

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas
July 15, 2018

Samson — Man of Faith
Judges 16:23-31

16:23 Now the lords of the Philistines gathered to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to rejoice, and they said, "Our god has given Samson our enemy into our hand."

16:24 And when the people saw him, they praised their god. For they said, "Our god has given our enemy into our hand, the ravager of our country, who has killed many of us."

16:25 And when their hearts were merry, they said, "Call Samson, that he may entertain us." So they called Samson out of the prison, and he entertained them. They made him stand between the pillars.

16:26 And Samson said to the young man who held him by the hand, "Let me feel the pillars on which the house rests, that I may lean against them."

16:27 Now the house was full of men and women. All the lords of the Philistines were there, and on the roof there were about 3,000 men and women, who looked on while Samson entertained.

16:28 Then Samson called to the LORD and said, "O Lord GOD, please remember me and please strengthen me only this once, O God, that I may be avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes."

16:29 And Samson grasped the two middle pillars on which the house rested, and he leaned his weight against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other.

16:30 And Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines." Then he bowed with all his strength, and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he had killed during his life.

16:31 Then his brothers and all his family came down and took him and brought him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the

tomb of Manoah his father. He had judged Israel twenty years.

We learned that God became the Father of the believers, and He disciplines His children with love. Today's verses show the purpose of His discipline. What is it? It's that we may share His holiness as the second half of verse 10 says, "He disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness." Then, what is the "holiness?" How can we share His holiness? And what kind of blessings can we receive when we share His holiness? Today, let us learn these three things, in its order.

1. Time of Judges

I told you about Gideon last week. I will talk about Samson today. Both of them are called the judge. The time of Judge was from the death of Joshua until the first king Saul in Israel. This is the rough timeline of the Old Testament, but you can learn it in this way.

- 2000 B.C. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Genesis)
- 1720 B.C. Israel migrated to Egypt (400 years)
- 1280 B.C. Exiled from Egypt (Exodus)
Journey of wilderness (40 years, Numbers)
- 1240 B.C. Entering the land of Canaan (Joshua)
Time of Judges (Judges, Ruth)
- 1050 B.C. Saul and David (Samuel)
Solomon (Kings, Chronicles)
- 930 B.C. Kingdom divided
- 722 B.C. Northern kingdom (Israel) destroyed
- 586 B.C. Southern kingdom (Judea) destroyed
and Babylon Captivity
- 538 B.C. Return from Captivity (Ezra)

515 B.C. Rebuilding the temple

The time of judges was chaotic because the leaders such as Moses and Joshua passed away and there were yet no king. There were repeating phrases in chapters 17 to 21 such as " In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes." If there is no foundational guidance or principle that governs society in any age, each one argues that "I am right" by becoming self-righteous and self-centered. It brings chaos to the society.

So, was there anything to lead the Israel during the time of the Judges? No, there was Law and the temple of the LORD. There was also a priest in each tribe of Israel, and the priest was teaching the word of God. Even though Israel had no king like any other countries, God himself was the King and the society would have been preserved by the Word. People served the Lord during the time of Joshua, the time of the elders who survived after Joshua and saw all the great work that the Lord had done for Israel (Judges 2:7 And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work that the LORD had done for Israel.). But there were generations who did not know who the Lord is and what the Lord had done for Israel. These people served the gods of the surrounding countries, "Baal" and "Asheroth", and "Ashtaroth." (Judges 2:10 -11) And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel.). It brought chaos to the society.

The social order and morality are built upon our faith in God. So, when our faith corroded, our society is corrupted and our country

slowly deceases. The Judges teaches us the very important lessons to hand over our faith in God from generation to generation firmly.

In the time of judges, those who abandoned the true God and worshiped idols, began to suffer from the surrounding countries. That suffering was, so to speak, their own fault, but God saw the sufferings of people and gave them His mercy. Salvation is not given because we have the right to wish for it or because we diligently asked for it. Salvation comes from God's mercy. It comes from the love of God who suffers with those who suffer. God's mercy is the source of salvation. By the mercy, God set up the Judges to save Israel.

In the chapter 3, there were Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar. In Chapters 4-5, there was Barak. In Chapters 6-8, there was Gideon. In Chapter 10, there were Tola and Jair. In chapters 11-12, there were Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon. And in Chapter 13-16 there was Samson. Samson was the twelfth, the last judge.

2. Samson's Success and Failure.

Samson 's life is entirely different from other judges, and his birth is informed by angels beforehand. When an angel appeared to Manoah and his wife, told them the child born would be a "Nazirite." (Judges 13:2-7) That is similar to the angel announced that the birth of John the Baptist. Both Samson and John the Baptist being away from the world such as "wine and strong liquor" since before their birth, and they were under the special power of the Holy Spirit.

The first showed Samson's power was at his wedding. Samson killed 30 people in the towns of the Philistines and took away expensive clothes for his wedding. Since he did so, Samson's wife left

him and became another man's wife. Samson made an excuse it, burned the Philistine's wheat fields and olive groves. At the time, the Philistines dominated Israel, and they were attacking the Israeli town, killing people and looting. Further more, the Philistines were stealing up wheat and olives when the harvest season came. What Samson did was a violent way, but it was revenge to Philistines did.

In this situation, when the Philistines came to catch Samson, the Israelites did not protect Samson, but bound Samson with ropes and took him to the Philistines. Israelites did not even feel like stand up to the Philistines, thinking what Samson did was "annoying". However, when the Spirit of the Lord came to Samson, the ropes that had tied Samson became loose and down "like fire burned flax" (15: 14). At that time, Samson killed one thousand Philistines. Since then, the Philistines were afraid of Samson and no longer suffering Israel. People in Israel also recognize Samson as their judge.

But the Philistines are not withdrawing as it is. They explored the secret of the power of Samson by a woman. The mystery of the strength of Samson was in his hair, which did not razor since his birth. It was a sign as "Nazirite." Because Samson confided, his hair (God's hair) was shaved off while sleeping. When Samson heard the voice that "the Philistines are approaching you," he wakes up and tries to put forth full power, but the power was totally lost. The Philistine caught Samson easily, scratch his both eyes out and let him work as grind on burrstone mill inside the jail.

Samson was chosen by God before birth and was given extraordinary powers. In that respect, Samson was like John the Baptist. But Samson was not faithful to his mission like John the

Baptist. Samson lived a morally problematic life and brought about his destruction for women. Samson had the power from God, but he did not have the right relationship with God. Samson misunderstood the power from God as his power, and he did give the hair, the “mark of choice” of God, to the secular hands. “He did not know that the Lord had left him” at 16:20. The Bible does not say that the power of Samson has left him. It said that the Lord who gives that power left him. Even if you seek strength, but you do not pray to God about it, thereof, will lose their power.

This world is the world of “Doing,” but the Kingdom of God is the world of “Being.” In the world, “what can be done” is judged, but in the Kingdom of God “How do you become in front of God” is questioned. You live only in the world of “Doing,” and you are indifferent to the world of “Being,” then even you work hard, no matter how busy on activity will not be a blessing. If you lose “Holiness,” then the gift given will not take advantage of yourself nor other people. We would like to learn what to learn from Samson's failure.

3. Samson’s Faith

Now, we know what Samson had been done. His life ended almost in failure. However, Samson was recognized as one of the “Faithful Figures” in addition to “Gideon, Barak, and Jephta.” (Hebrews 11:32) How can we find the example which we can learn and follow in the faith of Samson? It can be found in very last of his life.

The rulers of Philistines caught Samson, and the Philistines praised their God Dagon. Several thousands people came to one place. The

Philistines brought Samson to the place to show him. I am assuming that people were looking down and laughing at Samson who did not have eyes. However, he prayed God. In Judges 16:28, “Then Samson called to the LORD and said, “O Lord GOD, please remember me and please strengthen me only this once, O God, that I may be avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes.”” After his prayer, he found two pillars to support the place and pushed them with his hands. Since the pillars were removed, the roof fell down to the people underneath, and many Philistines died. God answered the prayer of Samson and showed the Philistines that he is true God.

Why did Samson display his huge power right before his death? In Judges 16:22, “But the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaved.” I think this is why. I do not say that his hair itself had the power. No matter how many times the hair is shaved, the hair is growing again as long as the hair root is alive. The faith in God is the same. You might have done the sinful action or failure and lost your faith; however, if you repent your sin, the faith in God will be growing again. While his new hair is growing, he remembered God and was led to the repent. Samson used to believe in himself and think that his power belong to him. He might said, “I can do it” and displayed his power. However, he was power-less after losing his hair; therefore, he asked God for the power. He repented, admitted that he was power-less, and rely on God. This is Samson’s faith.

Psalm 62:11 says, “Once God has spoken; twice have I heard this: that power belongs to God,” You can start over your life if you know this truth. Samson realized this at the end of his life and returned to God. Fortunately, we are heard about the repentance in the middle of

our life and invited to the faith. We shall answer the invitation of the repentance and faith in order not to regret our life.

(Prayer)

Dear Father God, the secret of Samson's power was your election and consecration. Please help us remember your election, which we have received from you, help us live godly even in this ungodly world. "Power belongs to God." Please let us stand on this faith in any situations. In the name of Lord Jesus, Amen.