.
- He used this tragedy to destroy the Philistine leaders and deliver Israel.
- Samson’s prayer in verse 28 is interesting. Was his motive to deliver Israel? What was it? What does this say about Samson’s character even at the end?
- Will we see Samson in Heaven? Hebrews 11:32 (the Hall of Faith) includes Samson among the heroes of faith. His life reminds us that our failures do not have to be the final word. God’s grace is greater than our sin, and salvation rests not on our perfection, but on faith in Him.

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- There is an old quote: *“Sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay.”*
- Few people in Scripture illustrate that truth more vividly than Samson.
- We cannot defy the law of cause and effect. Donuts have calories; sin has consequences; but followers of Christ have CHOICES.
- I thought of an old country song by that name (CHOICES) recorded by a man who had made his share of poor choices — George Jones. Look at the words:
*“I’ve had choices since the day that I was born
 There were voices that told me right from wrong
 If I had listened, no, I wouldn’t be here today
 Living and dying with the choices I’ve made.”^{iv}*
- Followers of Christ are not ‘robots’ that live perfectly. God has given us the ability to make real choices—to be faithful to Him or not.
- Step one for avoiding temptation to sin: Don’t go there! Run from temptation!
- Before making a poor choice, envision the consequences.
- Samson thought his sin was a game. Playing with sin is a losing game.
- Even when we make a bad choice, there is grace if we truly repent. We won’t lose our salvation, but we can lose in so many other ways because grace doesn’t magically erase consequences of poor choices.
- *“Nobody’s perfect,”* TRUE. *“God will forgive,”* TRUE. Gross sin leads to painful consequences, also TRUE. Each day let’s ask God what the Psalmist prayed: **Psalm 139:23–24 (NLT)** — **23** Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. **24** Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

Psalm 19:13 (NLT) — 13 Keep your servant from deliberate sins! Don't let them control me. Then I will be free of guilt and innocent of great sin.

ⁱ **1 Thessalonians 5:19** — “Do not quench the Spirit.” **Psalm 66:18** — “If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.” **Hebrews 12:6** — “The Lord disciplines the one he loves.” **John 15:5** — Apart from Christ, “you can do nothing.”

ⁱⁱ Lifeway – Explore the Bible Leaders Guide

ⁱⁱⁱ *ibid*

^{iv} Yates, Billy, and Mike Curtis. "Choices." *The Cold Hard Truth*, performed by George Jones, Asylum Records, 1999. Publishing administration by BMG Rights Management and Songs of Universal, Inc..