Samson’s weakness

 The title of this sermon might sound a bit paradoxical as we know that Samson was the strongest man at its time. He was indeed gifted with extraordinary strength, but also had his weaknesses. His entire story gives us a portray of a character who is so strong and inspiring but vulnerable and weak at the same time in certain areas of his life. The different perspectives of his story full of successes and failures, gives us a lesson that we can learn from. This story cannot obviously justify someone when sinning o let us think that anyway things will go well even when we sin but could be encouraging if we are already found in the situation of falling into sin or can warn us and prevent us from future failures and mistakes. This is also the reason for which the Old Testament stories and all the stories in the Bible in general are there for us. To teach us something and to warn us.

 1Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. 1 Corinthians 10:11

 Let us have a look at a part of Samson’s story in Judges 16:4-31

 4Afterward it happened that he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name *was* Delilah. 5And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, “Entice him, and find out where his great strength *lies,* and by what *means* we may overpower him, that we may bind him to afflict him; and every one of us will give you eleven hundred *pieces* of silver.”

6So Delilah said to Samson, “Please tell me where your great strength *lies,* and with what you may be bound to afflict you.”

7And Samson said to her, “If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, then I shall become weak, and be like any *other* man.”

8So the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, and she bound him with them. 9Now *men were* lying in wait, staying with her in the room. And she said to him, “The Philistines *are* upon you, Samson!” But he broke the bowstrings as a strand of yarn breaks when it touches fire. So the secret of his strength was not known.

10Then Delilah said to Samson, “Look, you have mocked me and told me lies. Now, please tell me what you may be bound with.”

11So he said to her, “If they bind me securely with new ropes that have never been used, then I shall become weak, and be like any *other* man.”

12Therefore Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them, and said to him, “The Philistines *are* upon you, Samson!” And *men were* lying in wait, staying in the room. But he broke them off his arms like a thread.

13Delilah said to Samson, “Until now you have mocked me and told me lies. Tell me what you may be bound with.”

And he said to her, “If you weave the seven locks of my head into the web of the loom”—

14So she wove *it* tightly with the batten of the loom, and said to him, “The Philistines *are* upon you, Samson!” But he awoke from his sleep, and pulled out the batten and the web from the loom.

15Then she said to him, “How can you say, ‘I love you,’ when your heart *is* not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and have not told me where your great strength *lies.*” 16And it came to pass, when she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, *so* that his soul was vexed to death, 17that he told her all his heart, and said to her, “No razor has ever come upon my head, for I *have been* a Nazirite to God from my mother’s womb. If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak, and be like any *other* man.”

18When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, “Come up once more, for he has told me all his heart.” So the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hand. 19Then she lulled him to sleep on her knees, and called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him. 20And she said, “The Philistines *are* upon you, Samson!” So he awoke from his sleep, and said, “I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free!” But he did not know that the Lord had departed from him.

21Then the Philistines took him and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza. They bound him with bronze fetters, and he became a grinder in the prison. 22However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaven.

23Now the lords of the Philistines gathered together to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god, and to rejoice. And they said:

“Our god has delivered into our hands
Samson our enemy!”

24When the people saw him, they praised their god; for they said:

“Our god has delivered into our hands our enemy,
The destroyer of our land,
And the one who multiplied our dead.”

25So it happened, when their hearts were merry, that they said, “Call for Samson, that he may perform for us.” So they called for Samson from the prison, and he performed for them. And they stationed him between the pillars. 26Then Samson said to the lad who held him by the hand, “Let me feel the pillars which support the temple, so that I can lean on them.” 27Now the temple was full of men and women. All the lords of the Philistines *were* there—about three thousand men and women on the roof watching while Samson performed.

28Then Samson called to the Lord, saying, “O Lord God, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may with one *blow* take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!” 29And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars which supported the temple, and he braced himself against them, one on his right and the other on his left. 30Then Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines!” And he pushed with *all his* might, and the temple fell on the lords and all the people who *were* in it. So the dead that he killed at his death were more than he had killed in his life.

31And his brothers and all his father’s household came down and took him, and brought *him* up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of his father Manoah. He had judged Israel twenty years.

 This is the last chapter of his story and describes his downfall and the way he rose again. But let’s see first a whole picture of his life. Since his birth Samson was chosen by God and consecrated to Him. The way the birth occurred was miraculous as his mother was barren and couldn’t bear any children before that. An angel appeared to her saying that she was going to have a son and he was going to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines with the condition that no razor would come upon his head (Judges 13:2-5). There was only one purpose for which he was born, and that was the glory of God. His mission was to bring freedom to the nation of Israel by opposing its enemies – the philistines. For the most of his life he managed to do that. There was though one thing that was hindering him sometimes, and in the long run, that brought him down. That was his weakness toward sin. He had difficulty sometimes to say no in certain situations. Remember that we are looking here at the Old Testament, and the sin was seen slightly different than the one in the New Testament, but we definitely can compare ourselves with the life of Samson and get a teaching from there.

 In general, Samson was having an issue with women. Something that most of us could be struggling with today, even though when we talk generally about sin and discussing the situation of Samson, we are not meaning always sexual sin and women, but this is what in most cases a person could be struggling with anyway. Samson’s downfall was with Dalilah to whom he revealed all his secrets concerning his strength and, in this way, he was overpowered by his enemies. We have to know though that all this didn’t start with Delilah. He was cultivating these desires and didn’t fight much with them, didn’t resist them. This is also how sin works. Since the beginning of his story, we see him choosing a philistine wife instead of following the advice of his parents to take a woman from his own nation. That already gave a space for the enemy to interact with him as his wife was from their nation (Philistine) and in this way they started interfering with him since the feast he had set up for his wife (Judges 14:10-20).

Now Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines. **2**So he went up and told his father and mother, saying, “I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife.”

**3**Then his father and mother said to him, “*Is there* no woman among the daughters of your brethren, or among all my people, that you must go and get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?”

And Samson said to his father, “Get her for me, for she pleases me well.” Judges 14:1-3

 In today’s days, this situation could be compared to someone choosing a non-believer as a wife. I am not judging persons having such relationships, I am just analyzing the passage. In this way someone is already more exposed to the world and the enemy as here we are speaking about being unequally yoked with someone as 2 Corinthians 6:14 says. I am not saying this is an impossible task, I am just saying that there are consequences for each decision based on the flesh we take. God could allow some things to happen, but just because we have chosen them, and we will bear the consequences. He doesn’t want to force us sometimes. He is instead advising us, and we have His word as a guidance on how we should live. We can say that Samson was many times guided by his impulse and what he saw than the word and the principles of God. Was it a good principle for the Israelites not to take a woman from another nation? Yes, it was. Same as today it is for a Christian husband or wife to have a believer as a companion instead of a non-believer. There will be eventually cases where this will happen or maybe the two of them were engaged before coming to the faith, and in this case, they should stay together, but in general God had set some principles and rules which are good to follow. They are good advises for our good. We can see many other persons in the Bible taking some important and essential decisions based on what they just felt or liked, and we see the consequences that came with that too. So, we see that despite the advice of his parents not to take a Philistine woman as a wife, he did it and in this way his enemies got involved in his personal life too and for a revenge they killed his wife (Judges 15:6). That brought Samson to a crisis, and he fought with them and revenged his wife, and that was also from the Lord as the scripture says in Judges 14:4, but this is just because we have an amazing God who knows how to make things to work together for good for those who love Him. It is not because of our wrong decisions, but because of His goodness. We must never think that sin and wrong decisions will bring us any good, but to know that God is the one who does it because of His mercy by interfering with the situation. Glory for Him for that and for his mercy that could anyway also run out if someone takes it as granted and doesn’t have the right attitude toward it.

 Today we can compare Samson with a believer who of course walks with God and fights His battles, but still easily stumbles into his weaknesses. Obviously, many persons stumble and have weaknesses, but here we are speaking about someone who is a bit more inclined to this. Comparing him to a believer today we cannot either say that we are speaking about someone who lives permanently in sin and doesn’t feel regret at all when he sins. No. When we are talking about Samson we are talking about a real believer and one who fights his battles for God’s glory, someone who is a part of the Kingdom. We know this because the Bible says that Samson was chosen since his birth, and we can see God’s hand on his life.

The Bible talks in 1 Corinthians 3:11-14 about building with different materials. There Apostle Paul makes a comparison with the life of the believer. He talks about a person having a foundation already, which is **very important**. Nevertheless, the life of a believer doesn’t stop just at this point, (which is of course essential). Paul talks about the material we use to build on the foundation and lists the possible materials used, of which some are more resistant and some others not. They all will be tested with fire one day. To me the way someone builds mean the way we live as Christians and the dedication we have for the Lord. There are indeed some Christians being more worldly and fleshly than others. Here we are not speaking about the measurement of faith each one is having as even those having a small measurement could be more dedicated than the rest. Samson was a strong warrior for Gid’s kingdom. He was admired for his extraordinary strength with which was gifted and even though he was fleshly at times. We need to have a desire while we live, we need to have a desire for the Lord to work in our life, to be used by Him as well. Paul compares the Christian life in 1 Corinthians 9:24 to a race. We need to run in such a way that we may win, not in a sluggish way.

Many times, I found myself to build with materials which do not endure. A house could have a good look when built with straw, but it will eventually not endure. Sometimes I thought to build with materials such as wood which apparently seem more resistant but still do not endure in the fiery trial which come upon everyone.

12Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; 1 Peter 4:12

Samson was a person who was building too with such materials, by not paying attention to his weaknesses and working on them. We need to pursue perfection in our Christian lives even if we see ourselves far from it. We need to desire to grow more in the Lord. We are obviously not perfect and when speaking about perfection I am not referring to justification which comes from God alone. Somebody might be looking for perfection in order to justify himself, but we need instead to present ourselves before Him the way we are and He will justify us by His precious blood. When talking about perfection I am talking about a dedication, about exercising our faith and the way we walk in Him after we have received the justification. This could help us to grow and prevent us from stumbling.

This was probably lacking in Samson’s life and the consequences didn’t delay coming. After the death of the woman he had chosen for a wife and some other moments he went through, he met Delilah. Driven by the Philistines, she wanted to know the secret of his strength. Here we see the enemy pointing right there where the fountain of the power is. His purpose is to annihilate us and to attack us where our major weakness is. Once the enemy achieves that, he will try to interrupt the fountain of our strength, he will try to interrupt our relationship with God and to cut our strength and faith by the roots. We know that our strength comes from God. That’s why he will try to interrupt our relationship with Him. He will try to instill doubt in our hearts and to cut all connections and ways for us to be related with God. This is what Delilah did. She wanted to know the very secret of Samson’s strength. He probably didn’t take it as something serious in that moment and being overconfident, he kept on playing with her, telling her different things about the secret of his strength. This is when we play with sin, thinking that we still have control over it. If he had taken the matter seriously, he would have probably cut this conversation with her since the beginning of it and would have moved away. But as he had probably forgotten that the secret of his strength was coming not from himself but from God, by following His ways, he opened his heart to her. This happens in our life when we are too confident, and we forget that we are nothing without him. Failing and falling into sin, helps us to realize our fragility and get back to God, to get back to trust in Him even more than before. The failure and the sin don’t occur just at the moment in most of the times but build up with time by leaving aside our trust in Him. We start walking by our own strength and wisdom. This is something subtle and, in our eyes, it looks like we still walk and trust in God, but we don’t do it all heartedly. We need to put all our effort to do so, but to trust in our own strength is nevertheless an occurrence that sometimes we cannot control. That’s why God sometimes allows certain failures to happen in our life so that we can come aware of our real condition and our weakness, so that we can trust again in Him. This is in His sovereignty, and we have to desire to walk up straight with Him through thought the way and not to purposely allow sin in our life.

Going back to the story of Samson, we see that instead of cutting off since the beginning the conversation concerning the secret of his strength with Delilah, he kept on conversing with her. Something similar happened in the garden of Eden with Eve and the serpent. She started talking with the serpent about the prohibited fruit and remained there to converse about it. Somethings get cut off since the beginning, otherwise they could prevail over us.

Out of this story as in any story in the Bible having to do with taking wrong decisions or falling into sin, we can see that there are consequences. As we said before this is also a demonstration of God’s love as sometimes, he allows these consequences and also judges us in this way, so that we can understand the gravity of our wrong and in this way to repent and not return to the same mistake. A father corrects the child he loves. In 1 Peter 4:17 it is said that the judgment begins with the household of the Lord. This means us who believe. It is not in the same way with the unbelievers who will not be judged now and will not feel most of the consequences of sin at this present time. They will not be corrected by the Father as they are not legitimate sons. That’s why you will probably never see an unbeliever regretting his sin or feeling sorrowful because of it. A believer instead knows when his relationship with the Lord is interrupted and when the Lord is not pleased with Him. Sometimes the judgment is expressed in leaving us into the enemy’s hands. It is not God who wants to hurt or harm us, but He just removes His hand of protection from us. He does this because He cannot stand at sin and iniquity. At the same time, He uses this moment to work in us. It looks like He left but He is there though and oversees us. He will not allow for us to be over tested. He won’t allow the enemy to do more than what He allowed him. We want to sin and pull away from God in this way? Then He leaves us to go into that direction, as He is a gentleman and doesn’t force us. Then we see our relationship with Him to be interrupted and we learn how harmful is to be away from the Father. We understand that He will not strike us with lightning or judge us directly when we sin, but He just removes His protection in most of the cases, so that we can understand how painful is to be away from Him. One of the best things in our relationship with Him is His love and His protection and providence which many times we take as something granted and we don’t appreciate as we should. It us said: “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” Matthew 6:33

By “all these things” we also intend His protection. We wanted to depart from Him? Them He leaves us to depart but will still remind us that the only secure place is under His wings. Same as the prodigal son who asked for his part of the inheritance and left his father. He departed far from him and after a while felt the consequences of his own choices. So, the way He performs this judgement and the fact that we are found in the enemy’s hands same as it happened to Samson, is actually for our good.

Samson felt the consequences of his sin. Which was his sin precisely? He opened his heart to Delilah and told her the secret of his strength. First, he did a mistake to be with her and afterwards all this grew to something bigger. We see that after she cut his hair, he lost his strength, and the enemy blinded him and imprisoned him. We need to know that when we are on the side of the Lord and fight battles against the enemy (the devil) in His name, the same way as Samson did, we are getting the devil furious on us. Much more than ever before. Now he wants to annihilate us. He wants to destroy us. He will never show any pity and will do everything possible to accomplish that. Once that we fall in his hands, he will poor all his wrath and rage on us. Why? Because we’ve been causing damage to his dark kingdom. Not we, with our own strength, but Jesus living in us. Same as Samson was fighting the Philistines and when he fell in their hands, they were furious with him by blinding him and enslaving him. The Bible says that the prince of this world (the devil) is the one blinding the people from seeing the glorious light of the gospel.

 “whose minds the god of this age **has blinded**, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.” 2 Corinthians 4:4 (emphasis added)

 Of course, in this passage is speaking about the people who do not believe at all, but I believe that a believer can also get blinded again. In 2 Peter 1:5-9 it is said:

5But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. 8For if these things are yours and abound, *you* will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9**For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness**, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. (emphasis added)

We see that in this passage is described the effort a believer must have, so that he can grow in the faith. Without this he is shortsighted, even to blindness. This confirms that a believer can be blinded too. Samson wasn’t probably putting all his effort to please God and many times gave a free way to his flesh and desires.

Was Samson chosen? Was he a man of God and a believer? Yes, of course. He was chosen since the womb of his mother, but still, he probably didn’t live fully for God, at its full potential. What is true is that God turned all of his failures and what the enemy meant evil against him into something glorious as he managed to destroy more enemies than ever at his death (Judges 16:29, 30). He was blinded and enslaved by the Philistines. They had finally achieved what they wanted. Their enemy Samson was weakened and helpless and imprisoned by them. One day they were at their temple to rejoice over their triumph, and he was called out to perform for them. Standing between the pillars of the temple, he prayed to the Lord to give him strength for this last time so that he can take vengeance on the Philistines for his two eyes. The Lord heard his prayer, and he pushed the two pillars, making the temple to fall on them and him also. We need to remember that when speaking about the Philistines, we are referring to the devil, whose purpose is to enslave us and blind us, as they did with Samson. The Lord heard the prayer of Samson and in this way, he had a victory over the Philistines and ended his life victoriously. This should be our desire above everything. To glorify God with our life. That’s why if you feel failed today, you have to raise up and trust in the Lord as He still wants to work in your life. You just need to understand the wrong you have done, the consequences of it and be disposed to His treatment. **We need to appreciate God’s mercy as it would have become much worse if it wasn’t for it**. Samson could have died and be killed by the Philistines at the moment he was taken by them, but nevertheless he remained in life to fulfill his calling. This could happen only by God’s mercy. If it was up to us and the decisions we took, we would have been lost by now. But today we are still standing by God’s mercies, and we need to be acknowledgeable for that. Samson felt the consequences of his wrong choices but finished well. We don’t want though to end up blinded and enslaved. We want to live our life fully for Him in the right way.

 Another thing that we need to notice is what happened after they imprisoned him. V. 22 of chapter 16 of Judges says:

**22**However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaven.

 It means that slowly but surely, same as a hair takes to grow, a believer, a man of God is destined to regain his strength. This is obviously if his hair doesn’t get cut again and again. It also takes time until we regain our spiritual strength. In the midst of it we will be weak and be exposed to the enemy’s attacks, but what we need to do is to stand firm, hold unto the promises of God and trust in His word. Healing takes time. God’s forgiveness comes at the moment someone acknowledges His wrongs, but spiritual healing and regaining strength takes time.

 We said already that Samson’s victory as well as the victory we can have today is because of the Lord’s goodness and not because of our capability or failures. Through this story we can clearly see that our capability is not to glorify God, but to fail. I am not saying this to point that we can deliberately fail, but so that we can come to acknowledgement of who we are, of how our nature is. Our nature and desire are leading us to sin. I am also mentioning this part of the story of Samson to say to those who have failed and think that their failure is great and irreparable, that they need to be encouraged knowing that God can still use them and use any situation for good. Samson achieved much at the end of his life, but there indeed were consequences and he went through tough moments. He was blinded and at the end in order to accomplish what he desired from God, he had to sacrifice himself and die with the Philistines. I am sure that we don’t want to go through these kinds of moments in our life, even if we are not necessary speaking of literal death coming to someone when sinning as it happened in this story. This is just an example of the consequences that come after sin.

The Bible is full of stories written for our encouragement, correction and exhortation. We could find ourselves in certain stories or character in the different times we are going through life. This all is for the purpose to give us hope and to instruct us. Whether we are found in a situation similar to Samson, we fell in something, and God wants to rise us up or we just need to be careful and take this story as a warning and guidance of how we need to walk in front of God.