

LIFE LESSONS FROM FAMOUS FAILURES (Pt. 6)

“Samson – A Weak Strong Man” Judges 13-16

INTRO: Whales chasing minnows died on beach illustrates tragic waste of life in trivial pursuits. If ever this epitomizes a Bible character, it was Samson, Israel’s 12th and final judge. His story is one of the most familiar in all the Bible. He is best known for his hair, his strength, and his tryst with Delilah. MAP . . .

I. SAMSON’S LIMITLESS POTENTIAL (Ch. 13)

- A. *Born in Time of Decadence (13:1)* – Judges covers 350 yrs. after Joshua’s death. Called “the Dark Ages,” of Hebrew history (2:10, 23). Israel’s sins had left them in Philistine hands for 40 yrs. God sends a deliverer named Samson. He never delivered Israel because he never delivered himself.
- B. *Born To Be A Deliverer (13:2-5)* – Look at all his advantages:
 - 1. Miraculous conception (2-5a) – only 1 of 12
 - 2. Unusual Vow (5b) – Nazarite vow normally temporary, not lifelong (Num. 6). Vow denied him three things to totally serve God: avoid wines and vineyards (sensualism), avoid corpses, avoid a barber (sign of strength).
 - 3. Clear Mission (5c) – deliver Israel from bondage.
 - 4. Godly parents and home (8,12) – prayed, sacrificed, guided.
 - 5. Best Credential (24-25) – God’s Spirit was upon him. He was God’s man. He’d have qualified for “most likely to succeed” in Zorah High School. He had so much going for him, but he became a failure.

II. SAMSON’S CARELESS LIVING (Chs. 14-16) - YEARS LATER

- A. He *Defied Parental Authority* (14:1-3). In marrying a Philistine, he was disobeying God (Deut. 7:1-4). His parents tried to dissuade him but he defied their authority. Authority is one way God guides and protects us. Many been ruined by choosing wrong partner.
- B. He *Dishonored His Commitment* to God. One by one, he desecrated his Nazarite vows: vineyards and drank (14: 5,10); dead corpse (14:8-9; 15:15); and 20 years later, lost his hair (16:18-19).
- C. He *Displayed Unbridled Impulses*. He could not manage his anger (14:19; 15:1-8). He used it for revenge. He never controlled his passions. He was a lustful man (14:1-2; 16:1-3; 4ff). He was a he-man with a she-weakness, which has ruined many a man. Only saw the external. Lived sexually impure.
- D. He *Disregarded His Walk With God*. He never cultivated his r’ship with God. He only prays twice – both to meet personal needs (thirst – 15:18; revenge – 16:28).
- E. He *Died a Wasted Life* (16:21-30).

III. LIFE LESSONS FROM SAMSON’S STORY

- A. *Ability and opportunity do not guarantee success*. He had it all (birth, home, credentials, call, power, etc.). One of life’s supreme failures is to have so much and do so little with it – like chasing minnows. Potential and

opportunities can easily be forfeited by carelessness. They must be combined with obedient living.

- B. *Godly parents can have kids who fail*. They were good and godly folks. They wanted the best God had for their son. They tried to give him guidance. He had no care for his spiritual heritage. He thought he knew better than those in authority. Saw parents as “thing-getters.”
- C. *Don’t live to please self* (14:2-3 “for me”). He lived giving little thought to pleasing others, much less God.
- D. *Personal discipline is essential*. He lacked self-control. He was angry and lustful. He had no self-control over his impulses (Hillary . . .). He conquered everyone but himself (Prov. 5:23; 25:28). Uncontrolled sin always gets stronger. Years of discipline and faithfulness can be ruined quickly. Accountability is key. He was always alone.
- E. *It is dangerous to flirt with sin*. He never took sin seriously. He kept tempting himself. He played with fire (14:5, 8; 15:15; 16:1, 4, 7, 11, 13). He ignored all the warnings (14:5; 15:16; 16:9, 12, 14). He disregarded his vows. Even made a riddle of his experience with sin (14:14). It’s bad enough to disobey but when you joke about it, you reach new depth of spiritual demise. Before you do wrong, you’ll do almost wrong.
- F. *There is a price to pay for compromise*. The Law of Harvest is always true – you reap what you sow. He sowed disrespect, no discipline, immorality, anger, lust, etc., and lost everything: his strength, freedom, testimony, chance to serve and his life. He caused God to be dishonored and His people humiliated. Sin’s wages are steep. God did not chasten him until after he broke final vow, some 20 yrs. later. God gave him warnings that he refused to heed.
- G. *God still uses failures*. He was a miserable failure, but he did something about his condition (16:28-30). He confessed, sought restored fellowship and was willing to pay price. And, God used him again. He is included in heroes of the faith (Heb. 11:32-34). God’s grace is always greater than our failures. There’s no situation God can’t redeem. No one fails beyond God’s forgiveness. Samson shows us three things God will never do: let us *off* (we pay for unconfessed sin), let us *down* (we draw near, so does He), let us *go* (we may leave Him He’ll never leave us). You can get back to God. Only a prayer away.

CONC: Samson, like those whales, gave his life to trivial pursuits (sensuality, pleasing self, revenge, etc). Like those whales, he died. God took him off the scene. He is only remembered for what he destroyed. Ironically, his life more defined by his weaknesses than his strengths. The tragedy of a life that refuses to let God have His way. Any area in your life out of control? Deal with it. God can and will forgive. You are still usable. Let God have His way in your life today. Starts with, “Lord, please remember me.”