

"The Restoration of a Failure" – Judges 16:21-31

Tonight we're going to say goodbye to Samson. What a fun study. I don't think out of all the study's I've ever done, Nehemiah, all of them, I think that Samson has become really the challenge of my life. If I had to do another book, I would do it on broken relationships and I would use Samson as a guide to teach on. Because when you really look at his life it really doesn't get too far from our own personal life. He's kind of like Peter in the Old Testament. And the wonderful thing that I'm excited about tonight is I get to leave you with Samson going out in glory. They made him perform, and he 'brought the house down'. So it's a wonderful thing to see and he goes down in history as one of the men who lived by faith.

And I have to say that I've always kind of struggled with that one verse in Hebrews, but as I ponder it, and thought about it, and taught this study, what SIX times on Thursday night on Chapters 13, 14, 15 and 16 and as we wrap it up tonight, I would have to say that if I was God, which I'm not, I would have to put him in the 'hall of faith'. For two simple reasons: Number one, that at his age and what he went through, he still was willing to be changed. And I think one of the sad commentaries on our lives is we just give up. We feel like we are not going to be able to change, or this is the way it is, but there is not a desire to really be what God want us to be. We just are going to be second, we're going to be here, we're going to do this, and this is the best I can give God. And that is so sad, because anybody can change. And even though things had not worked out, and you had made bad decisions in your life; God can still restore

you and God can still bring the house down, and God can still do one more work in a powerful way through your life.

And so I have to say that tonight's study, I would agree with God. Not that that's important but I would agree that, yes, this man goes down because in that moment of brokenness he did not turn from God. And you would think that when people are dealt with, or humbled, or devastated by God, that they would humble themselves and become obedient and just surrender and not fight with God; that is not true. For instance, you go try to correct your wife out of love and see what happens. Or you try to share with your children how they might be making a mistake, they're not going to love you anymore, they're going to get mad.

And so when God seeks to correct, or when God desires to help you, often times more than not, we tend to run away and get away. And so when someone gets hurt or someone becomes paralyzed, instead of turning to God we turn against God. So when a person has been dealt with: blinded, his eyes gouged out. He's been binding and grinding in prison. He's been mocked, and a horrible example, 20 years of not being obedient before the Lord. And finally he just says, "I quit." And God said "Great." And his hair begins to grow, and he says, "God, one more time let me die." And God says, "Fine let's do this thing." And what he did in one moment was more than he did in his whole time. This is my favorite portion of Samson, "That which he did at the very end was more than 20 years in the flesh." (Judges 16:30) Because 'obedience' is the greatest blessing of your life, so you can never give up. So it doesn't make a difference, if you made a wrong decision in you marriage, or you got a divorce, or you have been separated, or you're going through difficult times. If you can turn and look to God and accept God's way out, then you too will go down to the 'hall of faith'. It's very few people that do that. And I want to be that. And so Samson teaches me tonight, what not to do but what to do.

And so we pick up the story in the book of Samson. Very simply I want to read just a couple of things with you. You can turn with me to Hebrews chapter 11, and also put your fingers in Judges chapter 16. So we'll start in chapter 16 verses 28-30, and then we'll jump over to Hebrews once again verse 31 of chapter 11. So once again "The Restoration of a Failure". If you have made a mistake, if you've been relieved of your position, if you've been kicked out of ministry, if you have been a failure, drunk or whatever it be, God is in the business of restoring people. So this is a very important study for you always to remember because Jonah was restored, and Peter was restored, and Paul was restored, and Moses was restored, in other words, when God gets a hold of you, He's in the business of putting you back in business.

And so Samson's great victory, we see in chapter 16:28-30, **"And Samson called into the Lord, and said, 'Oh Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, (Just one more time God. I like that, "only this once" underline that.) Oh God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes."** (Judges 16:28-30) Now I don't believe that God answered that prayer, and we're going to talk about that in a few moments. **"And Samson (in verse 29) took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it bore up, and the one with his right hand, and the other one with his left. And Samson said, 'Let me die (Oh man, that's the prayer, "Lord let me die." "Lord let me avenge what my spouse is doing. Lord let me avenge what my boss has done. Lord let me die." God will always answer that prayer. Lord let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself (I like that, "Lord let me die and let me bow himself.") with all his might, and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people that were there in. So the dead (and here's the verse, I wasn't making it up) so the dead which he slew were at his**

death were more than they which he slew in his life.” (Judges 16:29-30)

Five seconds of obedience was better than 20 years of disobedience.

And then we see the great victory; we see his great faith. In (Hebrews 11:31-34) this is kind of encouraging, “By faith the harlot Rahab persisted perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace. And what shall I say more (or, ‘What shall I more say?’) for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, of Barak, of Samson.” And so his name is mentioned there. And in verse 33, **“Who through faith subdued kingdoms, they wrought righteousness, they obtained promises and they stopped the mouths of lions, (We know that to be in Daniel. Verse 34) they quenched the violence of fire, escape the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed mighty in fight, turned to flight the enemies once again.”** And so we see his incredible ability to do that.

And so here we have a man that once again found himself in a difficult position. He had sinned against God. He had slept with a harlot. He had been living with Delilah. He has now given up the heart of his secret. God has dealt with his life. And he’s there been grinding, has gone through difficult times, he’s now come to himself. He’s almost like the prodigal son; he finally came to himself. And he said (the prodigal son), “If I go home it’s going to be so much better, being with my father.” (Luke 15:17) And when all of a sudden I begin to talk that way; when he came to himself, is when he said, “If I just go back to God, it’s going be easier.” The way of transgressor is hard. I need to turn.

Kind of reminds me of a story of a failure in Britain about a captain who was in charge of a certain ship and they were doing courses and they were seeking to do maneuver’s out in the ocean. And he had a battleship, and I think there were like 15--16 different battleships. And all of a sudden at a certain command, the admiral would make all the captains, would have to turn their ships a certain way

and reverse course and turn around, and they would have to do it perfect, lest it be very dangerous. And so the maneuver went perfect, except one captain that wasn't paying attention. And all of a sudden as everyone else turned, he didn't pay attention, and so he is now heading right into the rest of them. And so the rest of them had the ability to maneuver, to get out of his way. Finally when it was all said and done everything kind of brought back into a peaceful situation, the admiral called the captain and said, "What are you doing?" He said "I'm going to buy a farm when I get home." He knew that his days of being a captain were over. And so in his life failure meant dry dock.

Well that's not the way with God. When you blow it, God's willing to restore, and God's willing to do a work, and God's willing to give that second chance. And that is the mercy of God. He's willing to give you a chance over and over again. And God loves to turn the table. I remember sitting in Costa Mesa, I never forget this, and Chuck has this little thing he always does, this hand thing, and he always says, "And God loves to turn the table." And he would always kind of share that one story of Esther. How Haman was seeking to kill the Jews. And how Mordecai, you remember, came to Esther and said, "Listen you need to go before the king and tell the king what's happening." And she said, "I can't do that, because he's kind of in a bad mood, doesn't want to be bothered, and if you interrupt him you can die unless he tips the scepter toward you." (Esther 4:9-11) Now here she is married to this man and she fears this man. And Mordecai said, "Listen how do you know if you have not come for such a time as this?" Well finally God convicted her; and so she begins to walk in the door and she says, "If I perish I perish." (Esther 4:9-16) And so she just walked in. And of course the king loving her tipped the scepter towards her. And she was able to share with the king Haman's purpose in killing the Jews. Well when the king was able to see what's being taken place, eventually as the story goes we find that Haman built the gallows to hang Mordecai and all the Jews. And what really happened is that the very gallows that Haman built Haman hung on.

And Chuck would always say that, "God loves to turn tables". And I believe you need to understand that in your life, "God will turn the table". God will get things right. God will vindicate your life. God will turn this thing around. It might not be overnight but God will do the work in a very powerful way.

And I want to share with you just a couple of things this evening but there's things I want you to try to remember, and just 3 things I would like you to jot down and try to remember these. Number one, Samson's sin took him further than he wanted to go. Samson's sin took him further than he wanted to go and I think that you need to understand as well as I do, that sin will take you farther than you really want to go. Oh, you can start out very simple but all of a sudden Satan begins to add and sin begins to multiply. And Satan begins to twist and Satan begins to blind your eyes. And so here we find that Samson went further than he really wanted to go. And we saw that in verses 1-17 that all of a sudden he went down to Gaza on business, whatever, but he met a harlot. He had no business being in the Philistine country but he met a harlot. And then in verse 4 he went down and met a woman name Delilah and got involved in a relationship. And then he opened his heart and revealed the secret. And then all of a sudden he's now blinded, in prison, out of the Will of God. You see Satan took him further than he really wanted to go. So if you don't want to go down that path you have to stop right now. So sin will always take you further. That's why lust is never satisfied it needs to keep growing. The magazines don't do it, now it's something else, and something else, always desiring more. It takes you further than you wanted to go. "I'm going to tell my husband what I think." Well fine, you shouldn't but you're going to. "Now I'm going to really tell him how I feel." Fine, now you're screaming, now you're divorced. What happened? It took me further than I wanted to go.

And secondly, we find that Samson's sin kept him longer than he wanted to stay. Sin will keep you longer than you want to stay. And the first thing is it's going to take you further than you want to go. But secondly, sin is going to keep him longer than he wanted to stay. And so he stayed too long at Delilah's house. And the longer he stayed, the more she pressed him, the more she challenged him. And you remember the last week she vexed his soul till the point of death. In other words, she was driving him crazy. And so out of foolishness, he opened his heart and revealed the secret.

And so number one, sin took him further than he wanted to go. And secondly, sin kept him longer than he wanted to stay. And thirdly, tonight we're going to look at this; sin cost him more than he wanted to pay. So sin will always take you further, and sin will always not only take you further, but also sin will keep you longer than you wanted to stay. And lastly, sin will cost you more than you wanted to pay. Hey, just give that gal a kiss, and all of a sudden, now you have venereal disease, and she's pregnant, and your whole life is a mess, and you're now divorced. It took you further and it cost you more than you ever expected. That's why Jesus Christ came to die for your sins because he understood what sin did to humanity--it destroyed it. That's why the Holy Spirit doesn't want us to play with sin He wants us to die. That's why he wouldn't avenge his eyes; but he would revenge his heart.

And so once again, a couple of things; and so in verses 20-31, I want to give you four things to think about: very simply, kind of cool, the Lord kind of gave these to me today. Kind of redid them, but they really ministered to my heart. And so number one, God released him. In verse 20 under "Will cost him more than he wanted to pay". The first thing we find in verse 20 is "God released him". Well you say, "That's exciting." Not really. Notice it said, "The Lord left him." (Judges 16:20). And she said, "The Philistines be upon thee Samson. And he woke out of a sleep and said, 'I will go out as other times before.'" Underline that, "I'm

going to go out as I did before.” The way I attacked the lion, the way that I took the city gates off of the city of Gaza, the way that I was able to kill a thousand Philistines. In other words, the way that I’ve always done it, “God, I’m going to do it.” So he went out as other times, and he shook himself, and he did not know that the Lord departed. So because of his unwillingness to surrender his life, because of his flirtation to play and toy with sin, he is now caught, snared. And the one thing happened that he never thought would happen. Number one, he had never known defeat. He had always been victorious. Nothing had ever happened in his life to challenge that. If he wanted to catch a fox, he can catch 300 of them. If he wanted to open things up, he can do whatever he wanted. No one ever took away his strength; this time what happened is that God left him. And because God removed His presence, he was just a normal man. There was no longer a supernatural strength. The covenant was gone; he had violated, he had been cursed because of that decision he had made. He had played with God, challenged God, mocked God, and wouldn’t listen to anyone, rebelled. And finally the Lord said, “You crossed over, you now have sinned to the point that I cannot do anything else with you. I’m going to turn you over.”

And so we find that first of all that God released him. And that’s a sad day. That’s the worse day of your life. Can you imagine the rapture coming, and all of a sudden you’re walking in, and your family is gone and you’re still there? Can you imagine all of a sudden walking down the street and everyone is gone, but you’re still there? In other words, because of the life style, because of what I’ve done, I never dreamed I would be left behind, never dreamed I would get myself in a situation, but the reality. Talk about these reality shows; let me give you a great reality. If God were to leave you, you’d be one hurting puppy. And the worse thing that you can ever want in your life is for God to remove his presence, or for God to turn you over to the enemy, or for God to allow the enemy to come against you. But that happens all the time because people are

not serious about God. They really don't place God in the place of honor and respect. And they treat Him as a Santa Claus, give me this, give me that. And there comes a time, I don't know when, that God will just simply say "Fine. Let your lovers and your idolatry and all the things you're doing take over."

What Billy Graham said is so true, "If God doesn't judge United States, He owes Sodom and Gomorrah an apology." In other words, the only reason I believe God hasn't judged the United States is because we have not turned on Israel. That's the only thing I can think of. And if we ever turn on Israel we've had it. And so the only thing holding us together, but yet we still see the violence, and the crime, and now the TV, and the nakedness, and using the Lord's name, and all the shows coming out, and all the radical things going on. And this amazes me, just flaunted before God.

And so we find here, the Lord left him. And the Philistines took him. Notice it says in verse 21, "Not only did the Lord leave him, but the Philistines took him. But the Philistines took him and put out his eyes and brought him down to Gaza." So number one, they took him. Number two, they put his eyes out. Number three, check this out, they brought him down. That is so cool, when you see who is bringing you down. God isn't bringing you down; the enemy is seeking to bring you down. God is seeking to take you up.

So I would think that we would want to serve God because we're going to be taken up, but we don't. In our minds if we serve God, we're going to suffer. And Satan has convinced us, if I give God this, he's going to take it away. Well if God takes it away, He's going to give it back to you a hundred times better. So God will always take you up, He'll never take you down. If you don't, and seek to be taken up, then He'll humble you. But here very simply he was taken down. And so the Philistines took him, not only did they bring him down but also they bound him, and once again he was now grinding in the prison house. Now check this

out, his whole life he's been saved, his whole life he's been in victory, his whole life he's been the "man of the hour," the man who was in charge, the man who can do anything. But in a moment of time, he lost everything, and what he lost was his freedom. He lost his eyes, he was brought down, he was bound, and once again he is now in the prison house. And so Samson is helpless and they had blinded him, they had fastened him, and now they had imprisoned him. And notice they blinded him; I think that is what sin does. Sin and Satan seeks to blind you from the work of God in your life. It seeks to keep you away from the things of the Spirit. The world, the flesh, and the devil is right there seeking to have you go after it. And so we become blinded to the call of God because we're coveting, or we become blinded to the things that God wants because we're doing things that we ought not to do.

Sin will blind every single time. And how it blinds is kind of interesting. It tells you that you're not that bad, look around. And it tells you what you're doing isn't so bad at all. "I'm not taking drugs but I'm hooked on prescription drugs, so it's not that bad." Listen you're still addicted. "And I'm not really lusting I'm just kind of in love." No you're lusting. "And it's not really adultery; it's kind of like a you know, hanging out together just kind of petting each other." You have to call it what it is, its adultery, its fornication. And the reason why we don't call it that is because adulterers and fornicators, they're not going to enter the Kingdom of God. "Well, I don't like to hear that." Well that's what I need to hear. In other words, God has established the standard, if I can't live by the standard I need to either change God or change the standard, or justify it some way. So I call it, "I'm falling in love", you're tripping over yourself lusting, you can't even think about anybody else but him. And all of a sudden your whole life is around him, it ought to be around Jesus Christ. That guy is going to let you down; that guy is going to hurt you. "Oh no, if I could just get married," he's really going to hurt you. In other words, we don't know how to do it the right way, even in our best day we're still selfish. Only God is the one who can be

loved without ever being hurt. And so they blinded his eyes very simply, and he was blinded to other people.

Sometimes I'm blinded to those around me, because I'm into myself. Well that means I'm blinded. The Bible says I'm to look, and I'm to be open, and I'm to be praying, and to be helping other people. When I'm into myself, I'm blinded. When I want to take care of me, I'm blinded to the needs around. And so sin will always blind, it will always bring you down. And not only did it blind him, but also bound him. Notice he was tied, and sin will tie your heart. And sin will tie your soul. And Satan is seeking to tie you down, to bring you in bondage, to bring you under his authority, his power. And it will always bring you down and burden your life. And you will always hear this, "Don't go to The Cross; come over here." And that is the first sign that you need to understand you're under the wrong master. Because you need to run to the cross, you need to look to Christ.

It's kind of like that great little story, true story about a rat eating this guy's wire. Now you say, "Well, what's the problem with that?" Well he was in an airplane. And he's flying, and he realizes he hears this gnawing going on by his feet. And he doesn't know what to do, but he knows that if that rat finishes eating, he could crash. So all of a sudden he remembers that he has oxygen. So he takes this plane as high as he can go. Well basically he put the oxygen on, the rat died. So what do you do when sin is gnawing at your life? You go up. What do you do when you're being tempted? You go up. What do you do when you want to hurt somebody or say something? You go up. In other words, you pull back, and you go as high as you can, because sin cannot dwell in the presence of God. You just go straight up.

But we don't do that. "Oh, well let's land, and let's see what else we can get ourselves into." That's why we're sheep; we're kind of dumb we're not really

smart. You know a sheep will walk off a cliff? The only animal that will honestly walk off a cliff; they're eating, eating, ahhhhhhhh! Any other animal doesn't do that; a sheep will do that. Any other animal can sniff out poison, not a sheep. Any other animal stops, won't gorge itself; a sheep won't. You see sheep are kind of dumb animals. Now why did God say, "You are the sheep of my pasture, you guys need help." And what is a sheep always doing? Looking on to other pastures, you know. We know what happens, sometimes God has to take that sheep and break it's leg, and put it over him and teach that sheep a lesson. Well God broke Samson, but God never let him go. And God doesn't let me and you go. And so he was buffeted, he was grinding in prison.

So number one, God released him and when God released him the Philistines took him. And when the Philistines took him he was blinded, he was bound and he was buffeted. Tell me that isn't John 10:10, "**Satan has come to rob, to steal, to kill but I came to give you life.**" And secondly, not only is God releasing him, but notice verse 22, "God restored him." This is so neat. Notice, and I'm praying for this everyday in my life, "His hair began to grow." In other words he was shaven. He was bald. But here's the crazy thing, as they shaved his head and his strength was gone, because he broke the covenant, the commandment, and the Nazarene vow. But the incredible thing, if I was a Philistine and had any knowledge of God I'd be shaving his head every single day. But his hair began to grow, his hair began to grow and forgiveness is immediate. You need to understand the moment you fall in sin God will forgive you instantly. But there are somethings that take time; and his hair began to grow. See restoration doesn't come quickly; it takes time. You need patience if you're going to have God restore you. "I want it now!" Well a Bible scripture just came to my mind. You remember they took Jericho, they did it God's way and because they did it God's way, the walls of Jericho what? They came down, just thought about this. But then they went to Ai, and they did not bring God into it, they went attacked Ai on their own strength. We do that sometimes.

And what happened? They lost the war. And all of a sudden we find Joshua falling down asking God what to do? And God said, "There's sin in the camp." The whole story goes on, but when they went back to overcome Ai they had to do it a different way. They had to set an ambush up. And so yes, you're able to conquer territory you lost, but it's harder. Yes God wants you to get that territory, but it's going to take longer to get it. So instead of just going in the first time doing it God's way, now you have to do it God's way, and it's going to be a little bit more harder to get. Because you have done things, and there's lessons to be taught. And so they had to set an ambush. And they had to do all these things. They did overcome Ai, but it took a little bit longer. You fall, God will restore you but not overnight. He will forgive you instantly, but God desires to begin to build your life back up in a very powerful way. Well He forgave David, but he could never do what he wanted to do. He wanted to build something for God, and God said, "No you're a bloody man." And we find Peter that he was restored and forgiven, and God did a work, but Paul was right on the tail ready to take over his ministry. And Jonah we find that God restored him, but he fades out. And Elijah was restored after he wanted to commit suicide, but Elisha was now going to take over his ministry.

So sometimes restoration takes longer than we really want to do it; "I want to be restored now." Well what got you here? "I want to do it my way." Well now you want to be restored your way? You got time out here. If you have messed up your marriage, it's not going to be fixed overnight. It might take a year to fix your marriage. Are you in love with that woman long enough and deep enough to die for a whole year? "Well, she might take advantage of me." So what, God will deal with her. We're not talking about her, we're not talking about the church; we're talking about you. Are you willing to do one thing that you haven't done? Are you willing to die to who you are? "Oh yeah, for one day, that's it." I know, it's hard; I'm right with you.

So God restored him. And we see, and once again, often times, we think... Well great God, his hair began to grow, I'm going to sin, and God's going to let my hair grow. Remember his eyes were not healed. And remember he was not delivered from the Philistines. And remember he died. So though God forgave him, God did not put him back into position; God took him out. And so yes, God can restore you. Yes, God can forgive you. But when you go down that path, and you destroy character, its going to take time to build it. And very few times in 33-34 years of ministry have I really witnessed a person saying "I want to build my character, I'm willing to humble myself be a servant, sit, grow, get my priorities right, and die to who I am." Too hard - but if you do it, God will restore. And the love of God will fill your heart, and people will see Jesus and no longer you.

And so number two, we find that God was able to not only release him, but secondly, God was able to restore him, his hair began to grow. And then number three, I find that God rebuked him. God rebuked him in verses 23-27, and it says here, "Then the lords of the Philistines gathered themselves together to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon (half fish half man) and their gods, and to rejoice for they said, 'Our god has delivered Samson our enemy into our hands.' And when the people saw him, they praised their god: and they said, 'Our god has delivered into our hands the enemy, and the destroyer of the country, which slew many of us.' And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, and they said, "Call for Samson that he may make us sport." (In other words, he's going to entertain us.) And they called for Samson out of the prison house; and he made them sport: (he did things that made them laugh) and they set him between the pillars." Now a couple of things stand out to me: God rebuked him. Why did God rebuke him? Well first of all God released him. Where? Into the hands of the Philistines. But then the mercy of God got a hold of his heart, his hair began to grow, and God began to restore him. But there were lessons he had to learn. And God now is going to rebuke his servant; and he's going to

rebuke him, because number one, his testimony brought shame to the name of God. So it's important that I do not violate my testimony. If I go out and sin I'm going to shame the name of Jesus Christ, I'm going to hurt Calvary Chapel, I'm going to destroy my marriage, I'm going to destroy your lives, there's too much at stake. I need to die. I can't take a chance of not dying to myself. I need to go the way of humility. I need to go the way of reconciliation. I need to come, I don't and I cannot afford to get angry. I did that once and got shot. I can't afford to lie, because I don't know where it's going to take me. In other words, there's too much at stake for God's name. He saved me, He was the only one that reached out and took me out of the street. He was willing to put His life into mine. I need to bare His testimony for the rest of my life. And I need to be honest with God, and tell God how I feel. But notice his testimony was ruined. They delivered Samson they said, "Our god has destroyed Jehovah." And in their minds they were right. Dagon has delivered Jehovah. He has destroyed the man of God. And the world rejoices when you fall. And that's the crazy thing about sin: sin will challenge you, and love you, and play with you, and give you, and then turn on you, and mock you, and shame you and make fun of you. So much so, that you turn from God. Sin is a devilish thing.

And so we find they made fun of him, and they sported, they mocked him. And not only his testimony was ruined, but also notice his life was an embarrassment. He is now entertaining them. He was once a judge, now he's a prophet. He was once the man of God, now he's the celebrity. He was once the mighty man of God, now he's blinded, old, and bald. He's just a withering man, sad thing. His testimony is ruined. He's embarrassed. And I think the greatest thing, for me, his strength is broken. And this is where I see God beginning to change his life. Notice verse 26, **"And Samson said to the lad (this is so neat) that held him by the hand, 'Suffer me now I pray thee to feel the pillars whereupon the house stands, that I may lean upon them.'"** The first time in his life, he asked for help. When you begin to ask for help, when all of a sudden you begin

to talk to your spouse or you talk to your children or you talk to your employer, or you talk to your friends and say, "Pray for me I need help." It's a sign of brokenness; you've come to the end. Or all of the sudden when Jonah stopped fighting with God and God said something, and Jonah didn't say a word, basically it means God won. But as long as I'm fighting with God, like Peter, "Lord let me tell You, You're wrong." Well, finally when Peter blew it, he didn't say a word. In other words, the Holy Spirit won. And the great thing is that all of a sudden you begin to realize. God strengthened him. And so he's now reaching out for a child. He's asking to be led; he's asking to be helped, "Show me this pillar." And I think really the purpose is restored, not only do I find his strength being broken but also I think his purpose is being restored. And why I say that? I'm a visionary. He's now remembering there are 3000 people up above. He knows the city, he knows the pillars, he's been there. So what's happening? He's not saying, "Woe is me." He's saying, "Let me have this pillar, let me bring this thing down." In other words, why did God make him a judge? To destroy the Philistines. What does he want to do? Destroy the Philistines. He's back on track.

And it's a glorious day, when all of a sudden you ask for help, and God gets you back on track. But God has to break you, and sometimes God goes out of His way to break you. Sometimes God allows things to happen in your life that aren't even fair to bring you to a point that you're looking to God. And lastly, not only do we see that God released him in verse 20. And God restore him in verse 21, his hair began to grow. And God rebuked him because of the lack of his testimony, bringing shame and once again the things he did before God.

But then we find that God re-used him. I like that. God re-used him. In verse 28-30, and very simply three things, he says in verse 28, "Lord remember me." "And Samson called unto the Lord, and said, 'Oh Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once (and I like that, underline

that only this once) that I may be at once avenged for the Philistines for my two eyes.”” A very simple prayer: God number one, remember me, Number two, strengthen me, And in this verse he uses three different names for God, and the very last one is the one for relationship. But once again, “Lord remember me.” So he’s looking to God. Remember, the man of faith, what’s he doing? He’s looking, “Lord, remember.” Now you might be in a car accident or you might be financially in trouble or you might be going through a difficult time or you might have been fired today. If you’re able to say, “Lord, remember me.” It means you’re a man of faith; you’re a woman of faith. “Lord you remember me.” But then secondly in verse 29, “Lord strengthen me, Lord strengthen me.” “And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was bore up, and the one with his right hand, the other with his left.” And then here’s the killer, this is the one verse in verse 30. And I believe this, others might not, but I personally believe that God didn’t answer the first prayer because God doesn’t want to avenge your eyes. God doesn’t want to avenge people that have hurt you. God wants to teach you. But the moment you say, “God let me die” that’s the time that God does the work. Elijah said the very same thing on top of the hill, “Lord, I’m thy servant (Okay, Okay, Okay) Lord let thy name be glorified.” Bam! Fire came down. You see it’s all about God. “Lord use this ministry.” But why? For Your Name sake. For me? Not me, for You.

And so we said in verse 30 “And Samson said, ‘Let me die (I like that, “Let me die, let me die.”) with the Philistines.”” And “he bowed himself.” I saw that today in here, he bowed himself. That’s a wonderful gift to bow yourself. Oh you bow when your get in trouble. You bow when you’re going to get fired. You bow when you’re going to be beat up by your wife or something. You bow when you’re going to lose your dating relationship; that’s not the time to bow. You bow before the One who made you. And God gives you a chance to bow. Kevin and I were talking about that one verse, “If you fall upon the rock.” You’re going to be what? Broken. But if the Rock falls up on you, you’re going to be

what? Crushed. Well here's the key. Tell me the key. Ok, ready? Pay attention, you're going to break one way or the other. Now you have a choice. Do you want to break easy or do you want to break hard? Well what's the easy way? You fall upon God and you'll be broken. What's the hard way? He'll fall upon you and crush you. I'll take the first way. Let me give you another thing. You're going to learn the lesson. "Well how can you say that?" Jonah or Habakkuk; well what's the difference? Habakkuk went up and prayed and God opened his mind and showed him. Jonah said, "I don't believe it!" Fine. "In the belly of the whale or in the belly of the fish you go." God's going to do in your life what He's done for everyone. He's going to change you, He's going to help you, He's going to grow you, but He is pretty pinpoint and knows exactly what to do in your life.

And so he says here, "Let me die, let me die with the Philistines. He bowed himself (and notice this) with all his might." (Judges 16:30) Sometimes we don't give God everything. We kind of hold back, we run on 2 cylinders, 4 cylinders. It's kind of interesting when a man is really broken, when his life is really shattered, when his family is really falling apart, when his church is really falling apart, God will give you all of our life. Fall down before You; worship You, God whatever it takes, I just want it. You know there's just a difference about us. "Lord, we bow before You, Lord we humble ourselves, Lord we fall before You, God just do what You want." And so here's this man, if you were God what would you do? Here's your servant blinded, shaven, a mess, beaten, grinding, in prison. Here's the guy you ordained, you strengthened, you gave a covenant to his mother, and you raised him, the strongest man in the world in the Old Testament. And here's this pathetic servant who had let you down over and over again. And all of a sudden tears and he's broken, and give me a child. And God just looks at that and all of the sudden he's now saying, "Lord, remember me". Okay. And Lord not only, "Strengthen me, I'm so embarrassed, I'm so shameful, I've done so many things that shame Your name. And Lord avenge

my eyes.” Okay, okay great. “Lord let me die.” Ahhhh... great. “But Lord before I die let me bow before You, and not only let me bow before You, but Lord once again let me give You all my might.” “And he pulled once again, and the people that therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than which he slew in his whole life” (Judges 16:30) and so God answered his prayer.

And God will always answer your prayers. When you bow, God will always answer. And when all of a sudden you’re willing to say, “You know God I’m willing to die.” God will answer that prayer. And I think it’s all about, the whole story is all about God’s grace. How that God is able to take a failure and make him a trophy of grace. And maybe you’ve been living for years as a failure. Maybe you’ve been a failure as a father, or a failure as a staff member, or a failure as someone in the community, or a failure as an employee; it doesn’t make a difference. God is extending His heart to you saying, “That I have restored failures my whole life. I’m in the business and there’s no one is better than I. But there’s the right way and a wrong way. And if you come My way and bow, I’ll do it for you.” And that’s all God’s asking. “Will you trust Me? Will you give Me your life? Are you willing to die?” “Yes.” “You see you got into this mess because you are unwilling to die.” Selfishness will destroy your life; but the moment you’re willing to die; now God has something for you. And God will re-use you.

Closing Prayer:

Well, Father we thank You for Your goodness and Your kindness in our lives, and for that great mercy and grace that You have given to us. And for Samson, Lord we love him so much we can identify with him. And, Lord what a wonderful way to go out with this man. And so I can see how he ended in the ‘hall of faith’. Lord, often times we find ourselves in a horrible place. And God we stay there for years and years and years, and we blame everyone around us, but Lord, what a wonderful day when we finally just begin to grow up. Lord, we’ve had

this rat gnawing on our lives long enough; it's time for him to die. That Lord we need to grow up, and Lord, begin to head towards heaven. So tonight as we are here, it doesn't make a difference how we have failed, how we have done certain things, Lord, we know that life is tough but God You're good. And we know that there are times that you have to release and almost turn us over, now encourage us. In Jesus' Name. Amen.