Study of Samson - Part 6

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[0:00] The Lord's blessing will turn to the first portion of scripture we read, the book of the Judges, and chapter 16.

And at verse 22, Judges 16 at verse 22, how be it the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven.
Now last week we looked at Samson's fall into a path of sin, and we saw the chastisement which God took upon him, which we have recorded in verse 21 when the Philistines took him, gouged out his eyes, and bound him with bronze chains.
And he was grinding corn in the loneliness of the prison house. And tonight I want to look with you at the way in which God restores Samson, and to look also at Samson's final triumph when he slays more Philistines with his death than he ever did in his life.
Now we all know that Samson had unusual strength, and that this strength didn't come at all from himself, it came from God. It was a gift of God.
[1:49] And it was given by God to him to equip him to be a deliverer for Israel. And the symbol of God's strength in Samson was his long flowing hair.

The length of the hair spoke of the fact that he was under authority in a special way to God. And we saw how that can be proven from the scriptures.
And again his hair was arranged in seven distinct locks, which reminds us that the power that came from to him was from the Holy Spirit of God, the sevenfold Holy Spirit.
Samson was under his authority, and it was his power or strength that enabled Samson to do what he did. So when Samson began to disobey, and when he became self-reliant, and when he became proud of his own gifts, and proud of his own strength, God took his strength from him.
And at the same time his hair was cut off. And God caused these two events to happen at precisely the same time, the withdrawing of the strength and the cutting of the hair, so that it would be a vivid reminder to Samson that his weakness lay in his lack of holiness and his lack of consecration to God.
[3:16] As long as he was subject to God, he was strong. But when he began in a path of disobedience, then he became weak.

In other words, it was not the cutting of his hair that weakened Samson at all. It was the lack of holiness. Not the lack of hair, but the lack of holiness.
And the cutting of the hair was just a mark of that. And in the same way, when it's written here that the hair of his head began to grow again, we're not just told a mundane fact that once a person's hair is cut off, it begins to grow again.
What we're actually told is a spiritual truth. That after Samson was shaven, after he was put to shame, and after he was brought low, then his strength began to return to him.
And the growth of his hair meant that Samson was returning in his soul back to his God and to the God of his fathers. He was turning back in repentance to the God who had wounded him, so that the God who had smitten him might now heal him.
[4:25] Now we touched a little, I suppose, on his repentance last week, but I want to notice two things about it tonight. I think it is right to say that there were two things in Samson's condition that God used to speak to him.

And when God chastises us, he doesn't chastise us indiscriminately. He chooses the chastisement to teach us our sin.
And the very way in which God deals with us brings to light where exactly we have gone. And you can usually, it's dangerous for one person to trace it in another, but you can usually trace it yourself.

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A chastisement from God bringing to light something that you have done wrong. Let's take first the blindness which he had in the prison cell.
His eyes were gouged out. Some people say that that was usually done in the ancient world at the point of a dagger. A dagger inserted and extracted with the eye on the end of it.
[5:29] However it was done, Samson was left without eyes. And the darkness of that prison cell became to him a gradual reminder or a symbol, I should say, of the blindness that had come into his soul.

For some reason Samson had declined and he had fallen away and he had become blind to the requirement of God. He became blind to the fact that we have nothing from God unless we walk in a path of obedience.
That we cannot rely on his gifts unless we walk in a way of covenant holiness. Samson forgot that. He came to rely on his strength as though his strength would be given him come what may, irrespective of how he walked.
But his blindness taught him that he had lost sight of God and he had become spiritually blind. And then again there was the grinding in the prison house.
Now that grinding meant that he was making corn for the Philistines. He was helping their harvest and helping their economy. And I believe that that became a symbol to him also.
[6:44] That what he had been doing over the past year, nearly the 50th year of his life, he had been doing the devil's work. Rather than furthering the kingdom and cause of God, which is what he had done for over 40 years, he had suddenly begun to do the work of the adversary.

And he was giving occasion for the enemies of God to blaspheme. And that day he went to Gaza and he saw a harlot and went in there.
That day he dragged down the cause of the God whom he served and he did it openly. And for that year in his life, instead of burning the harvest of the enemy as the triumphant Messiah of God, he was instead grinding out corn spiritually for the Philistines.
And I have no doubt that this endless grinding of corn, night and day, spoke to him in that way, what have I done and what have I been doing? It is as though I have spent my strength on the wrong side and furthered the devil's kingdom rather than furthering my Lord's.
And my friends, if this chastisement seems hard to us, and it is a hard chastisement, it is a hard chastisement because the sin was an open sin.
[8:05] And whom God loves, he chastises. I tell you, it would have been far more worrying if you had read Samson's history in chapter 16 with Delilah and with the harlot.

And if you didn't read of a chastisement, that would be much more worrying because whom the Lord loves, he chastises. And the Lord chastised him sore because he had sinned sore.
Flagrantly, he had sinned. Flagrantly, he is chastised. And notice, by the way, that he is chastised in Gaza. What's the significance of that? Well, I think the significance is this, that that's where it began in the first place.
You read of his declension at the beginning of chapter 16 when he went down to Gaza and there he saw the harlot. So God, as it were, is making a public proclamation to the Philistines and to Samson.
This is where you took a wrong step. And this, no, is where you will be chastised. So the place, the grinding, and the blindness were all used by God to bring him to repentance.
[9:16] And my friends, as Samson is in the prison cell, he's got no eyes. But I tell you, he regains his vision. Eyes or no eyes. For the first time in a year, he's looking at God as he has not looked at him for some time.

When everything else is dark, suddenly he begins to see the Lord and he calls upon his name. And he repents. And by that I mean that he puts the service of God back into the first place in his life. And he gives and consecrates himself and whatever God gives him to the service of God, be it his strength, his energy, his time or whatever, God is now back on the throne of his own heart.
And God has taken this branch that has become clogged up and God has cut it. And the sap is now flowing back into it. And again, Samson is bringing forth fruit.
And he again becomes a prayerful and obedient man. Now, whom the Lord loves, he chastises. Yet I'll not take my love from him, nor false my promise made.
[10:31] He may have to bear affliction because he's been a fool. But God will never reject his own. And God hears his mourning cry and he hears his prayer and his petition.

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And God is now going to free him. And he's going to bring him back to strength. And he's going to cause him to triumph. And in many respects, even though he's without his eyes, and even though he stands in the brunt of shame, Samson, in many respects, has his finest hour right at the end of his own life.
God waits for the occasion. And the occasion comes about in verse 38, where we read this. Verse 20, where we read that there was a great national gathering.
In verse 23, the lords of the Philistines gathered them together to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god and to rejoice. For they said, our god has delivered Samson, our enemy, into our hand.
Now this feast took some time to be organized. You can even tell that from the fact that Samson's hair had grown. It was a national feast and a national celebration.
[11:53] It was held at Gaza, the southernmost of the five leading Philistine cities. And all the lords of the Philistines were there. That means that the five rulers of the five great cities were present in Gaza.

And the feast took place in the temple known as the Temple of Dagon. And there they gathered together to celebrate, because they said, Our god has delivered Samson, our enemy, into our hand.
Now at this feast there were two things that were and still are a great offense to the Almighty. And the first is idolatry.
Idolatry. Thou shalt have no other gods before me or before my face. No other gods before my face. But look at verse 23. Gathered them together to offer a sacrifice unto Dagon.
Now this was a worship service. It was a thanksgiving service. To commemorate a great national deliverance. Now we've always done that.
[13:02] And every branch of the Christian church has always done it. When God has spoken to us in a particular way. Then there is a service held to commemorate. Sometimes a service to fast that God would deliver us.

Or sometimes a service of thanksgiving because God has delivered us. For example, after the last great war. All the churches proclaimed a service of thanksgiving for God's deliverance.
Here you have a thanksgiving service organized by the Philistines. But who is being worshipped? Well, we're told that it is Dagon, their god.
A great sacrifice unto Dagon, their god. Now interestingly, Dagon was the god of the grain. The god of grain or the god of the harvest.
And of course, that represented the power of reproduction and fertility. And in all these false religions, this tends to come to the fore.
[14:04] The idea of reproduction and fertility. And that, of course, allowed the excuse for immorality to enter into these feasts and festivals. And it's a common symptom of Canaanite and Babylonian religion that there is gross fleshly immorality connected with it.

And their gods usually represent reproduction and fertility. Now Dagon is the god of the grain and the god of the harvest. And you see this picture of Samson.
And I don't think I've ever mentioned that his name means the sun. Samson, the sun. S-U-N, not S-O-N. But Samson, the shining sun of God's deliverance, is here in a dark prison cell, grinding out grain to Dagon, as it were, in the eyes of the Philistines.
What they are saying essentially is this, that our god has triumphed. And their redeemer and their deliverer is doing service to our god.
Our god has delivered Samson, our enemy, into our hand. And my friends, that is an offence to the Lord. And John Milton wrote a very famous poem in connection with Samson.
[15:18] It's one of his great epics. And he writes this line in it, that from this point onwards, the contest, he says, is betwixt God and Dagon. And that's an interesting observation.

And Milton has said something in the head there. And it's this, that God's honour is now at stake. The way in which Samson is dealt with has put God's name at stake and God's honour at stake. He must arise and vindicate his own name and his own cause. He must show himself to be greater than the gods of this world. And therefore he must intervene and intervene he will.
Because idolatry is loathsome to God. There's another thing too, as well as idolatry here. And I want to look at it perhaps a little more. And that is blasphemy or sacrilege.
What that means is making the holy common. Ah, what a fearful thing that is. Making the holy common.

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[16:18] When you bring down God and what belongs to him. Just to the level of an ordinary thing. Or to the level of the world. Sacrilege.

Blasphemy. But where does that appear here? Well, it appears in verse 25. There are men and women who are able to look down at the spectacle that is unfolding before them.
It is that large a temple. It is that great a gathering of people. And where is the blasphemy? Well, we're told that when their hearts were merry. In other words, when they had begun to drink.
So that they had become drunk. And when their hearts were charged with the power of the drink. Then they said, call for Samson. Why? That he may make us sport.
Now, Samson was in a prison house. And that was pretty near connected to the temple. It was a matter of sending someone. And here we're told that it was a boy they sent.
[17:25] To bring Samson out of the prison house. And Samson is led blind by the hands of this young boy into this vast temple.

Filled with men and women who are already drunk. Drunk on their own pleasures. As certainly as they're drunk with the wine. And there is the statue of Dagon. The god of fertility.
And the god of reproduction. And the god of immorality. And there's a stage set there. Call for Samson. They say that he might make us sport. You know, the phrase really means to make him dance with music.
And that brings before us exactly what they did. They made a mockery of Samson. They made a fool of him. They made a fool of the strong man. In other words, they synchronized the lashings of their own whips.
With the crashing of cymbals. So that just at certain points in the music and in the festivity. Samson would have to jump. And he would jump in pain. And everyone would fall around laughing at the mighty man of God.
[18:32] Who has made the butt of their jokes on the stage in the middle of the temple. That, my friend, is what I mean by blasphemy. Just like the old Victorian sideshows.

You've all heard of the elephant man. He was one of those who were in these sideshows. They were specimens of humanity. Born deformed. Poor creatures that people would take around in sideshows.
And you would pay to see them and pay to laugh at them. Well, that was what Samson was. And that's what he became to the Philistines. They degraded him. And they brought him low. Now, let me say, as I've said before.
And I have to say it again. Never sit in the scorner's chair. Never sit in the chair of the blasphemer. If you must, then sit in the chair of those who don't attend God's house.
But never, ever, ever sit in the chair of the blasphemer. And of those who mock the name of God. And who bring it to nothing. Are you in that chair tonight yourself?
[19:31] Do you laugh at the church? Do you laugh at the troubles of the church? Do you laugh at the ministers of the church? Do you laugh at the elders? Do you find it funny?

God does not find the mockery of the Philistines amusing. Even if Samson has made a fool of himself, God will not allow the Philistines to make a fool of him.
And God will come down. And God will deliver him. My friends, we would all do well to remember Babylon. To remember Babylon. There was a night in Babylon when Belshazzar was carousing and he was feasting.
And he made this massive festival. A great feast. Full of the finest food. And the wine and the strong drink flowing so freely. It didn't matter to Belshazzar that the Persians at that very moment were encircling the city.
Belshazzar thought that the walls of Babylon were impregnable. And they pretty near were impregnable. But not impregnable to God. He had a feast that night. And that feast got way out of hand.
[20:38] Out of control like most of your parties and meetings do. Get out of control. And it's at that moment that Belshazzar said, Go, he says, and bring in here the vessels of the temple.

And those were the vessels of God's temple in Jerusalem that they had transported out of Babylon. Now the people of Jerusalem had abused these vessels.
They had not respected what God gave them. But God still valued these vessels. They were holy vessels to himself. And the minute these vessels were brought in and they began to use them to drink from them.

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The golden candelabra. All the vessels that the priests used. They began to abuse them. At that moment God says it is enough. And you'll remember that against the light cast by the shadow of the candelabra there.
The hand appeared with the finger. Writing on the wall. Many, many. Tekel, you farsin. Finished. Finished. Finished. God has numbered your kingdom.
[21:37] You have been weighed in the balances. And you have been found wanting. And very often when a person is about to be snatched or cut down by God. Sometimes you find them given over to a blasphemy.

And how often that is connected to strong drink. How often it is connected to strong drink. Look not on wine in the cup when it is red.
Don't look at wine in the cup when it is red. What that means is this. You remember when Esau was weak. He came home tired.
And he saw the food that Jacob had prepared. It was a stew. A red stew. And what Esau said was, give me some of that red. He says, that red.
Why did he call it that? Just because of the sheer desire that he had for it. It was so red. So alluring. And so powerful. Never look at wine when it is like that.
[22:36] Wine is not forbidden in God's word. But when it is red, leave it alone. Because it leads you to do things you might not otherwise have done. And God holds you culpable and responsible for them.

There is no but. This was what made me do it. There is none of that. God holds us culpable and responsible. And may God not say to yourself tonight.
Many, many tackle you farson. You are finished. You are finished. You have been weighed in the balances. And you have been found wanting. So here you have two things.
That are inviting God to intervene. In idolatry with immorality mixed with it. And along with it there is the blasphemy against what is holy.
No, God is not asleep. He is going to arise. What of Samson? Well, it is his hour of shame. He is the butt of jokes. The lash falls on his back.
[23:34] And he has to jump, as it were, to the sound of cymbals. And he cannot see where he is going. And he cannot see what he is doing. It is the hour of his shame. But is he ashamed for himself? I believe, friends, that he is not.

That he is not shamed for himself at all. What he is shamed for is this. That he has brought God's cause so low. And that is a mark of any man's repentance. That is a mark of a spiritual man.
When what worries him is not the shame that he brings to himself. That is as nothing. It is the shame that he has brought on the cause of God. Because he has made people say, Samson, where is now your God?
Where is your God? Here you are, leaping around like a fool to our tune. Grinding in our prison cells. And Samson knows that he has brought God's cause into disrepute.
Now, my friends, who knows what lies ahead of me and what lies ahead of you. But I know that if you are God's child tonight, you will be anxious.
[24:38] That you will never bring shame, open shame upon God's cause. And if you feel that, that is a mark of a true child of God. But I will tell you this.

He may be in shame. But Samson, and here is the strange thing. Samson is in a better spiritual condition here. Than he was when he was going out of Gaza with its gates on his back.
In a better spiritual condition. And that is a remarkable thing. If you had been a witness at Gaza. Seeing this man take the gates, posts, bar and all. Off its hinges and up on top of the hill. You would have said, well there is a man close to the Lord.
Wrong. And if you had looked at this man. Dancing around to the tune with no eyes. You would have said, here is a man a million miles away from God. Again, you are wrong. Samson's spiritual condition was better here than it was at Gaza.
Oh, how prone we are to make our mistakes. In the assessment of God's people. How prone we are to make mistakes. Now Samson has a plan.
[25:42] And God gives this plan to Samson. Samson knows the temple. I'll come to the temple just in a minute. Samson knows it. And he knows its structure.

And wouldn't it be good if that's what had sent him to Gaza in the first place. I remarked last week that we don't know why he actually went down to Gaza when he saw the harlot.

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Perhaps it was to spy out the temple. Who knows? But he knows the inside of the temple. He knows how they're structured. And he calls on the boy who's leading him. And he says, let me rest. He says, for a while against the pillars. Now he's not feigning exhaustion. There's no doubt that he is exhausted. And he is tired. And the young boy puts Samson in between the pillars.
But Samson knows exactly what he is doing. Now I want to pause with you for a moment to look at the temple. Because I think it's absolutely vital to understand the temple.
[26:42] In order to understand what Samson is going to do here. And I'll begin with this. In the ancient world. The heathen temples were models of the universe.

Now that is important. They were models of the universe. The whole created order. And the pillars supporting these temples were representative.
And this is important. They were representative of the power of their gods. It was by their gods. That the universe itself was upheld.
It was by their gods that their own lives. Their own civilization. And the world was upheld. It was all down to their gods. Now. The Philistine temples were unique.
They were unique. Archaeology has only uncovered two Philistine temples. One is at Tel Aviv. And I've forgotten where the other one is.
[27:43] The first one was uncovered in 1972. That is very recent. And it had a remarkable design structure. That set it apart from all the other Canaanite and Babylonian temples.

And this is interesting. What set it apart from all these temples. Was that the whole structure of it. Was made to be dependent upon two massive central pillars.
And the basis of those two pillars are still found in both temples. Now. Neither of those was the temple involved here. This was a bigger temple than either of those two. This was the leading Philistine temple dedicated to Dagon.
A massive structure with 3,000 on the roof. But notice how the archaeological discoveries have proved what the scriptures were saying. And here again we find something that I've referred to in the past.
And it's always interesting. Because right up to 1972 people were saying. You don't find temples that have their weight suspended on two pillars. They just don't exist. That is not how temples were in the ancient world.
[28:45] Then 1972 comes along. And they find them. So what do they do then? They ignore them. After all. How many of you know that a Philistine temple wasn't covered in 1972 with two pillars in the center?

Probably none of you. Or very few of you. Why don't you know it? Because it doesn't make the news. It doesn't make the news. It's not convenient news is it? It's not. It's not convenient.
But it's the same pattern you always find. Laugh at the Bible until it's proved true. And when it's proved true ignore it. It's the same pattern all the time.
Friends. Will you not open your ears and your hearts and me with you. To recognize that God has even left his footprints. Amongst the historical ruins of the world.
Even there he has left evidence substantiating or corroborating what he has put down in his word. The Philistine temples were suspended upon two central pillars.
[29:41] Now in all probability. There would be other pillars coming out. From these. That would be supporting part of the roof structure.

We don't know. And it's not possible from the remains to say how exactly that was. All that is clear as though God has left it. Is that it is suspended upon two pillars. And that represents to the Philistines the arms of Dagon.
It is his power supporting the world. Giving life. Grain. The harvest. And fertility. It is from him. They have exchanged the worship of the creator.
For the worship of the creature. And on the top of these temples. There was a vast space. And here we are told that there were 3,000 men and women on the roof.
Now I have no doubt that that must have been a strain. On the roof. However big the roof was. I mean you can try and work out yourself. How many people there are on a gallery here. Supported on the pillars.
[30:43] You can imagine the size of roof it would take. To hold 3,000 men and women. And notice that they were able to view what was going on down.

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They all had a view of Samson. Because we are told in verse 27. The last part of it. That there were upon the roof. 3,000 men and women. That beheld.
While Samson made spoke. Now what a perfect scene that is for them. Here they are. They are in their own house.
With their own God. Having the victory. Upholding their lives and the world. And there is the man of God. And he has become a fool. And he is grinding out corn for them.
But Samson gets a hold of the two pillars. He says to the young man. He says. Let me lean upon you. Let me lean upon them. And the young man guides Samson's hand.
[31:43] To the pillars. And then he prays. And isn't that a wonderful thing? Lord God. He says. Remember me. I pray thee. And strengthen me.

I pray thee. Only this once. O God. That I may be at once avenged. Of the Philistines. For my two eyes. Before I come unto the faith.
In this prayer. Some people again say. That this is a selfish prayer. By Samson. That all he is concerned about. Is getting back for his own eyes. But. I want you to notice this. And to remember this.
I hope if. I have made anything clear. From this. That we have understood. That Samson. Is a messianic figure. That he is the deliverer. Of Israel. And he stands there.
As a representative. Of Christ. The Lord's. Own anointed. And when God's anointed. Is sin against. It is a sin. Against God.
[32:38] And when he calls. For vengeance. For his two eyes. We are to see. And to understand there. That it is Christ. Who is about to bring vengeance. Down upon his own enemies. It is the Lord.

Every sin. Is a sin. Against God. It is against his honor. Against his wisdom. And against his integrity. Samson is not praying. Selfishly. It is a messianic prayer.
You tell me. God. Prayed for his enemies. On the cross. That they might be saved. I say to you. Yes he did. For some. But you read the whole. Of the gospels. And the psalms. And you'll find. That there was a two-edged sword.
In his prayer. What was the cross? It was salvation. To some. And it was destruction. For others. It was judgment. To the prince. Of this world.
And to the world. In darkness. And it was salvation. To all who are to believe. In him. And so. When Samson. Prays here. It is a messianic prayer. That God would avenge.
[33:33] And that he would arise. And vindicate his own name. His own glory. And his own truth. Because Samson knows. It's not him who has suffered really. It is the cause of God.

And he prays for that. To be avenged. But. What I want you to notice. In this prayer. Is the faith. What he prays for is this. Remember me. And strengthen me.
Only this once. Oh God. Now. I suppose. We could. We could suppose. That Samson. Does not know.
Precisely. How much strength he has. What Samson does. Is he just. Casts himself here. Upon the loving kindness. And the mercy of God.
He doesn't know. How much his strength has returned. Or how much God would bless. But he just casts himself. Upon a loving. And merciful. And powerful creator.
[34:30] And what he says. Essentially is. As I push. And as I bow down. And as I take the strain. He says. Strengthen me. This once. Oh God. And show.

Thy power. Through me. Notice. He's not presuming. Upon his strength. That's what he was doing. When he was in his sin. He would just snap the cords. That Delilah had put around him.
It was a show. It had become a show. He was abusing the gift. That God gave him. He's not doing that anymore. He doesn't bow down. And say. Well God will help me anyway. He's back to the spiritual condition.
And this is a mark of a spiritual man. That he depends upon God. For everything. The spiritual man. Is a prayerful man. And he's a dependent man. And that's the way Samson became.
Strengthen me. Oh Lord. This once. And it's a strength for himself. No. When he was playing around with Delilah. And even. When he took the gates of Gaza.
[35:27] On his back. He was playing around with his strength. Using it for himself. But he's not using it like that anymore. He's going to use it in God's service. Even though it costs him his own life.

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Even though it costs him his own life. He's going to use his strength. For God. And Samson bows. With all his might. And he begins to push.
At these massive pillars. That are holding up the whole temple. Now I suppose. Like the people in Jericho. The people around laughed. When they saw the spectacle.
But as the pillar began to move. And as it began to creak. And as it began to dislodge. Those smiles changed. Into worry. And in anxiety. When they said peace and safety.
Then destruction was to come upon them suddenly. Like travail. Upon a woman with child. Samson. With the strength of God. Dislocated the pillars from their pedestals.
[36:27] And the whole structure of the temple came crashing down. The roof already strained with 3,000 men and women. Down it came. So that the whole of the temple was destroyed.

And the men and women on the roof. As well as the men and women on the bottom. Were brought to a sudden death. By the hand of God. Let me die.
He says with the Philistines. And so he did. The whole temple. Or the whole world. Came crashing down upon the heathen. And the man of God. Died with them.
Now there's a few things I want to say about this. But I want to deal with something quickly first. Many people sadly speak of this as suicide on Samson's part.
And again before I elaborate on that. Let me say this. We should not view suicide. As the unforgivable sin. Which some people for some reason do.
[37:24] It is not that at all. There is only one unforgivable sin. And that is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. There are many things I suppose. Mysterious things that have caused people.

To take away their own lives. And for our own part. We understand the Lord's people to be included amongst them. And it would be a brave man. Who would understand all the mysteries.
And intricacies. Of the way a person's mind works. Even with the spirit of the Lord within it. Suicide is not spoken of. As the unpardonable sin in the scripture. It is not.
But is this a suicide anyway? Well friends. I don't know. Why anyone should call this a suicide. Supposing someone threw a grenade into this building.
And suppose someone in here got up. And threw himself on top of the grenade. To take the blast of it. To take its force and its fury. Would you call that a suicide? I would not. That would not be a suicide in my book at all.
[38:24] What would we do to such a man if it was a time of war? You would honor him. You would even put a plaque as a memorial for him. What would you say he had done? Well the word that you would use for it would be sacrifice.

That he had sacrificed himself. And that is the word that I would choose to use of Samson. That he sacrificed himself. In the deliverance of his people Israel.
Why did he give himself? For the salvation of Israel. That was his ministry. God said. That he would begin to deliver his people.
From the Philistines. And that's what he did. It was a sacrifice. He gave himself. For the life and liberty of God's people. And how much we should thank.
Even at a natural level. Those in our own history. Covenanters. Martyrs. In Europe. In Scotland. And everywhere. Who gave their lives. Gave them for you a freedom.
[39:19] And for mine. And today they're forgotten. They're as men dead long ago. There's not a word. Or not a cheap. Of what it cost them. To give us the very liberty. That we have of worshipping here today.

People who died. Like Guthrie and Rennick. All over the country. They died. For our liberty. And for our spiritual freedom. To worship God. According to the simplicity of the scriptures.
They died for it. And we've forgotten them. I've mentioned it before. But it's so sad. To go through Greyfriars churchyard. And to see the little dog. So beautiful. Greyfriars Bobby.
And that is touching enough. But the dog is so beautiful. And so well kept. And there's the martyr stone. Down there in the corner. With its solemn message. Here lies in the dust. And lists the names of the martyrs.
And it's grown over with moss. With dirt and decay. What does that say about Edinburgh? Or about Scotland? Or about you and me? What does it say? It says a lot.
[40:15] Samson gave his life. For the church of God. He gave his life. For the God of the church. He was the deliverer. He was the redeemer.

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And he died to give him life. And what can we say to that? Well just this. That there is a greater than Samson here. And I certainly see a greater than Samson here. Who do I see?
Well I hope the one you see. The one who was blindfolded. And they smote him with a ring. And they said prophesy. Who struck you with the hand? And they mocked him. And they spat upon him. As he was blindfolded. They made sport of him. Hitting him and said. Who touched you? And who hit you? Who smote you? I see someone who was taken to the cross.
And who was crucified. In the midst of the contempt of men. And of women. And I see someone on the cross. With reverence. Who certainly did not commit suicide.
[41:12] But who did give himself as a sacrifice. Are we not told in Matthew 27. That he dismissed his spirit. Aren't these marvelous words? He dismissed his spirit.

What was he? But a sacrifice. Who gave him? He gave himself. He gave himself. For a people. As a sacrifice.
And that brings me to this. It's interesting that there are. All the lords of the Philistines. Were told. Were gathered here. In other words.
The heads of the people. The powers. And the principalities. Of the whole country. Were gathered. In this temple. Chief priests. And the five lords of the Philistines.
Samson. Destroyed them. When he gave himself. As a sacrifice. What does that speak to you? Does it not speak to you. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. Who was surrounded.
[42:10] By the bulls of Bashan. And by the roaring lion. Were the powers and principalities. Present on the cross. Of course they were present on the cross. Was it just.

Some minor. Agencies. In the legions of Satan. That were present on the cross. No. It was himself. And it was. The highest in his kingdom.
It was powers and principalities. With which the Lord was fighting on the cross. But what did the Lord do? Well. We're told in Colossians 1.
Colossians 2. That Christ spoiled the principalities and powers. He made a show of them openly. And he triumphed over them. In other words. God defeated the powers of darkness on the cross. He smashed them. That takes us right back to Genesis again. You shall bruise his heel. But he shall crush you head.
[43:07] Notice. This temple came down. On the heads of the lords. Of the Philistines. And you've got this picture in the Bible. Again and again. And it's not long since this was brought.

To my own attention. In the reading of the scriptures. How often this appears. The idea of the crushed head. We find it right from Genesis through to Revelation. I mentioned it last week with respect to the jawbone.
The only way the jawbone kills. Is by crushing the head. Here you find the same thing. In his last great act. He brings the temple down. To crush the heads.
Because that speaks of Satan. And the enemies being destroyed. Where was that done? On the cross. On the cross. By the Lord Jesus Christ.
Why? For your freedom. And for mine. And this is the marvel of it all. Samson died. To deliver a church. The Lord Jesus Christ.
[44:04] Slew powers and principalities. So that a church could be saved. And here you have it. You have your choice. You can either die. With the Philistines.

Or you can be saved. With the Israelites. It is like that. The cross is such an awful thing. It is the judgment of God. Through Christ.
And it just cuts like that. Midway. Between the lost and the saved. Just as certainly as the cross saves. So does the cross condemn. It does the two.
It seals the doom of the unbelievers. As certainly as it seals the blessedness of those who believe. And there it is. Are you to perish with the Philistines.
Or are you to be delivered with the Israelites. Samson did the deliverance. And he slew the dominion of the power of darkness. And I have no doubt.
[45:01] That as well as being a picture of Christ's triumph on the cross. I close with this really. It is also a picture of the end of the world. I just mentioned some moments ago.

That text from Thessalonians. When they shall say peace and safety. Destruction comes upon them suddenly. As travail upon a woman with child. The Bible makes clear that the end of the world will find a careless people.

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A people who just could not care less. The end of the world will find a people who don't bother with the true religion. It will find very few who are cleaving to the true faith.
And it's when the people are feasting and saying peace and safety. That God breaks in and brings the temple down. God will kick away the pillars of support.
And he will bring it all crashing down. Because he is raising a true temple. He is raising a new heaven. And a new earth wherein dwells righteousness. There is the true Samson. The true son of God.
[45:59] S-U-N as well as S-O-N. Where he shines in his might. In the true temple. And all other temples are brought to nothing. And they are brought to ruin. Don't let that day overtake your soul.

Don't let it find you as a thief. Wallowing in blasphemy. In idolatry. Or in drunkenness. Let it find you in the service of God. I said I would finish with this.
Let me just bring one small thing. We are told at the end of the chapter. And this is very solemn itself. That his brethren. And the house of his father came down.
Took him. Brought him up. And buried him. Between Zorah and Eshtol. In the burying place of Manoah. His father. He had judged Israel.
Twenty years. His brothers came down. Now I don't know if that is to be taken literally. His father and mother perhaps did have other children. Then after Samuel was born.
[46:56] But in any case. Those closely connected to him. Went down. And amidst all the bodies. They found the one. Of the man of God. They found the body of Samson.

And they lovingly took it. Like many years later. They took the corpse of John the Baptist. And they took him home. And they buried him. Where? Where it had all begun.
Between Zorah and Eshtol. Where his father and mother. Had received a vision. And they buried him. In the burying place of his father. Already. A man dead.
Gone to his rest. And gone to his reward. Probably. His father never saw his back sliding. How much of a grief. It would have given. Who knows.
Maybe he did. And maybe he did not see his restoration. That is something that the children of God often have. Grieving over your sons and daughters. Not seeing the end of the Lord.
[47:53] But the end of the Lord was gracious. They laid this deliverer in his tomb. And there he awaits the resurrection himself. He didn't bring a perfect deliverance.

Because he wasn't the perfect Messiah. But what we can say in conclusion. Is to read these words of the apostle. What more shall I say.
The time would fail me. To tell of Gideon. These are men of faith. Of Barak. And of Samson. And of Jephthah. Of David and Samuel. And the prophets.
Who by faith. And this is what faith does. Subdued kingdoms. Wrought righteousness. Obtained promises. Stopped the mouths of lions. Who is that?
Quenched the violence of fire. Out of weakness were made strong. Waxed valiant in fight. Who was that? Turned to flight the armies of the aliens.
[48:51] Who is that? But Samson. Others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings. Bonds and imprisonment. Like Samson. Yes. Of whom the world was not worthy.

They. Having obtained a good report. Received not the promise. God providing something better for us. That they without us. Should not be made perfect.
Samson went home. And awaited. The resurrected body. Of the Lord there. And awaits his own resurrection too. And seeing as we are compassed about.
With so great a cloud of witnesses. Let us fight. The good fight. Of faith. And let us be strong in the Lord. As Samson was.

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