

## The Life of Samson #4

2001 Family Conference

By Jim Savastio

sermonaudio.com

**Bible Text:** Judges 13:1-16:31

**Preached on:** Friday, July 6, 2001

### Grace Reformed Baptist Church

939 S. 3rd Street

Mebane, NC 27302

**Website:** [www.grbc.net](http://www.grbc.net)

**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/grbcnc](http://www.sermonaudio.com/grbcnc)

As you turn to Judges 16, I do want to, once again, express my thankfulness for the opportunity to be able to speak these things to you, thankful for the church and all that they do to make this possible. I know this is a highlight of the year for so many of you. I was reminded this past week of the feeling that I had some years ago when I was a student at Trinity Ministerial Academy and the day came that I was done with my studies and we were going to have what they call a Recognition Service, generally what would be called a Graduation Service and eight of us that had completed our studies were sitting up on the platform and I kept expecting that somebody was going to turn around and look at me and say, "Who are you? What are you doing up here?" I felt like a stowaway and I felt that way often this week, that I'd be up here and someone would turn around and think, "What are you doing up here?" That's how I feel, brethren, and I have felt my weakness to an unusual degree and my own frailty, my own native inability to bring anything that would be edifying and helpful to you but I am thankful that out of our weakness, God's strength can shine forth and may he do so yet again today.

Judges 16,

"1 Now Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there, and went in to her. 2 When the Gazites were told, 'Samson has come here!' they surrounded the place and lay in wait for him all night at the gate of the city. They were quiet all night, saying, 'In the morning, when it is daylight, we will kill him.' 3 And Samson lay low till midnight; then he arose at midnight, took hold of the doors of the gate of the city and the two gateposts, pulled them up, bar and all, put them on his shoulders, and carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron.

"4 Afterward it happened that he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. 5 And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, 'Entice him, and find out where his great strength lies, and by what means we may overpower him, that we may bind him to afflict him; and every one of us will give you eleven hundred pieces of silver.'

“6 So Delilah said to Samson, 'Please tell me where your great strength lies, and with what you may be bound to afflict you.'

“7 And Samson said to her, 'If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings,’”

Let me pause here to say this was not obvious in the English that these were made from the tendons of freshly killed animals and so that when he says “not yet dried,” these represent the carcass of an animal and so that Samson is, once again, flirting with his Nazirite vows. He is confident that his strength will remain no matter what he does.

“If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings not yet dried, then I shall become weak, and be like any other man.”

“8 So the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, and she bound him with them. 9 Now men were lying in wait, staying with her in the room. And she said to him, 'The Philistines are upon you, Samson!' But he broke the bowstrings as a strand of yarn breaks when it touches fire. So the secret of his strength was not known.

“10 Then Delilah said to Samson, 'Look, you have mocked me and told me lies. Now, please tell me what you may be bound with.'

“11 So he said to her, 'If they bind me securely with new ropes that have never been used, then I shall become weak, and be like any other man.'

“12 Therefore Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them, and said to him, 'The Philistines are upon you, Samson!' And men were lying in wait, staying in the room. But he broke them off his arms like a thread.

“13 Delilah said to Samson, 'Until now you have mocked me and told me lies. Tell me what you may be bound with.' And he said to her, 'If you weave the seven locks of my head into the web of the loom' -

“14 So she wove it tightly with the batten of the loom, and said to him, 'The Philistines are upon you, Samson!' But he awoke from his sleep, and pulled out the batten and the web from the loom.

“15 Then she said to him, 'How can you say, “I love you,” when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and have not told me where your great strength lies.' 16 And it came to pass, when she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, so that his soul was vexed to death, 17 that he told her all his heart, and said to her, 'No razor has ever come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man.'

“18 When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, 'Come up once more, for he has told me all his heart.' So the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hand. 19 Then she lulled him to sleep on her knees, and called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him. 20 And she said, 'The Philistines are upon you, Samson!' So he awoke from his sleep, and said, 'I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free!' But he did not know that the Lord had departed from him.

“21 Then the Philistines took him and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza. They bound him with bronze fetters, and he became a grinder in the prison. 22 However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaven.

“23 Now the lords of the Philistines gathered together to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god, and to rejoice. And they said: 'Our god has delivered into our hands Samson our enemy!'

“24 When the people saw him, they praised their god; for they said: 'Our god has delivered into our hands our enemy, The destroyer of our land, And the one who multiplied our dead.'

“25 So it happened, when their hearts were merry, that they said, 'Call for Samson, that he may perform for us.' So they called for Samson from the prison, and he performed for them. And they stationed him between the pillars. 26 Then Samson said to the lad who held him by the hand, 'Let me feel the pillars which support the temple, so that I can lean on them.' 27 Now the temple was full of men and women. All the lords of the Philistines were there - about three thousand men and women on the roof watching while Samson performed.

“28 Then Samson called to the Lord, saying, 'O Lord God, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may with one blow take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!' 29 And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars which supported the temple, and he braced himself against them, one on his right and the other on his left. 30 Then Samson said, 'Let me die with the Philistines!' And he pushed with all his might, and the temple fell on the lords and all the people who were in it. So the dead that he killed at his death were more than he had killed in his life.

“31 And his brothers and all his father's household came down and took him, and brought him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of his father Manoah. He had judged Israel twenty years.”

Let's once again pray.

*Our Father, what a sad thing it is to read of the pathetic sight that Samson became. Father, as this man would not take heed according to your word and who flirted away his distinctiveness, Father, we pray that he might serve as an example to us in his misery and in his death and yet, Father, we can see in this passage that there is yet some hope that you may yet use a man even who has sinned. And, Father, we pray that both the terror and the goodness of the Lord may be manifest in our midst today. Father, we are weak but you are mighty. Our vessels our on the way to being depleted but, living God, you can fill them again with a strength not our own. Help us, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

What is it that really scares you? Do you have something of which you are very much afraid? If you were to find out that there was a rattlesnake or some other kind of snake, maybe even a garter snake on the floor here, a number of you would probably run out. I know if a rat came into this room, my wife would probably run from here. Some are deathly afraid of spiders; some are deathly afraid of water; some are afraid of heights; and some are afraid of a host of other things. I believe if we were to pass out a survey and you were to ask to soberly evaluate that which frightens you the most, what is your deepest fear, I think there would be one answer that would come out in this group above all others, that is the fear that we might bring grief and shame on the name of the Lord Jesus. The fear that we would, through a lack of diligence, find ourselves ruined at the end, finding that our name has become a byword in the church of Jesus Christ. Or perhaps it's the thought of one day standing there in the place of judgment and finding ourselves cast out, that God will not receive us. That is often in our hearts, a very deep-seated fear. Well, I trust that as a result of some of what we studied yesterday and then again in light of what we study today, that God might minister to that fear though in some ways that fear can be a healthy thing if it keeps us in the pathway of obedience. As we saw yesterday, if we are in that pathway we do not need to be afraid.

As I have contemplated and reflected upon how I have viewed these messages, I thought of the words of an old preacher and I believe it was Vance Havner, it might not have been but I believe it was him who said that he regarded that it was his duty in preaching to afflict the comfortable and to comfort the afflicted. I have sought to afflict the comfortable. I have sought to address something that has concerned me deeply in our churches and that is the reality that though we determine with all of our hearts that we will be unlike the world in our corporate worship, that we are becoming very much like the world in our private lives. That concerns me and as I have visited numerous Reformed Baptist churches and interacted with a number of young people, there doesn't seem to be a great deal of difference. As I've talked to members of churches this past week, that fear has been reinforced sadly and I have had a number of people speak to me about their concern for our movement and where we are going to end up. Brethren, if we go the way of Samson, then we deserve to end up as Samson ended up and God will not bless our movement for our theology. God will bless our movement because of our likeness to Jesus Christ.

So, for that reason, I have sought to afflict those who may have gone comfortable but today I want to comfort those who may have been afflicted. I want to bring a message of hope for those who do feel their sin. As we have focused here upon our sin and upon the power of the world to subtly and slowly seduce us, as we have noted in recent days, the vulnerability of our own hearts, as I have sought to open up the wretched inclination of our heart toward the downgrade, as I have sought to bring forth the reality that the world is like a flame and our hearts are packed with oily rags and that if we get our hearts too close to the world, they will burst into flame. This morning, I want to bring a word of encouragement and I have to admit there's not a whole lot of encouragement in the life of Samson. Even here, perhaps there's a sense someone could say that, "Man, this guy really does want to comfort us because he's stretching this." I don't believe that I am, although I had to wrestle with whether or not I am one of the commentators that I have been reading, I think his estimate would be that Samson was a lost man and I have sought to say that though I can sympathize with that view, I believe that he was a believer.

But I do believe, here again, that there are some encouragements to be found at the end of the life of Samson. What I want to focus on this morning is our hope that is to be found in the loving determination of our God to bring us to heaven. The messages that I have brought and even in saying that and I'm going to bring this out a couple of times today, I hope that there is no one here this morning who thinks to themselves, "Man, you mean I can be like Samson and I can flirt with spiritual danger? I can be with prostitutes? I can be with ungodly women and yet I can have confidence that in the end I'm going to go to heaven? Oh goodie, he's saying I can have the world and heaven too." That's not what I'm saying. I trust that no one here would be that foolish as to tempt God. This message is not meant to be a soft pillow for someone contemplating a life of sin and compromise. I do not want anyone to take from this message the thought, "Well, then I'll go ahead and live in sin and God will always be faithful to bail me out." I do not believe that a Christian, a true Christian, could consistently have such thoughts. Such thoughts are selfish, they are ungodly, and if those thoughts are in the back of the mind of anyone who may be a Christian today, may God remove it this morning.

Look at a demonstration of the love of God in keeping his own from gross sin. Let me bring out three things. I want us to see: hope, first of all, in Samson's chastisement; secondly, hope in the regrowing of his hair; and thirdly, hope in his answered prayer. Consider first of all with me: hope found in Samson's chastisement. In Psalm 119:67 we read these words, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word." Before God dealt with me in chastisement, I was going astray. I went astray. The Psalmist is saying, "There were times in my life where I was careless. I was not watching over my heart with diligence. I was wandering off the pathway of obedience and strictness to God's command. I found that I was unstable. I was lukewarm or I was cold much of the time. I was dull in prayer, dull in worship. My Christianity had become to mean little to me but then something happened, God afflicted me." The word "afflicted" means "to be hard-pressed." It also could be translated "to be knocked down." And what he's saying is that, "Trouble and trial came my way which shook me in my slothful state. It awoke to the danger of my condition. God graciously intervened in my life while I was in a course that would have brought ruin to my soul."

One of my children is an unusually stubborn child and everyone who knows us knows who I'm talking about. I have a nickname for her. Her nickname used to be Waa because she would cry about everything. She later became the Princess of Waa and then she was the Queen of Waa and now I normally refer to her as the Empress of Waa. She's very passionate. She is very quick to anger. She is very quick to be frustrated. She's trying to put on a shirt in the morning, if her head doesn't go through that hole with the greatest of ease, you'll hear her screaming. Time and time again, her mother and I take her and bring her into the room where we discipline. I take her on my lap and I say to her, "I am not going to let you be this way. You're not going to be that kind of a girl. It will stop." And God willing, next year she'll be the Pauper of Waa. I'm determined it's going to stop. \

I'm not going to let her be that way and, brethren, every time God chastises us, that's what he's saying, "It's going to stop. I'm not going to let you be that way. I'm not going to let you live your life in lustful fantasy. I'm not going to let you be such a discontent, grumbling sheep. I'm not going to let you have bitterness in your heart and jealousy and envy and discontentment. I'm not going to have you be someone hungering and thirsting after the husk of the world. I'm not going to have you live that way. I'm not going to let you be hard-hearted and cold. And if you do, and every time that you do, I'm going to bring some pain into your life. If you are content to be that way, if you are wanting to be that way, I'm going to intervene." God is going to bring affliction to his children. Not simply as we heard last night so that we might be conformed to the sufferings of Christ and I don't want there to be any confusion, I know there may be some undergoing tremendous trials and you're wracking your brain, "What did I do, Lord? Lord, is it because of this? Is it because of that?" God is not cruel like that. I don't ever take my children and just start spanking them for no reason and let them wonder, "Why, you figure it out." When we get chastised, we know we're getting chastised and we know why. But there are other times we suffer, as our Brother brought out, for the sake of Christ and it is simply that we might be conformed to Christ and that we might have our feet pierced, as we heard. But God will bring affliction to his children and God will, out of love, break his children down in order that they may not go so deeply into sin so as never to recover.

What if Samson had been able to just keep going his way? Would he have ended up his life married to Delilah or married to some other immoral woman, raising kids in Gaza? The people would have wondered, "Whatever happened? Didn't you ever hear about Samson?" Samson's there with his beer-belly sitting in front of his tv with his wife and kids. He didn't have anything to do with God anymore, nothing to do with Israel anymore. That's how he would have ended up his life but God allows him to be bound. God allows the enemy to pluck out his eyes and to strap him to a grinding wheel and to taunt him and to mock him. As I was meditating on these messages over the last several months, it struck me as never before what a mercy of God it was to have his eyes out. Samson saw a woman of the Philistines. Samson saw a harlot. And though it is not brought out fully, you'd better believe Delilah was one fine looking woman and what led Samson into her lap were his eyes. His lusts were brought about through his eyes. She looked good and the pleasures of being on her lap made it all worthwhile. He was being

deceived. The lusts of the eyes were the means by which the lusts of his flesh were invigorated. It was the means by which he compromised his high calling over and over again. His eyes were the doors through which sin entered into his heart and I thought of the words of the Lord Jesus that if your eye offends you pluck it out, far better to enter into life blind than having both eyes and go to hell. And in a very literal way, that's what happens to Samson. If Samson's eyes will damn him and ruin him and ensnare him and compromise him, I believe God loves him enough to have his eyes gouged out. Talk about tough love. Far better that Samson should grind at a wheel, blind and in misery, than he go laughing and fornicating to hell.

What would have happened to King David had there been no consequence for his sins? What if God's hand had not been heavy upon him day and night? You see, some of you know what's it like. You've sinned in a certain way and you thought, "God's going to get me. Am I going to be able to drive safely home?" God's going to expose this and yet, maybe the Lord at that moment didn't do anything and perhaps what it did was harden your heart, "Then I can continue to go on." As it says in Ecclesiastes, "Because the sentence against an evil is not swiftly brought about, therefore, the hearts of men are set in them to do evil." Because the sentence is not swiftly carried out, our hearts get set in a bad way. What if that had happened to David? After David went into Bathsheba and the child was conceived and then Uriah, the Hittite, was slain. You might if you didn't read the Psalms, get the impression at least for a time that everything was hunky-dory but David says, "Day and night your hand was heavy upon me. My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. God, your hand was heavy on me. I was miserable."

Again, I want to say to somebody that may have the idea that, "Well, I think it's worth it and go ahead and sin. If all I'm going to get is a whipping out of it, I'll go ahead and sin." We used to have a saying in college that it's easier to ask for forgiveness than permission and if we wanted to do something that was against the rules, "Well, let's go ahead and break the rule and then we'll say we're sorry for it." We can sometimes have that attitude. But do you really think that you can go on and press on in the way of sin and just say, "Well, I'll take the whipping." Do you think David as he stood over the grave of his baby or as he stood over the grave of his adult sons or as he tried to comfort his raped daughter or as he was fleeing from Jerusalem because Absalom was in rebellion, that he thought to himself, "Well, you know, that night with Bathsheba sure was worth it." Or that Samson thought as he was grinding at the wheel in his blindness and hearing the taunting into his ears, "You know what? It was worth it to hold that fire to my breast."

I know a man that used to work in a fast food restaurant and one day it was his job to remove the container of hot grease where they make the french fries and as he was lifting it up, he slipped on the mat and that tub fell over on top of him. It covered his entire body and he told me that the only two places that were not burned were the top of his forehead and his knees and he would try to sleep like that. Is that worth it? You know, someone says, "Well, you know, he's still alive. He had a couple of places in his body that weren't burnt. That's no big deal." You see, that's what some people think. "I'll take the burn. I'll take the chastisement." Really? You will? You'll take the plucking out of your eyes? You'd rather have that than to walk in God's ways?

Had God not done these things, how thoroughly this man would have thrown off his identity and I believe that it can be said that it was not until Samson was blind that he really began to see. It was then that the illusion of beauty and the power of that beauty that had seduced him was removed and it's now that he's lashed to that wheel and as he hears people laughing and as he gets up every day and perhaps in his dreams he's still able to see but he awakes and his eyes are gone that he says to himself, "This is where my sin has brought me. I loved Philistia. I know I was supposed to fight Philistia and judge Philistia and destroy Philistia and deliver the people from it but I gave my heart to it and this is where it has brought me and now I see it for what it is. It is in this darkness that I now see. Now I see Delilah for what she was. I see that harlot for what she was. I see the nation for what it is. They don't love me. They didn't want my best. They're not my friends. They're triumphing in my misery. They really do hate God. They really do hate what God stands for. They really do hate me. And now because of me, the Gentiles blaspheme and praise their wicked gods." His wishy-washy nature is now changed and his heart will now be set on God endowing him with strength that he might bring judgment on the land. Again, I believe if such a thing had not happened, Samson would have been lost.

As I have contemplated again this point over the last several months, I realize how strange it was going to sound and I told some people, "I'm going to talk about the blessing of having your eyes gouged out." But in a sense, it is. This is why the writer to the Hebrews says what he does in Hebrews 12. He said "you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons." Had God not intervened we'd say Samson was a lost man but God did. "Furthermore," we read, "we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness."

And again I say, child of God, if you are a child of God, God has committed that you will be holy. God has committed to us if he indeed loves us and if we are his, that he's not going to allow us to slip into being indistinct from the world. He's going to awaken us and perhaps these messages are God's belt to us, God's rod to us, saying to us, "You're not going to be that way anymore. You're my special people. You're my treasure. I didn't send my Son to die for you simply that you can go to heaven at the end of your life." He did die to make us holy. The Scriptures tell I and I know, chastening seems to be joyful for the present but painful, nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

I ask you here, my friend, has God ever met you in your sin? Has he in mercy shown you that he will not allow you to prosper while in rebellion against him? He's not going to let



you have an easy conscience. Day, night, his hand is going to be upon you and if you won't bow beneath that heavy hand, then God will do something else. Has God ever stripped away the delusion of sin in order to reveal the truth to you painful though that may be? Then if he has, take it as a sign of his love. God is more than willing to bring pain to our lives in order to bring about the peaceable fruits of righteousness. And I don't want this to be taken in the wrong way, I hope you'll understand what I mean and I'm not making a comment on anyone in any kind of a situation but it may well be that God would rather see you paralyzed and blinded or deaf than to lose you to the world. He will bring pain to save you. If we were to be in an accident on the way home and a van were to flip over and to be twisted in such a way that one of my children were caught in there and their feet or one of their legs were caught in the twisted mangle and the fire was beginning in the car, I would rather take that leg off and to have her saved whole than to lose her to the fire.

There are purposes as we've brought out for which Jesus died for his church. If we truly belong to him, God will cause us to see one way or another the world for what it is. The Psalmist says, "I know, O Lord, that your judgments are right and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me." That's what he did to Samson. Secondly, let us see it in the regrowing of his hair. We read there and it is in the most dramatic fashion that it is brought out that he was a grinder in the prison, however, the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaven. Now, we need to be careful here that we not read into this any kind of superstition. Samson's strength wasn't in his long hair. Samson's hair could grow out the back door and if the Spirit of God wasn't with him, he'd be as weak as I but what is meant to be conveyed by this? I believe that it is telling us that very slowly and seemingly imperceptibly, God was restoring to him the chief mark of separation. Little by little, day by day, he was once again taking on the appearance of that lion of God. His hair began to grow again. He had been shaven. He had been mocked. But now his hair began to grow again.

And I want to apply this to some here this morning and I don't want this to be misconstrued, I'm not here referencing disqualified men returning to the pulpit, that's a whole other issue. But I am saying that when our sin causes our hair to be cut so that we lose our distinction and our power, that those things can be restored. That though for a time Samson would have looked like any other man, the time came when the growth of his hair gave him back his peculiar appearance and though that hair, most likely, did not grow as long and as full as it once did in the days of his consecration, it nonetheless did begin to make him distinct. I see in this a picture of God making up for the years that the locusts have eaten. Here's a man who sinned against his family and his sin is exposed and he's there shorn and bald and weak and blind and his heart is broken before God and he's wondering, "O God, can you ever even love me again? God, is it possible that my family will ever love me? Can my wife ever respect me again?" Lo and behold, the grace of God is such that the hair can begin to grow again. Someone who has blown it, someone who has grieved the Spirit of God, someone for whom for a time it can be said the Spirit in regard to empowering has departed, that one can be brought back into the full fellowship of God's people again.

I love the way that Jesus does this with Peter. Jesus said to Peter, "Satan desires to sift you," and he's talking about all the apostles. He's looking at the apostles and he says primarily to Peter but he says, "Satan has asked permission and he wants to sift you like wheat." That is, he wants to throw you into the wind and scatter you and have you be no more. But Jesus says, "I prayed for you that your faith will not fail and even in your darkest times, that your faith won't fail. And, Peter, when you have returned and because you're mine you will return, when you return strengthen your brethren." I've wondered how Peter must have felt on that Sabbath day in which Jesus was in the grave. You know, the Scriptures speak of how he had gone out and wept bitterly and then in Mark 16 we read the record of the women going to the tomb and the tomb is empty and the risen Jesus appears and he says these words, "But go, tell his disciples and Peter, that he is going before you into Galilee and that you will see him as he said to you. Ladies, you go and tell the disciples, I'm alive and make sure you tell Peter because Peter especially needs to know that I'm alive. The last time I saw Peter, he was weeping bitterly but you let him know that I'm alive."

Even though he knew he was alive, I wonder and if he's someone like Pastor Donnelly could fill me in later on, Peter goes back to fishing even after the resurrection but I wonder if part of that is the thought that, "Yes, Jesus loves me and he's forgiven me but in light of what I've done, I can't ever be his apostle anymore." And on the beach around a fish breakfast, Peter's hair grew back. Samson dies looking like a Nazirite. He does not die as a bald man, as one that looks as though he'd been deserted by God and though for many people in their sin, the Bible tells us that they go their own way foolishly and God says, "I will laugh at you when your calamity comes." God doesn't laugh. God, once again, separates him and though he remained blinded and in chains until his dying day, yet he once again will be one clearly owned as of God. He will die in the fullness of his identity as one who is designated by God to fight against and to destroy the Philistines. When Samson was remembered, he was remembered as a long-haired man who killed many Philistines. That's the mercy of God.

Thirdly, in regard to answered prayer. He prays and I know there are elements of this prayer that are selfish. He uses the personal pronoun, I think, five times in his prayer and he references his eyes but he also calls upon the covenant of God. Again, we remember that the Spirit of God had left him. The power that he once knew was gone. The man who had been able to fight the Philistines hip and thigh and slay 1,000 with the jawbone of a donkey and carry city gates 40 miles away and who was able to break ropes as though they were yarn touched by fire is a shadow of his former self. Remember that he thought that he could do what he always done, he would just get up and do his old thing, but the Spirit of God had left him. The question, no doubt, in his blindness and in the darkness and in the midst of the taunting, "Would God ever return? Would God ever hear me again? The God who split open a rock for me so that I could have my thirst quenched? Will that God ever come to me again? Will that God ever empower me again? Will God ever allow me to do what he called me to do again?"

He may have thought, "Well, why should he? Why should God hear me?" And perhaps at times you may find yourself in the midst of your sin and it may not be as wild and as

gross but it's something that you told God you'd never do again, "Lord, I vowed I wouldn't do this but here I am. I've sinned again." You may be thinking, your conscience may be telling you and the devil will be telling you, "God won't hear you. Take your shaved head and go away." But he believes he can call upon God and he believes that the God of power will yet visit him. Why? How does he know that? Well, because the little bit of his Bible that was written at that time would let him know that the Lord God is merciful and gracious, that he is revealed in the Bible as one who is good and ready to forgive, who is abundant in mercy to all who call upon him. Because there is the realization that man cannot out-sin the mercy and grace of God, that God will hear the poor and the needy in their distress. The God whose Spirit departed from Samson when Samson was smug in his sin is the God who will drawn near to him in felt weakness. Again, this God is ready to do these things to all who call upon him. I don't know about you, but I need to remember this about God.

How often do you sin? Can you count that high? How many times have you sinned in the past week or in the past month or in the past year? We've probably found our sins fairly restrained this week. The world this week probably hasn't been too alluring but what about next Friday? What about the Friday after that? What about the Fridays in January and in February when the effects of this conference may be long gone for some? Do you realize as the Spirit of God convicts, you've not been what God has called you to be and you've broken a vow before the Lord? What do you need to know? You need to know that he's good and that he's ready to forgive and that he's abundant in mercy to all those who call upon him.

I preached last week or a couple of weeks ago to the folks back home from that text in Psalm 86:5 and I reminded them that God does not dispense his mercy with an eye-dropper. Getting mercy out of God is not like getting blood out of a turnip. It's not like finding water in the desert. It's like finding water at the ocean. It's like finding clouds in the sky. Finding mercy in God is like finding corn in Iowa. That's what it's like to find mercy in God because he's abundant in mercy and God says, "I'm ready to forgive. Samson, in all of your sin, I am ready to forgive you. You've grieved me, yes. I'm angry with you, yes. But I'm ready to forgive you."

And I need to know that and I need to be comforted at times by way of degree and I mean by that this: that if God is willing to hear a man who sinned so greatly and so grossly and who was so careless, will he not readily hear the one who desires to please him? I take great comfort in that portrait of God that's given in Isaiah and then repeated again in the book of Romans where God says, "All day long I held out my hands to a sinful and a rebellious people." If God will hold out his hands for people like that, will his hands not be open for me?

Again, the end of this man's life is tragic. It is sad to note as one commentator brought out that in one real way, he's more useful in fulfilling God's plan by dying than he was by living. May that not be said of us. May the purposes for which God revealed this man's life not be lost on this generation of believers. For those, again, who are in the vineyards, for those who may have desires to marry the Philistines, may the sight of a blinded man

with his head shaved, grinding at a wheel with the taunt of God's enemies in his ears, help to draw you back. For those who may be indifferent about our identity, who regard separation as legalism, may this call us to live all the more as Nazirites, that the world around us and that believers around us will say, "There is a people that take their Bible seriously." "Hey, you want to go and see this?" "Well, no, not that." "Why not?" "Because it's got this and this and this in it." "What's the problem with that?" "They break God's commandments." For some here this morning who may be contemplating a pathway of sin, may the pain of this man keep you back. But for anybody here that may have felt lashed to the wheel of the Philistines, may you find some hope and that God allows hair to grow back and may you be encouraged in the mercy of God. These things are written for our admonition upon whom the end of the ages have come and may God help us to learn.

Let's pray.

*Our Father, we do pray that the life of a man with so much potential that was frittered away may cause us by the Spirit to determine that we will not be like this man. Father, we thank you for warning us. We thank you, Father, for lions in our vineyards. We thank you for enemies at the gates of our sin. We thank you, Father, that you've been kind and merciful and gracious. Thank you, Father. We tremble almost to say it but thank you, Father, for blinded eyes. Thank you, Father, for hair that regrows. Thank you, Father, for power that can be given even at the end to destroy the enemy. Father, you are a God full of mercy, may we not trifle with that mercy but bask in the light of it. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*