

## “Samson: Lose Compromising”

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I do want to encourage you this morning to open your Bible to the Book of Judges, chapter 13. The Book of Judges is technically the seventh book of the Bible in the Old Testament. And even though you may not be familiar with where the Book of Judges is, today we're going to study a Biblical character that no matter where you are on the Biblical literacy chart, whether you've just barely opened a Bible or you have studied it your entire life, I would be willing to wager that the overwhelming majority of us today are familiar with the person we are going to study. His name is Samson. He is a man that is known for his strength and he is a man that is known for an incredibly long lock of hair.

And he continues our study this fall entitled “Be A Loser.” Now honestly, if you are a first time guest or visitor, allow me to put a little disclaimer there. We are not trying to be demoralizing when we say we want us to be losers. What we are doing this fall studying the Word of God, in particular famous men and soon-to-come women of the Old Testament, is how do we, as individuals, husbands, wives, children, parents, neighbors, church members and literally citizens of the world, allow ourselves to be in a better position for God to utilize? How do we allow ourselves to be in a better place for the Lord to work through our lives? And what we've understood so far this fall is there are certain areas that to be greater used or maximized for God that we just need to allow Him through His Holy Spirit to lose in our lives. We need to lose some junk; we need to lose some baggage, so to speak.

And today we come to one of the most famed characters in all of scripture – a man by the name of Samson and a subject matter that he desperately needed to lose, but unfortunately demonstrates for all of us. It is this issue of compromise. I want to define compromise for you in the beginning before we go to the Word of God. I believe personally that compromise is taking that which inherently has been given to you by God and trading it for something

very trite and temporary. Samson had strength; Samson had an incredible calling of God and he decided it was worth trading for something that would be very temporary. So when we come to compromise I want you to understand what that means is the Lord has given us various concepts in our lives, various things in our lives and we have compromise when we take those God-given gifts, abilities, and resources and rather than utilizing them to glorify God we trade them for something this world offers us that is very temporary.

Before we get into the main meat of the message today, I want to look at who Samson was as a character. I know most of you are familiar with who he was, but I just want to share a couple of things with you. The first thing is this: he is a character that was known for his strength. We're going to talk about the three vows that were put upon his life as a Nazarite, but the one he is most noted for is his hair that he was never to cut. In fact, the Lord said as long as his hair was never cut, he would preserve and keep his strength. The details of the strength that were exhibited through his life are phenomenal.

There is a story and it's one of my favorites in all of scripture where he kills 1,000 Philistines with one jawbone of a donkey in one battle. So it's one versus a thousand and he wins. That's an incredible display of strength. We're going to read in just a moment that he comes upon a situation in life where there is a lion in his pathway and he defeats and kills the lion with his bare hands. That's an incredible feat of strength.

There's another story in the Book of Judges where he gets frustrated, and to be honest with you, I would too. He was married to a young lady, he went away for a while, and while he was away his father-in-law gave his wife to another man. He decides to catch with his bare hands 300 foxes. He pairs them into 150 pairs, ties their tails together, sets them on fire and puts them into the fields of the Philistines. Now we could also utilize Samson on a course of anger management! But that being said, that's incredible strength.

But then finally his life climaxes and comes to an end because he takes with

his bare hands two pillars of a building that has 3,000 people on its roof celebrating and with one swift action he breaks those pillars and they fall to their death. He was a man of great strength. But I think the thing we need to know about Samson in the very beginning is what is pictured in chapter 13: he was a man of sanctification, holiness and distinctness. And unless we get Judges 13:1-6 then we're not going to get the meat of the message today.

Judges 13:1-6: "1And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years. 2And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren, and bare not. 3And the angel of the LORD appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shall conceive, and bear a son. 4Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing: 5For, lo, thou shall conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines. 6Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible: but I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name:"

Now I want to make something very clear because it's easy today in dealing with a subject matter that none of us likes to deal with called compromise to say, "Well, I'm no Samson," and that's right. In fact, the vows that were put upon his life communicated by the angel to his mom in this story in chapter 13 were not the vows of all the prophets; they were not the vows of all the judges. What is important for us to understand is this was specifically what God gave Samson. How easy it is when we talk about compromise to begin comparing. We'll say, "Compared to so-and-so, I'm doing okay. Compared to so-an-so, I'm doing alright." Understand: this isn't about your neighbor; this isn't about the person next to you. This is about what God has enabled you with and given you and you trading that for something that is temporary.

We have to understand these three things before we get to chapters 14 through 16. Number one: he was never to consume anything of an alcoholic nature. That was his vow put on him by God. Number two: he was not to eat anything of an unclean animal as given by Levitical law, given to him by God. And number three: he was never to cut his hair or shave his head. Those are the three things. You ask why is it so important to grasp that; that's not my calling in life, that was Samson's calling so why is that so critical? Because what it is in compromise as I have defined it is that, as we're going to see in a moment, in every one of those areas he compromised. And it was a process where he started small and he ended big.

So what I want to share as we begin our journey of his life in chapter 14 is what is it that causes compromise? How does compromise come to be in our lives? How does it occur? What happens? We have to read Judges 14:1-9 to really grasp this. It says that the Philistines, for lack of better terms, had been a thorn in the side of the Israelites for forty years. We will find out at the end of the story that Samson judged the Philistines for twenty years. In chapter 14, this is the beginning of his judgeship; this is the beginning of his ministry. This is where the story picks up as he becomes a judge for Israel.

Judges 14:1-9: "1And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines. 2And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife. 3Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleases me well. 4But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the LORD, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel. 5Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and, behold, a young lion roared against him. 6And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he rent

him as he would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done. 7And he went down, and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well. 8And after a time he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion: and, behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion. 9And he took thereof in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat: but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion.”

As a concept, compromise by definition is a process. Just as in the video we showed you, it delights in the little things because as I had an old coach say once, “Atta-boys add up.” Little things ultimately become big things. So what I want to share with you are the three stages of compromise, and I will be willing to wager that every one of us will discover that we are in one of those stages in at least one area of our lives. But ultimately we’re going to see what is the cure or the solution for compromise in our lives.

Here’s the first stage of compromise: an attitude of ignorance. Listen to me, regardless of the motivational poster, ignorance is not bliss. There are three vows that Samson has upon his life: nothing alcoholic, nothing from a dead animal and do not shave his head. In chapter 14, in the beginning of his judgeship, he is going into the Philistines; he’s going to take a woman of the Philistines. His parents didn’t understand it but the Lord had a plan for him to infiltrate the Philistines.

I want you to notice what happens in verse 5. “Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and, behold, a young lion roared against him.” Do you believe honestly that the only route to Timnath was through the vineyards? The Bible makes it very specific that he got there through the vineyards. What I see is this is much like if someone says they came in first place. If you have a first place then you have to have a second place. The Bible says he specifically went through the vineyards which tells me there could have been another route.

What was his first vow? Do not drink anything alcoholic. Where does that come from? Yes, the vineyards. You may say, “But Samson didn’t drink. Samson did not break his vow.” And that’s the first step of compromise. He said, “I can walk through the vineyard and it won’t bother me. It won’t affect me. It won’t touch me, I won’t get tainted. I can handle this.” It was an attitude of ignorance. And I believe personally that the Lord gave him a swift spiritual two by four as he was going. He was walking through the vineyard and a lion shows up. It’s almost as if the Lord says, “Hello: wrong route!” Yes, he has the strength to kill and destroy this lion because he has not shaved his head. But I have this sneaking suspicion that what we see Samson doing is beginning that process of compromise.

Now I want to share with you a very dramatic example of how we see this displayed in our culture. I truly hope this is not a part of your life, your family’s life, or anybody you know. There is a series of public service announcements and commercials that are taking place that show intelligent, sharp-looking young men and women in all kinds of social scenes. Thirty to sixty seconds later, they find themselves with a life completely destroyed. It is a public service campaign against one of the most addictive substances known to earth and to our bodies called crystal meth; methamphetamines. We could go through and we’re not going to talk about all the types of illicit drugs that people in our society unfortunately use; we could talk about all the cocaine, the crack, the marijuana and all those different things. But you speak to anybody in law enforcement or the drug enforcement agency and they will tell you there is nothing that is as addictive out there as crystal meth.

Do you know what the slogan for the public service announcement is? “Not even once.” In other words, don’t even think that you can play around with this stuff; do not believe for even one second that you can just walk through the vineyard and everything is going to be okay. This stuff is going to burn you, no pun intended – it’s going to get you.

I hope that's not a situation in your life, but let's back it up to some reality. We have a hard month or a hard couple of months and we say, "I'm not a big fan of debt, but I'm going to try it just once." And what happens is it begins a cycle in your life where you keep adding to it. If you don't believe me, just call Washington and see how that happens after a while! It just keeps going. Or as it was alluded to in the video: we think it's just one lunch with someone who is not my spouse, it's just one casual conversation, it's not big deal, I'm not going to get burned.

In fact, the ignorance is that Samson, Mr. Strongman, thought he was strong enough. When we have an area in our lives that is not going to benefit us in certain ways but we think surely I'll just go through the vineyard and it's not going to hurt me, it is that attitude of ignorance. We look up six months or a year later and guess what's happened? We've been burned. Every alcoholic begins with one drink. Every pile of debt over someone's head begins with one purchase. It doesn't matter what it is, how dramatic, whatever it is in your life that compromise can occur in, it always starts with one time. We justify it by saying, "I'll just do it once." The interesting thing is that's not how it really works because what happened on Samson's way back? He went back through the vineyard. It didn't just happen once; it didn't just happen in isolation. He went back the way he came.

And that leads to the second stage of compromise. It's not just an attitude of ignorance; it's also an attitude, an action, or this mentality or thinking that we live life in isolation – that what we do only affects us; what we do can only harm us or only be detrimental to us. I want you to see what happens in verses 8-9. "8And after a time he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion: and, behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion. 9And he took thereof in his hands, and went on eating." The second vow was not to eat anything of an unclean animal. This was a swarm of bees inside an unclean animal according to Levitical laws. He may not have technically broken the first one, but there is no question about it – he violated the second one. How

many times when there is compromise in our lives, when there is a struggle, a temptation, something occurring in our lives do we say this really only affects me, it doesn't affect anybody else? Let me keep on reading: "and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat: but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion."

I think one of the things that we have bought into, a lie that we have bought into is that compromise, when we begin the process, only affects us. It only bothers us. That issue I'm struggling with, that concern I'm having only affects me. No, it affects everybody who has any type of interaction in your life: spouses, children, neighbors, churches, communities. We do not live on an island; we do not live in isolation. And compromise convinces us that to trade what God has given us for something that is temporary, is that we're making a solo trade: it's only between us and that situation. It did not just affect Samson; it affected his wife because he broke the vow. It did not just affect her, it affected his parents. We do not live life in isolation.

Let me give you a very dramatic example and then I'll move back to more of the things we probably deal with on an every day basis, and some of you may deal with this every day. We, unfortunately, have people in our society, and I have some in my family and I'm sure you do too, that believe that by them taking illegal substances, placing them in their body, messing up their world that their world is the only world they mess up. That is a lie straight from the pit of hell because they end up costing every single one of us. Let me give you a dramatic example and unfortunately we see this every day. You have an individual who takes that lifestyle. And throughout that lifestyle of addiction and struggle with substances, in the process of life they have a child and that child is born with some concerns and issues related to their body and to life. Can I be honest with you; it is no fault to that child whatsoever. And you may be thinking it just affects them and their family. Ask a school teacher the next time she has to spend half of her day ignoring the twenty-one children who can versus the one who can't. You say that child just didn't want to behave. Did that child ask for



generations above him to create the problems they did? No, he didn't. You can't ask which family to be born in. That being said, do you understand that when we do whatever it is, whether it's struggling, getting into massive financial debt, dealing with substance abuse, do you understand it affects everybody? Everybody; it doesn't just affect you. You do not live in isolation.

Now let me give you a positive example. Yesterday thousands of people descended on this campus from all places to this massive garage sale. I just want to go on record: I'm having a hard time defining that as a garage sale; it looked more like a flea market, but that's just me personally! That being said, at this massive garage sale that we had, there was a friend of mine in the community who came. His wife, daughter and grandchildren had gone to do something else and he had heard about it so he decided just because he had the whole day to himself that he would pilfer around and have a good time. Now let me share with you about this man: he is an incredible man of God. He serves in the preschool ministry of his church; he's in another church. He's an ordained deacon; he's a wonderful man. He has no relationship to this church whatsoever. We met at a conference and we've just kept in touch since I've lived in Georgia. He came up to me and he proved one of my theories true: ten percent of a group's actions give ninety percent of its reputation.

He came up to me afterwards when he was about to leave; we were picking up and he said, "Jeff, I just want you to know this is one phenomenal church." I asked why he would say that. He said, "Because as I was shopping, I had untold people invite me to church, and I had one man witness to me." Did he meet ten percent of our group? No; he met a very small percentage and what did it do? It gave the reputation for the entire whole. Now I can't prove this scientifically, but I do believe ten percent of a group's actions give ninety percent of its reputation.

Let me tell you where I get that fact. I used to give tours on the campus of the college where I went; that was part of my job. I was guiding people here and there, talking to parents, answering questions. And one of the

things I had to defuse all the time because I went to a “private” school, people thought the school was filled with nothing but rich, spoiled brats. And I had to share with them that was right to an extent, but ninety percent of us were on financial aide. Ninety percent of us do not fit that equation, but the ten percent that do give that reputation for those who don’t.

Do you realize that happens in the church of Jesus Christ? Do you realize that happens in a local church body? That happens in a community. What happens is because of a few people compromising in their lives and not letting the Lord be the Lord of their lives, what does it do? It messes up everything. You do not live in isolation and neither do I. So the next time you think it’s just going to hurt me, my marriage or my kid – wrong! It hurts everybody within earshot of anybody who compromises.

The same thing happened with Samson which leads to stage three. It always begins with an attitude of ignorance. It always then begins this concept that I live in isolation. And it climaxes with this belief that we are invincible. That no matter what, even if I’m fully discovered, my marriage will stay together, my home will stay together, somehow it will all just work out.

I want to pick up the story in Judges 16:4 and we’re going to meet a woman by the name of Delilah. “4And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. 5And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength lieth, and by what means we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him; and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred pieces of silver. 6And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee.”

Now let me share with you what is occurring in this story. Samson has already compromised his first vow. He’s already incredibly compromised and broken his second vow, and he is about to believe he is invincible. He is about to allow the third vow, the shaving of his head, to occur. And it begins when this

woman brokers a trade with the Philistines. Notice how much money: 1,100 pieces of silver. Judas only sold Jesus for 30. Do you see how badly they wanted to be rid of this guy? One thousand men killed with the jawbone of a donkey; that whole situation with the foxes: we've got to get this guy out of here. So in verse 6 Delilah comes to Samson and says, "I need to know how to make you weak. I need to know how to make you strong." And he lies to her.

So we go back in verse 10. "10And Delilah said unto Samson, Behold, you have mocked me, and told me lies: now tell me, I pray thee, wherewith thou mightest be bound." "Samson, here I am a woman you claim to love. You lied to me." And he lies to her again. Verse 13: "13And Delilah said unto Samson, Hitherto you have mocked me, and told me lies: tell me wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her, If thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the web." In verse 14, we discover three times she said how do I take you down and he said I'm not going to tell you. But then there's verse 15. "15And she said unto him, How can thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me? thou hast mocked me these three times, and you have not told me wherein thy great strength lieth. 16And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death; 17That he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There has not come a razor upon mine head; for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man. 18And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath showed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand. 19And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. 20And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before." I want to stop right there in this story. He's already walked through the vineyard; he's already eaten from the carcass of the lion; he has lied to this

woman three times and he then tells her this is how you do it. She wakes him up and says the Philistines are upon you. He wakes up and says I'm going to whip them like I've always whipped them. Now he had never shaved his head. Can we just imagine how much that hair weighed? There were seven massive strands. By the way, human hair if left unattended can grow between five and seven feet in length. This is a mop beyond proportions. This makes Sheldon Landy look like he has a buzz cut! I don't know about you, and I don't have long hair but when I get my hair cut short, I feel a little lighter, there's no weight up there. I've talked to ladies who have had extremely long hair and when they cut it they talk about how different it feels. Samson got up and he didn't even feel it. That's what happens when we compromise; we become so invincible in our own minds that we think even if I sacrifice it all, even if I go completely over the cliff, I'll be fine. Look what happens in verse 20. "I will shake myself. And he knew not that the LORD was departed from him. 21 But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house." That's a bad situation he ended up in. Why? Because he thought surely I won't get caught, surely it won't really come to pass; I've already compromised so much what would one more step hurt. You know we have this phrase, the straw that broke the camel's back. We use that for a reason because with all the other piles of straw it's that last one that makes the difference. The big question for us isn't just how he got into this mess, but how he got out. When you look at verse 21 his life is a total wreck. You may have been there before; you may be there right now. Notice his eyes are put out; he literally can't see anything. He is bound; he is literally handcuffed to the wall. He is grinding at the prison house. Everything about his life is absolutely, positively miserable. And you may be sitting here this morning thinking that is my life; my life is messed up, my life is jacked up, there is nothing good about it – I have made a mess of everything! You may be one of those persons, but I'd be willing to say you're part of the minority here. And the reason I say that is because there are those occasions and those people who literally go head deep in the water, but sometimes we're only knee-deep in the water. We're back at the

second stage. We back messing around with stuff so much that we don't think it hurts anybody else but we haven't lost our strength, we haven't had our eyes put out, we haven't been bound yet, and we haven't gotten caught yet. We're just knee-deep and wondering how much deeper we can get in this water. Or maybe you're one of those this morning who is just taking your big toe and dabbling in something and wondering, "How much of this water can I get into and it not burn me. I wonder how far I can go; I wonder how much I can stretch this; I wonder what I can do and not be caught?" Do you realize that the cure for all three stages is the same? You don't do one thing for stage one and another thing for stage three. In fact, if you have compromised something in your life of value in your relationship with Jesus Christ today, there is only one cure, only one way to get out of the mess and you've got to look at verse 28. "And Samson called unto the Lord and said, O Lord God, 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." Twenty years of being a judge of Israel, of dealing with the Philistines, do you realize that this is the only place in the life of Samson where he calls unto God? It's the only place where he cries out to God and literally says I've made a mess of things, I've gone somewhere I shouldn't have gone, I've done things I shouldn't have done, and I need You to help me out. You're saying but he's in stage three. Can I give you a hint: read the Bible from front to back and the Lord doesn't even want you in stage one. But if you're in stage one or even stage two, this is the cure. I want you to look in verse 30. "And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at this death were more than they which he slew in his life." I believe the reason we find Samson in Hebrews, chapter 11 in the "Hall of Fame of Faith" is in his last day of life, in his last action of life, he cried to the Lord and said I can't do this without You, much like John 15:5 where Jesus said, "Without me you can do nothing." He cried out to the Lord and it said that literally the Lord did more in one day in Samson's life than he had done in the previous nineteen years.

You say how did that happen? I want you to go back to verse 22. Samson has his head shaved; Samson has his eyes put out; Samson is bound with fetters. Verse 22: “Howbeit, the hair of his head began to grow again.” Now we don’t know the exact chronology, but I would be willing to bet that in this end of the story, we’re no more than six to twelve months which means that technically speaking Samson might have had up to an inch or maybe even at a radical extreme up to two inches of hair on his head. Why is that so significant? Do you realize that God did more with a buzz-cut and a prayer than He did with seven feet of hair? He did more with it. Why? Because all he had was a simple confession: “God, strengthen me. God, fix me; God, take care of me.” That’s really what happens when we get saved. That’s what happens when we do what the Bible says, being born again. When we realize I’m a sinner and there is nothing I can do to fix this sin problem, there is nothing I can do to save myself, I am hell-bound, not Heaven-bound, I’m in an absolute mess and without strength according to the Book of Romans, and Christ died for us. We literally look up and say, “God, You’ve got to fix this problem because I’ve got a mess on my hands.” And what does He do? The Bible says He saves us, and He forgives us. And the same thing happens with compromise. So maybe you’re here today and you’ve just put your big toe in, maybe you’re hip deep, or maybe you’re all the way head deep in a situation, a scenario, a temptation or a struggle in life and you realize I’ve headed the wrong way, I’ve been involved in the wrong things – what do I do? I want to encourage you at our time of invitation just to cry out to the Lord. Just say, “Lord, avenge me of my wrongs; fix this, solve this.” It may not be as dramatic as Samson’s situation concluded, but God did more in one act than he had done in twenty-nine plus years. Maybe you’ve been compromising for decades, maybe for years. And you say but it’s been so long. Let me tell you something: God can do more in one day than you messed up in fifty years. Let’s pray.