

Sermon Discussion Guide- Week of May 24, 2020

Heroes In Hard Times: By a Hair's Breadth

Pastor Temple, 10:30am

Getting Started- Life Updates, Prayer Requests & Opening Question (15 min)

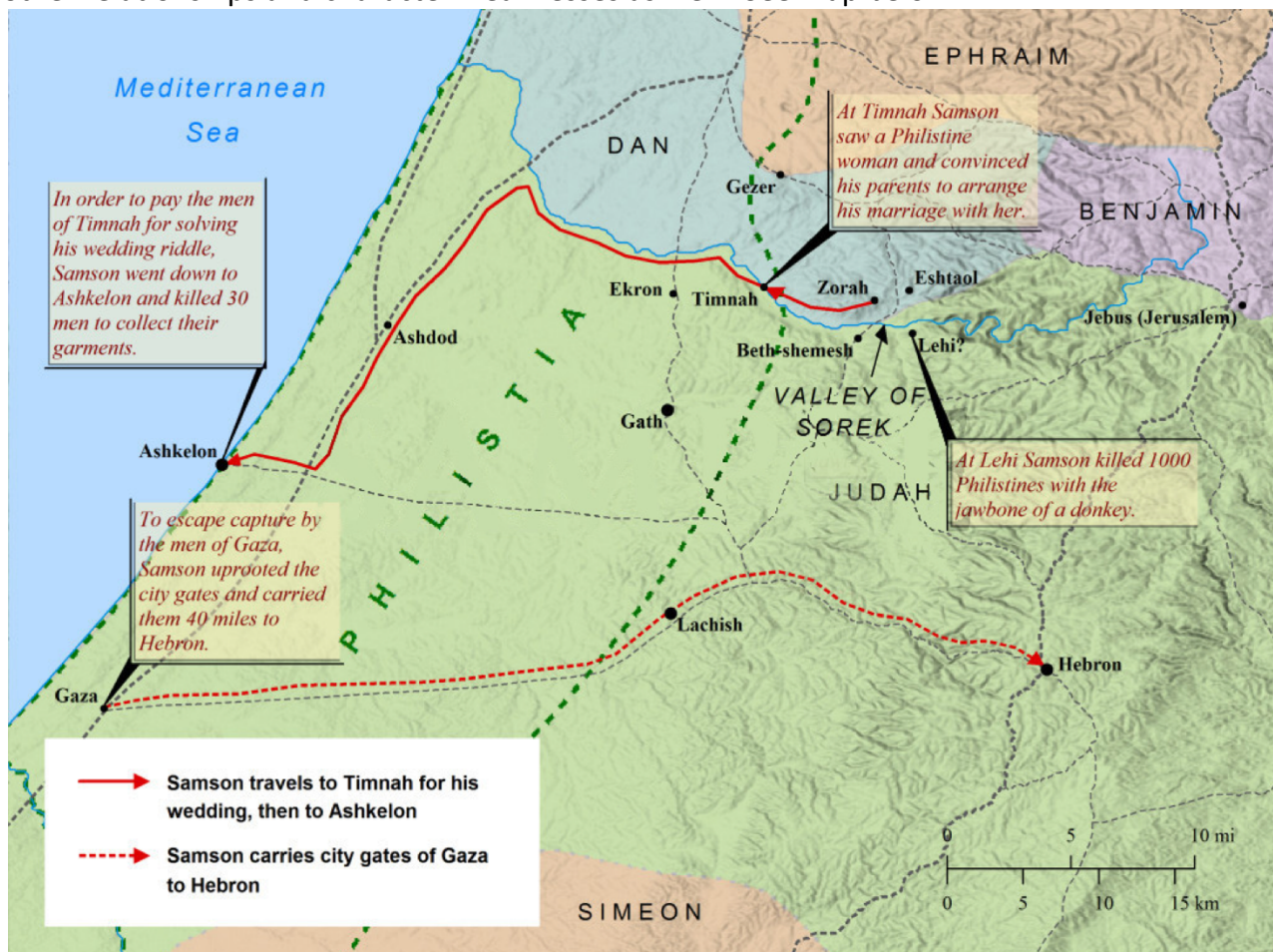
- Anything to share about personal events since you last met or about applying last week's message on Gideon by Dr. Beck?
- Are there any joys or concerns that you would like to share with the group for the closing prayer time or for group members to hold in prayer during the week? (please note them below for later)

Opener Question: How has the bad hair days of the virus epidemic been a humbling experience for you?

Review the Sermon (15 min)

Please read aloud the sermon scripture, Judges 16:4-22. You may find the passages in the additional pages and then discuss the questions below. Know that it is ok to skip some questions below in order to manage the time for discussions in each section.

- If you had to give a one-minute summary of the sermon message this week, what would you say?
- Background info- Samson was the last of the Judges in the book of Judges who, in the Lord, was given great physical strength to lead Israel against their enemies around Judah, especially Philistia. The three chapters prior to today's reading describe some of his run-ins with these enemies and some of his other relationships and character weaknesses as well. See map below.



- Also, Samson’s parents had consecrated him to God as a child with a Nazarite vow, Numbers 6:1-8. This entailed not drinking wine or fermented drink, not cut their hair and not going near a dead body. According to 6:7, “the symbol of their dedication to God is on their head.” How was Samson’s hair as a sign of dedication to God different than it being the source of his great strength?
- In 16:4-6, How would you describe the interests and character of Delilah (which in Hebrew means to weaken or impoverish)?
- Why do you think Samson lied to his wife the first time in verse 7? What other options might he have had?
- In verses 8-14, if he knew of the treachery, why did he allow it to play out 3 times?
- What changed in verse 16 such that he felt “nagged to death” and gave in?
- What kind of problems can we get into when we have an unrealistic assessment of ourselves?
- Pastor Temple’s reflection on verse 20 stated, “He did not know the Lord had left him, but he had left the Lord long before that.” Aside from his choice to trust Delilah, where had Samson gone wrong prior to his capture, blinding and enslavement?
- Do you think the more power a person has, the more temptations they face? If so, how?
- How does verse 22 allude to the hope we have in the Lord that endures even after our disobedience to God has led to terrible lapses in good judgement and painful consequences of them?

Other Related Readings (10 min)

- Would a volunteer please read aloud Hebrews 11:29-34.
- Despite his flaws, Samson is included in the list of exemplars of faith in the Lord here (11:32). Why do you think Samson is included here?
- Do you think the Lord granting him his request for strength for one final battle with the Philistines after his fall had something to do with it (Judges 16:23-31)?
- What hopeful message is in both scriptures for those who have stumbled into great sin but still have faith in the Lord and are willing to repent?

Personalizing and Applying The Message (10 min)

- As you reflect upon the sermon and the scripture readings above, what are points of encouragement or challenge for you personally?
- Pastor Temple quoted Augustine who said this, “Bad times, hard times- this what people keep saying; but let us live well and times shall be good. We are the times. Such as we are, such are the times.” How do you see this idea applying to our current times?
- What about this time of the virus outbreak do you think is most challenging for Christians in living responsibly and faithfully?
- Warren Wiersbe has said about Samson, “But passion had gripped him, sin had anesthetized him and he was unable to act rationally.” What have we learned about the nature of passion and sin in this conversation that can help us avoid the pitfalls of Samson and live well in Christian faith this week?
- A volunteer may lead the group in prayer about the concerns shared earlier in the meeting

Judges 16:4-22

⁴ Some time later, he fell in love with a woman in the Valley of Sorek whose name was Delilah. ⁵ The rulers of the Philistines went to her and said, “See if you can lure him into showing you the secret of his great strength and how we can overpower him so we may tie him up and subdue him. Each one of us will give you eleven hundred shekels of silver.”

⁶ So Delilah said to Samson, “Tell me the secret of your great strength and how you can be tied up and subdued.” ⁷ Samson answered her, “If anyone ties me with seven fresh bowstrings that have not been dried, I’ll become as weak as any other man.”

⁸ Then the rulers of the Philistines brought her seven fresh bowstrings that had not been dried, and she tied him with them. ⁹ With men hidden in the room, she called to him, “Samson, the Philistines are upon you!” But he snapped the bowstrings as easily as a piece of string snaps when it comes close to a flame. So the secret of his strength was not discovered.

¹⁰ Then Delilah said to Samson, “You have made a fool of me; you lied to me. Come now, tell me how you can be tied.” ¹¹ He said, “If anyone ties me securely with new ropes that have never been used, I’ll become as weak as any other man.” ¹² So Delilah took new ropes and tied him with them. Then, with men hidden in the room, she called to him, “Samson, the Philistines are upon you!” But he snapped the ropes off his arms as if they were threads.

¹³ Delilah then said to Samson, “All this time you have been making a fool of me and lying to me. Tell me how you can be tied.” He replied, “If you weave the seven braids of my head into the fabric on the loom and tighten it with the pin, I’ll become as weak as any other man.” So while he was sleeping, Delilah took the seven braids of his head, wove them into the fabric ¹⁴ and tightened it with the pin. Again she called to him, “Samson, the Philistines are upon you!” He awoke from his sleep and pulled up the pin and the loom, with the fabric.

¹⁵ Then she said to him, “How can you say, ‘I love you,’ when you won’t confide in me? This is the third time you have made a fool of me and haven’t told me the secret of your great strength.” ¹⁶ With such nagging she prodded him day after day until he was sick to death of it. ¹⁷ So he told her everything. “No razor has ever been used on my head,” he said, “because I have been a Nazirite dedicated to God from my mother’s womb. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as any other man.” ¹⁸ When Delilah saw that he had told her everything, she sent word to the rulers of the Philistines, “Come back once more; he has told me everything.”

So the rulers of the Philistines returned with the silver in their hands. ¹⁹ After putting him to sleep on her lap, she called for someone to shave off the seven braids of his hair, and so began to subdue him. And his strength left him. ²⁰ Then she called, “Samson, the Philistines are upon you!” He awoke from his sleep and thought, “I’ll go out as before and shake myself free.” But he did not know that the LORD had left him. ²¹ Then the Philistines seized him, gouged out his eyes and took him down to Gaza. Binding him with bronze shackles, they set him to grinding grain in the prison. ²² But the hair on his head began to grow again after it had been shaved.