

FEASTING ON THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

Missing the Blessings of God's Faithfulness

Judges 13 - 16

INTRODUCTION: Great to see you. New ones too! Still wonderful to have those worshipping online with us.

Great to have the children. Don't worry about their distracting us. It is OK for kids to be kids. We all once were. I remember one day standing up in church with the congregation, and while everybody sang a hymn, I sang Davy Crocket, King of the Wild Frontier, at the top of my lungs until my mom heard me and told me to quit.

So anyway, parents when you are ready from a safety perspective, do not hesitate to bring the whole family.

As we have feasted on the faithfulness of God, we have been encouraged by many examples of people who were blessed by God's abundant faithfulness: Noah, Abraham, Esther, Gideon.

There has never been a person who has been let down by the faithfulness of God. God is always faithful.

However, my message to you today is a message of warning. For while God is always faithful, it is possible for a person to miss out on the blessings that come because of God's faithfulness.

Such was the case with a judge that followed some years after Gideon. After God delivered Israel from the oppression of the Midianites, Israel walked with God for a season. But then they began to sin again against the Lord, and the Lord allowed the Philistines to dominate His wayward people.

When the people turned in repentance to God, God was faithful to hear their prayer and to provide a deliverer in the person of a new judge, who was being sent to free Israel from the oppression of the Philistines. This new judge came

1. As a miracle baby.
2. Set apart as a Nazarite, a man especially dedicated to God, while he was still in the womb.

3. While still a teenager, the Spirit of God entered him.
4. God gave him supernatural physical strength so that he killed a lion with his bare hands.

By now many of you know that I am talking about Samson, whose story is told in Judges 13 to 16. The Lord Himself came in person to announce Samson's birth.

Judges 13:3–5 NKJV 3 And the Angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, "Indeed now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son.

4 Now therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or similar drink, and not to eat anything unclean.

5 For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines."

5. All of this so that Samson could deliver God's people from the oppressing Philistines.

Seldom has a man had such a noble beginning. But Samson did not have a noble ending, nor even a noble life.

- a. He was an embarrassment to his parents.
- b. He was an unwise judge.
- c. His actions caused the name of the Lord to be mocked and reviled.
- d. The Spirit of God became so grieved with Samson that He departed from him.
- e. He gave away his greatest gift while in the arms of a prostitute.
- f. Samson utterly failed to do the one thing for which he had been born; and Israel remained under the cruel, oppressive hand of the Philistines.

God was faithful when He sent and called Samson.

God remained faithful throughout Samson's life.

Yet Samson failed to enjoy the blessings of God's faithfulness.

We ought to pause here and ask why?

Why did a man with so much come to so little?

Why did a man so anointed by God count so little for God?

Why did a man whose life was intended to be for God so often come down on the side against God?

Why?

The Scripture shows us. We shall see in a moment.

But before we see why Samson missed out on the blessings of God's faithfulness, let us be fully aware of the application of this truth to our lives at this very moment.

We remain under the oppression of this Coronavirus.

- We may feel like it has slackened its grip.
- We are only one resurgence away of COVID-19 moving back across our nation from being right back where we have been or worse.
- Not only is it still possible that we as citizens of the US could miss out on the blessings of God's deliverance,
- It is possible that individuals could miss out on the blessings that God is sending and which others are indeed receiving.

The things that caused Samson to miss out on the blessings that God's faithfulness was offering, are things many are still doing today. And that is why we should be warned by the life of Samson.

What caused Samson to miss out on the blessings God desired for him?

LIVING FOR THE PURSUIT OF PERSONAL PLEASURE

- With Women

- Samson lived for his own pleasure rather than for God's purpose.

Judges 14:1–3 NKJV

1 Now Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines.

2 So he went up and told his father and mother, saying, "I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife."

3 Then his father and mother said to him, "Is there no woman among the daughters of your brethren, or among all my people, that you must go and get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?" And Samson said to his father, "Get her for me, for she pleases me well."

- The first thing we read of Samson after he is grown is that he is chasing after a cute Philistine skirt.
- No matter that this was forbidden to any Israelite, much less a Nazirite, much less the judge of Israel.
- No matter that his parents objected and pleaded.
- Samson cared nothing about what mom and dad thought, what his countrymen thought, what God thought.
- He went after a Philistine woman to make her his wife because as Samson said, "She pleases me well."

The driving force of his life was lust.

- I think Samson never saw a Philistine woman he did not like.
- The first one he chased after and married briefly, brought devastation on everything within a hundred miles of that relationship.
- The second woman he did not even marry, but went to her as a harlot.
- The third, Delilah, brought Samson to the point of abandoning every semblance of commitment to the One True God.

Samson's pursuit of pleasure showed in other areas as well.

Showed in all he did - lion and honey. He did not care for maintaining the Nazirite vow not to touch anything dead. He just wanted the honey. Samson always did exactly as he pleased.

If this is the way you make decisions:

- **what do I like best,**
- **what do I want,**
- **what pleases me,**
- **look out!**

As long as you decide things on the basis of what brings you pleasure, you will never enjoy the blessings of God's faithfulness in your life. It is not that God will not be faithful, but you will not enjoy the blessings of His faithfulness.

The shelter in place orders across our nation and the increased unemployment has given a lot of Americans a ton of extra free time.

- What have you done with it?
- Read your bible more, prayed more? Found a way to serve the Lord in a way you never had time to do?
- Or have you used it to entertain and please yourself?

Another thing that caused Samson to miss the blessings of God's faithfulness was his

FAILING TO FORGIVE

Tell the story of Samson from Judges 14:3 – 15:17.

Slaying of the lion on the way to arrange to marry the Philistine woman and later on the way to the wedding feast he ate the honey.

To 30 male friends of the bride - Riddle: "Out of the eater came something to eat; out of the strong came something sweet."

Betrayal – murdered 30 men – abandonment by Samson

Returned – she was married to another – 300 foxes – death of wife and father-in-law

Revenge – great slaughter

Surrender – slew 1,000 with jawbone of donkey

Samson's motto was "Vengeance is mine." – not the Lord's!

- a. When he lost a bet, he killed 30 men to repay what he owed.
- b. When the Philistines struck back, he used 300 foxes to torch their fields.
- c. When they retaliated in turn, Samson slew over a thousand men in his anger and vengeance, not for the Lord, not to free Israel, but in an effort to get even.

Do you know why Samson was so vengeful? Because Samson was filled with unforgiveness.

- He would not forgive his first wife who told the secret of his little riddle to her friends.
- All along the way, Samson could have ended the cascade of violence with a single act of forgiveness.
- But Samson was determined to get even rather than forgive.

Jesus told a very important story about forgiveness in Mt. 18:21-35.

Unforgiveness puts us in the prison house and releases the torturers in our life.

- hardships
- stress
- depression
- anxiety
- pressures

Unforgiveness absolutely blocks spiritual growth and blocks us from receiving the blessings of God's faithfulness.

- Think of someone you know who is bitter, vengeful, harbors grudges all the time.
- Are they often talking about how the Lord has blessed them?
- Are they a blessing to others?
- Do they offer testimony about the faithfulness of God?
- Absolutely not!

Samson would not repent of his unforgiveness, and it kept him from knowing the blessings that would have come to him through the faithfulness of God.

Unforgiveness will utterly block our receptivity to the blessings God would send to us.

One more thing Samson demonstrates that blocks the blessings of faithfulness.

PERPETUAL PROCRASTINATION

Samson - speculation on my part -

- I don't think Samson intended for his whole life to be a testimony of philandering and bitterness. I think he planned to change... one day.
- In fact, **I think Samson did change.** Tell story of Delilah, blinding and death.
- **But he changed too late.**
 - **Too late to accomplish God's purpose in his life.**
 - **Too late to change his reputation and testimony.**
 - **Too late to change his legacy.**
 - **Too late to save his family and his country.**
 - **Too late to save his own life.**

I am now thinking of all of us worshipping here and online at home.

- There are hard hearts in the world who don't want to change. They are not procrastinating, they are obstinate.
- That's not who is worshipping here or at home. The obstinate don't care much for worship or church.
- But there are many in church who plan to change one day, but the day does not come until it is too late.
 - Too late to save marriage.
 - Too late to save family.
 - Too late to salvage testimony.
 - Too late to be useful in the Kingdom.
 - Too late to enjoy the blessings our Faithful God would have sent to someone willing to walk in obedience with Him.

CONCLUSION – Folks, even in the midst of this pandemic, God has been and is faithful. If we will do what the Bible and the old hymn both say, “Trust and obey,” then we will experience the blessings of His faithfulness.

But God can overflow with faithfulness, and we can miss the blessings, just like Samson did.

- If we focus on what we want for our own personal pleasure and gratification.
- If we refuse to forgive those who offend and sin against us.
- If we procrastinate in our obedience to the Lord.