

Finish Strong – Lessons from Samson

Judges 13-15

Intro: <http://www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/samson/trailer?play=1>

1. Chosen by God: How many of us like to finish strong? Often it is not about how you start the journey but more so about how you finish.

Our purpose on earth is not just to work all day, doing the mundane things and then wait till we die. God has a higher purpose for us. Have you ever thought about your purpose for why you were born? (Ps 139:13-16 God knew us before birth; Jer 29:11 God has a plan for us)

Israel was under Philistine rule: Samson son of Menoah was chosen to be a Nazarite (no wine, no cutting his hair and no touching anything dead)

Samson grew up knowing God's will for his life. He had been chosen before he was born, and his marching orders were made clear by the angel of the LORD who had visited his parents. Their son would *"take the lead in delivering Israel from the hands of the Philistines"* (Judges 13:5).

For any of us who follow Christ, God has a higher mission for our lives. We are *"called according to His purpose"* (Romans 8:28). He has chosen us to serve the people around us with the unique mix of spiritual gifts He has given each of us. As 1 Corinthians 12:11 explains, these gifts *"are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He distributes them to each one, just as He determines."*

Therefore, because we have such an important calling from God, we need to live *"not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is"* (Ephesians 5:15-17).

Have you had a calling from God a prompting in your spirit do something for God? I know I had. Samson resisted God's calling for much of his life and maybe we could be resisting that call of God.

Video Clip 1: Called by God <http://www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/samson/called-by-god>

2 Betrayed: Samson finds a beautiful girl from Timnah and wants to marry her. Samson goes to meet her parents with his father and on his way a lion attacks him, and he tears the lion apart, like tearing apart a young goat, he was that strong because the Spirit of the Lord was upon him.

Then on the day of the wedding when he was going to Timnah for the wedding celebrations he saw the remains of the lion and in the carcass, there was a honeycomb and he took some honey and ate it. At the wedding, he challenges the young men with a riddle which goes like this, *"Out of the eater came something to eat. Out of the strong came something sweet."*

And if they could not answer they had to give Samson 30 coats and if he could not answer he had to do the same. The young men bullied his wife to be to get the answer of the riddle from Samson and through her sheer persistence he gives in and tells her the answer and so when Samson confronted the young men they gave him the answer- Samson was betrayed!

Life happens and people sometimes trip you up just when you think you've got it all together. They stab you in the back.

As that scene continues, we soon discover that Samson had been betrayed by his enemy, Rallah, who had forced his bride, Taren, to betray him as well. And that was only the beginning. He was also

betrayed by his own countrymen, who bound Samson and handed him over to the Philistines (Judges 15:11-14). And finally, he was tricked by his lover, Delilah—multiple times—which led him to his ultimate downfall (Judges 16).

Have you has someone pull the rug from under you? Feels rough doesn't it especially when it is someone close. Praise God we have a Saviour who understands what we are going through since He was betrayed by a trusted friend Himself

Hebrews 4:15-16 says this: *We have a high priest who can feel it when we are weak and hurting. We have a high priest who has been tempted in every way, just as we are. But he did not sin. 16 So let us boldly approach God's throne of grace. Then we will receive mercy. We will find grace to help us when we need it.*

Jesus is that friend who sticks closer than a brother (Prov 18:24)

Video Clip 2: The Riddle <http://www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/samson/the-riddle?play=1>

3 Redeemed – God can give you a second chance. Samson fell in love with Delilah a Philistine woman and through her seduction and persuasiveness Samson reveals where his strength comes from – his hair and then one day while he was asleep on Delilah's lap she cuts his hair and when the Philistine army come to overpower him he thinks he could use his strength again and defeat them but he realises he has no strength. Judges 16:21 But he didn't know that the Lord had left him. So they bound Samson and took his eyes out so he could not see and jailed him.

Everybody loves a comeback. The defeated athlete who comes back to win again, the defeated soldier who finds the strength to overcome the enemy or the ordinary person who is about to give up, but then comes back to succeed in the very area that was about to defeat him—these stories always inspire us.

Well, the Bible is full of comeback stories. Joseph was sold into slavery, yet somehow survived not just to be free again, but to become the number two leader of an entire kingdom. David blew it—big time—but then he turned away from his sins and again found God's grace and favour. And Jesus, in the ultimate comeback of all history, was ruthlessly crucified, His dead body was placed in a cold stone tomb, and all hope was lost. Until it wasn't! Three days later Jesus triumphantly burst out of the tomb with resurrection life, and He wants to share that life with each of us!

Have you ever felt like giving up! That all is lost! No hope! Well, Good news! You can have a second chance. You can have a comeback story. God can restore you and heal you and crown you with honour and power and victory. Romans 8:28 is clearly written to believers—those who “love Him” and are “called according to His purpose.” That's a promise for we who are following Christ.

Video Clip 3 – Second Chance <http://www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/samson/surrender-to-god?play=1> Some scenes are made up but the main theme is true.

4 Finishing strong. God redeems us to fulfil His mission and purpose. We all have a purpose.

“For I know the plans I have for you” declares the Lord to the Israelites in Jeremiah 29:11. Well, if you're a follower of Christ, then God has plans for you, too. You're a member of the group Jesus commanded: “Go into all the world and make disciples.” We all have a vital part to play in that broader mission—and we also have other more specialized purposes for which God created us. One thing's for sure. God didn't redeem you to let you be idle. As the old saying goes, “You were blessed to be a blessing.” Jesus came to serve others—then He tells us to do the same.

Some people say “I don’t need a church to worship God. I worship God best in the woods.” Okay. You may feel closer to God in the woods, so get out in the sticks and give Him praise! But that doesn’t mean that you don’t need the church—or that the church doesn’t need you. In fact, when you neglect the command of Hebrews 10:25, and neglect meeting together with other believers, you’re actually ripping them off! That’s because they need you and your spiritual gifts and service. Some will say “But I thought God’s grace and salvation were supposed to be free”.

Well, that’s true. We saw this in the previous clip from Ephesians 2:8-9: we are saved by grace through faith, and our good works have nothing to do with obtaining God’s salvation. But let’s not stop there—verse 10 adds something very important. It says we were “created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

Video clip 4: in the temple <http://www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/samson/in-the-temple?play=1>

Summary

We saw in Session 1 that we are chosen by God to serve Him and to fulfil His purposes in our lives. Well, after facing resistance and sometimes betrayals (clip 2), God comes and rescues us (and if He hasn’t already done so, He redeems us as His sons and daughters—clip 3), and then He recommissions us to fulfil the purposes He gave us in the first place. Only God can recommit and reposition you

Even if we’ve failed, God wants to restore us and to help us finish strong. We see this pattern in Samson: God chose him to deliver the Israelites, he resisted, but all was not lost. God rescued and redeployed Samson, and he ultimately fulfilled the mission God made him for.

Samson ran away from God but when he came back to God he was able to fulfil his mission. Only by following Jesus can we fulfil our mission because our mission and purpose is in Him

Are we looking for a new start? Are we still running away from God and pretending to do what we think He wants us to? Do we need to take stock of our lives and recalibrate it to what Jesus wants not what we want?

John 15:5 *“I am the vine. You are the branches. If you remain joined to me, and I to you, you will bear a lot of fruit. You can’t do anything without me.”*