

[Reading Judges 16:4-30]

We're going to be looking at, and talking about this morning, Samson with regards to **Strength is Weakness**, but before we go into the text and what's been read in Judges 16 just a moment ago, I feel that we need to go back in time and that we need to understand certain things and certain principles in the first instance. I just want to bring something to your attention: do you know that God doesn't change his mind? Do you know that? Ok, God doesn't change his mind. Whatever God has set in place, whatever God has determined, so shall it be. And I want you to do this small exercise for me: turn to the person either to your left or your right, and look into their eyes and tell them that God hasn't changed his mind concerning you... Ok.

Back, some thousand years ago, Jacob (whose name means "trickster" - Jacob was a con artist: we know that because of what he done with his brother Esau, who sold his birthright) and he fought with, and wrestled with, an angel and his name was changed - God changed his name: from here on in you will be called Israel. And this picture kind of like demonstrates Jacob on his deathbed, and before he dies, he pronounces his blessings and prophecies over his children. And speaking those things, as the Bible says, are not as though they are.

And if you've got your Bibles, can you turn with me to Genesis 49:16-18. If you've got it we're going to go to the word of God. Are we there? Ok. It says there, Genesis 49:16-18:

[Reads Genesis 49:16-18]

So, if you can, like, just visualise through that picture there that Jacob, who's Israel, sitting up in his strength as Israel speaking prophetically, speaking into the future, seeing what is taking place spiritually in the future, is speaking to Dan. And from what we see here in what Jacob has done, we too who have children, we too who have got grandchildren, we too should actually lay hands, we should like speak life and prophesy over our children. And being guided by the Holy Spirit to be able to speak life into our loved ones to the generations which are to come, to the generations that're going to go forward. And God always watches over his Word to perform it, and it can never return unto him void, but it must accomplish what it set out to do.

Therefore, I challenge you to think about and ponder over the words that you've had spoken concerning you, and concerning your life. People might have spoken prophetically into your life - things that might not have happened so far, things that might not have come to fruition as yet. But God has not changed his mind concerning you.

And even in the Scripture, in the early part of Judges - about chapter 13 - we see that the angel of the Lord appears to Samson's parents and prophesies that they're going to have a child. They're barren - she hasn't had any children - but the angel of the Lord tells her that she will have a child, and it will be a Nazarite, and goes through the vows that she needs to adhere to even whilst in the womb. And I believe that that angel that appears to Noah and his wife was the Lord Jesus himself simply because the name given of the angel was "Wonderful", and there's only one place in Scripture that I remember that the name "Wonderful" was being used was in Isaiah 9 with Jesus being given so many names and "Wonderful" is one of them,

But, taking into consideration what Jacob done, I'd just like to say to you (as a quick reminder) that God hasn't changed his mind concerning you, he hasn't changed his mind concerning your destiny,

he hasn't changed his mind concerning your purpose, nor has he changed his mind concerning your assignment – you could have been born at any time in any era, but you're here now, and God hasn't changed his mind about you.

And we also need to understand that names are very important, and the names we give our children are important: names speak of destiny, names speak of purpose; and we need to understand that when we're naming our children.

When we look at what Jacob blessed and prophesied over Dan as being one who would be a viper lying by the way, and sniping at the heels of horses so that the horse rider falls backwards – that is like, when you look at that imagery, saying “You're just my child” or “Just like me” because what Jacob was like as a trickster, those sort of cunningness of the viper is exactly what Dan was. And through the lineage we see Samson, and Samson himself was very much a trickster and he loved riddles. He loved it so much that he liked to mock the Philistines – tries to make them understand that they did not have the same intellectuality as he has.

Samson's name literally means “Sun”. It's probably difficult to actually read it, but the name means “Sun” and it comes from the Hebrew word שֶׁמֶשׁ (Shemesh) from where the name שִׁמְשׁוֹן (Shimshon) is derived. Therefore Samson bore the name called “a Sun and a Shield”. So we see Samson's name being a prophecy of who he is, who he's called to be, who he's meant to be. And in the same way as God protects Israel, Samson was a protector of Israel for his generation. And after Joshua's death there was this power vacuum, and there was no leader as such. But what happened is that we see, in the book of Judges, the people rose up to actually take that place, to take that position.

So I just want to, by the show of hands, ask a question: how many of you believe that Samson was strong? Just raise your hand if you believe Samson was strong. It's not a trick question. Ok. Great. He was strong – look at how many Philistines he slew with just the donkey's jaw bone. Look what he done we read in Judges 16 at the gates of Gaza. So he was strong.

So, next question: raise your hands if you believe Samson was weak. If you put your hands up for him being strong... Ok. Yes, he was weak.

He was both. But why?

He was weak because he was allowing the devil to use his number one weapon. Do you know what the devil's number one weapon is? Lies? Some says lies. Deceit. Ok, we'll get to that in a moment.

The ancient Chinese military strategist and philosopher Sun Tzu – some of you might have read the book, some of you might have known of the book – wrote the book “The Art of War”, and in one part of that book it says “To know thyself, and to know thy enemy.”

We need to know who we are, and whose we are. We need to know that we are a child of the King. We need to know what levels of authority we are in Christ. We need to know that we're seated together with him in heavenly places. We need to know that we've been bought with a price which is the precious blood of Jesus. These are the things that we need to know, and ought to know.

And also what we do need to know as well is: who we are fighting against, who we are up against. And, as somebody said before, the devil's number one weapon is deception.

Deception is the devil's number one, top trump, master card, key domino – whatever you want to

call it – it is his number one thing that he looks to use. He used it in the Garden of Eden by saying “Did God say...?” posing the question to question Adam and Eve's understanding of what God has said.

With that now, deception, as being the number one, the devil only has 3 WMDs, three Weapons of Mass Destruction, and he uses it to great effect. And the reason I call them WMDs is because the devil comes, and he comes to kill, he comes to steal, and he comes to destroy. And the thing is, whether you know it or not, whether you've felt it or not, the devil doesn't like you. The devil doesn't like you – in fact he hates you. Why? Because we're created and made in God's image. So every time he sees us, he sees God.

And what we need to do, and what we need to understand, is that what his now challenge is, is to stop you from doing what God has called you to do, is to stop you from reaching and living out your destiny and your purpose what God has said concerning you, because God hasn't changed his mind, because God doesn't lie, and what God has said is “Yeah and Amen.”

So, the weapons of mass destruction, we find that out in I John 2:16, and these are the three: The lust of the flesh, The lust of the eyes, and The pride of life.

I'll say it again: The lust of the flesh, The lust of the eyes, and The pride of life. And Samson fell for all three.

It's very easy for us, through the corridors of time, to point the finger at Samson, and compose like a highlight reel of his errors and his mistakes and his weaknesses. But how many of you would have been able to be like Samson, to live like Samson, to be a Nazarite from the womb, to actually grow and to live that Nazarite vow? I think it would be very difficult. But this was something Samson was doing, and had done from birth. And he maintained that covenant – it's no easy feat to do that.

I don't know about you but I struggle daily with my walk with God – it's not an easy thing, it's not always plain sailing. There's time to have real questions about what's going on in my life and the life of my family. And some of you might not have that testimony, some of you might be really great, some of you might even be like Jesus cousin twice removed (I don't know), but that is not my reality: my reality is that I need to repent, I need to seek God, and I need to ask God for his help.

I want to just go through a quick one-on-one study and look at the ways in which God used the life of Samson.

First off, he has a very short lived marriage to his first wife – and we see that in Judges 14:3-4. Samson's parents did not understand why he couldn't find a wife within the 12 tribes, why he could not find a good Hebrew girl. But he wanted to be with a Philistine woman. But even that was a route in, when we look at the prophecy of how Dan, and Samson coming through the lineage of Dan, was going to be used as that serpent by the path, by the way, clipping at the heels. God used that particular set up for Samson to gain access to the Philistines to then do warfare against them. And the thing with that also is that often times what seems as being the right way, or the way it should be, or the way things should happen, is not always God's way of doing things. And we need to be open to that, we need to be understanding of that, and we need to be able to discern what God is doing.

And when you look at that marriage, that marriage did not last long. Why? Because it wasn't God's intention for him to know that philistine woman as his wife, because in the Scripture we

know, in terms of, in Deuteronomy it speaks about what should happen in terms of marriages, in terms of how they should live, and God doesn't change his mind – that's why it was a thing whereby the marriage didn't last long. It was for him to have an inroad into the Philistines. And then when his wife and father-in-law was murdered, God used Samson again. I don't know how Samson done it to find 300 foxes and tie their tails together, and set those tails on fire. We've got foxes all around us – I wouldn't like to go and find a fox and get not even two of them to do that. I hate foxes: they keep me up at night – I don't know about yourself. But for Samson to do that.

And God used his anger, he used his hatred at what had happened in order to burn down the Philistine's crops. But it wasn't just burning down their crops that God was dealing with, he was dealing with the god of the age, he was dealing with Dagon. And when you look at Dagon, the Philistine god: Dagon is a god of crop fertility – that's who Dagon is, the god and idol of crop fertility. And also from Dagon, is believed by them, is that Baal was his son.

So you're dealing with demonic forces and idols that God wanted to destroy, that God wanted to put to shame and to naught. So, therefore, God used those foxes and burnt down all the crops, and all the olive groves – everything that was growing it was gone and burnt up. So in one attack, and how God used Samson, is that the fire took out everything and brought about economic collapse to them as well – this is the God that we serve.

And whilst we look at that, and when Samson was taken by the children of Israel to the Philistines when he went out into the cave after doing that in hiding, a bit like Elisha, is that Samson asks them: “Are you going to kill me?” They said “No, we're going to take you to the Philistines.” So when they went to the Philistines that's where he got the jaw bone of the donkey, and he slew about a thousand Philistines.

And then we see about the attack in Judges 16:1, where he took the gates from Gaza and carried them out. That's another attack against that god Dagon in as much as making that city vulnerable, making them see that their god Dagon cannot help them, cannot do anything for them. However, we reach the last point where Samson brought the house down. Where he brought down the house in Gaza where they took him back to.

So the thing with here, going back to WMDs, is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life – that is what caught Samson with Delilah. To look at she was beautiful. To his flesh, desiring. And the pride of life is like Samson might have thought that he looked handsome, he had all strength, he had the capability of not being stopped by anybody. His strength was always there because he had his hair. And he had his hair in seven locks. And, even with that we're taught everything in Scripture has meaning, and the seven locks, as Samson growing up being a Jew, would know that in numerology seven is the number of completion and is the number of perfection. So he knew that he was walking in a perfect way, having perfected strength: no one could stop him because of his Nazarite vow, and no one could stop him because he was super strong.

But one thing happened is that he got distracted. He got distracted thinking that he could do all things by himself in his own strength, in his own self righteousness, in his own self standing. But he knew that they that know their God will be strong and do great exploits. So even in his situation whereby he had his eyes gouged out, even he was taken into slavery and taken into prison, even though he was mocked, he knew who his God was.

And so should we: we should know that if we know our God then there's nothing that we cannot do. If we know our God, then we too can do great exploits. If we know our God, then what God

has placed inside of you has to manifest. If we know our God, then all the words spoken concerning you, concerning your life, concerning your destiny, concerning your purpose, concerning what you're here to do, concerning the imprint and marking that you need to make in this earth, in this lifetime before you meet your maker, you can do because you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you.

Now is not a time to play church. This is not a time or season to play church; this is a time to get on our knees and know who God is. Need to know who God is. Don't be distracted. That warning sign is a distraction 'cause it doesn't tell you anything. Let's not be distracted, let's not be taken off course of what God wants you to do. God has you here for a reason, for a purpose. When you're weak the Bible says, then I'll be made strong. So is Samson's strength a weakness? Some might think "Yes it is a weakness," but from opinion from what I've read, from what I've studied, from what I've learnt, is that Samson's strength wasn't his weakness because the Scripture, in Judges, tells us that the strength was a sign of his anointing, of God's anointing on his life. The weakness came when he didn't know, wasn't aware of, those weapons of mass destruction. We need to understand that we can go the same route as Samson. It's easy: we can be tempted, we could be tempted by our own flesh, our own desires. We too could go like Samson. As I say, you know, "There go I but for the Grace of God." And it's God's grace, and it's God's mercy. And even in the prison I believe that what happened it that Samson was like that Prodigal Son, is that he came to his senses. We've seen that the parable of the Prodigal Son is that son looked around at the mess he was in, and he said "No, I will go back to my father's house – even the servants are living better than what I am." And in that prison I believe Samson came to his senses, he became humble because without God he is nothing; even ourselves without God we are nothing – we are absolutely nothing. So, I just want today to leave you for you to be reflective on a few things:

- 1) Where has God brought you from?
- 2) How is God going to use you?

These are things you need to know. Samson knew who he was because he was a Nazarite from birth, it was prophesied about him. The angels spoke. He walked with God. He had that Nazarite vow. God showed up in his strength. He wasn't like the other Judges who needed the armies of Israel to fight, he'd done it all by himself. There's things that God wants you to do all by yourself, but not in your own strength. And that's where Samson fell: he believed, in the latter part, that it was all him. Hence he was rolled out in front of the lords of the Philistines as a prize: "Our god Dagon, our god is a superior god. Our god has brought Samson to his knees – we are now in charge of Samson. We can roll him out like he's at a circus, tease him, mock him." But as we know, God is not mocked. In that moment we see Samson and he's asked for a child to put him between the two pillars, and he prays a short prayer and asks God to give him the strength one more time. For some of you, you might need that strength one more time. Some of you are waiting for breakthroughs in your life but you need that "one more time", because that one more time you'll succeed and have that breakthrough. The way the pillars came down, Samson slew that day more Philistines than he had done at any other time. But it was in God's strength and not his. He didn't have much hair on his head. And it's amazing what God can do with the little.

With the little – you don't need much. Some of you just need to, like, turn around and look in your house, and look in your home, like that woman whom Elisha went to who only had that oil to make a cake for her and her son and die. But God blessed that. What have you got in your hand? Some of you might be like Moses and have a rod. Whatever you have, whatever God has put at your disposal, use it, and God will strengthen that, and God will use that. Even in your weakest of

states, God can do all things except fail. You are strong – you're not weak – because of he who lives in you, because of Jesus Christ the Son of God who lives in you, you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you. I don't know if you can read that, but some of you might be broken in spirit, might have gone through certain things in your life up until this point, up until this moment, but broken crayons still colour – never lose your ability to colour.

Never lose your ability to colour. Wherever you go you bring that light. Wherever you go you bring that colour. 'Cause God is light, and you are that light. And when light is put through a prism, that light is refracted and becomes the colours of the rainbow. You are the colours of God's rainbow. Never lose your ability to colour and to make an effect on those people around you, those people whom you come into contact with. Don't look at this being a platform whereby I'm here talking – wherever you are is your platform, wherever you go is your platform, and as long as you have got breath in your body, life in your body, open your mouth and God's Spirit will give you utterances to speak, to speak life, to speak to somebody who's in need of what you have, in need of what you're carrying. Don't despise the day of small beginnings, don't despise the little that you have, because with the little God can do much.

Lastly, I'll just leave you with these two statements:

“Strength doesn't come from the physical capacity, it comes from an indomitable will.” (And that's Gandhi that said that.)

“You never know how strong you are until being strong is your only choice.” (Bob Marley.)

So I just want to leave you with those two thoughts. Sometimes you're going to have to push through that barrier. And when we're talking about Samson's strength (and he had all strength), we need to understand also that he was weak, and understand how that weakness came about. And that weakness came about through those 3 WMDs, those three weapons of mass destruction, those three weapons that the devil always uses – and we find it in I John:

- 1) The lust of the flesh,
- 2) The lust of the eyes, and
- 3) the pride of the life

Just before I hand back over to pastor Steve, I would just like everybody to bow their heads and close their eyes, and I just want you to be in reflective mode. And I just want you to think about your life, and to think about being real with yourself, and being real with God, about where you are. And with your eyes closed, I just want to ask this question, and you can respond by raising your hands: if you're feeling weak in your body, weak in spirit, feeling that you can't go on, just raise your hands.

Also, if you're, or find yourself in a position, like Samson and you've gone your own way and you want to get back into God's way, doing things God's way, or you feel that you've backslidden, or you're not in a place where God want you to be, just raise you hand.

And lastly, if you're here this morning and you don't know the Lord Jesus as your personal and indwelling Saviour, just raise your hands.

I'm just going to pray.

Father, in the name of Jesus, for the hands that were raised Lord God, I just pray Lord Jesus that you will meet them at their point of need.

Dear heavenly Father, where they're weak Lord God make them strong, where they feel that

they're not at the place where you want them to be Lord God, lead and direct them where you want them to be; prove yourself strong in their life Lord God.

Dear heavenly Father I pray that they will know you was their God, that they will be strong and that they will do exploits, in Jesus name we pray, amen.

If you would like prayer, please email us using [prayer@woodsidechurch.org.uk](mailto:prayer@woodsidechurch.org.uk)