

Opening Scripture: 2 Cor 6:4–10 “Instead, as God’s ministers, we commend ourselves in everything: by great endurance, by afflictions, by hardships, by difficulties, ⁵ by beatings, by imprisonments, by riots, by labors, by sleepless nights, by times of hunger, ⁶ by purity, by knowledge, by patience, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, ⁷ by the word of truth, by the power of God; through weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left, ⁸ through glory and dishonor, through slander and good report; regarded as deceivers, yet true; ⁹ as unknown, yet recognized; as dying, yet see—we live; as being disciplined, yet not killed; ¹⁰ as grieving, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet enriching many; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.”

Introduction: What picture comes to your mind when you think of strength? As a kid, I was obsessed with superheroes. I was particularly drawn to strong male figures who embodied the ideals of strength and power. I have to confess, as a kid growing up in Sunday School at Faith Baptist Church in Goochland, VA, I thought the story of Samson was awesome. I grew up thinking he was one of Israel’s superheroes.

As I’ve gotten older, I’ve come to realize, as we said last week, that the intended lesson of Samson’s story was somewhat different than what I had assumed.

Samson is actually the epitome of human weakness. We learn in Chapter 16 that if the Spirit of the Lord departs him, he is as weak as any other man. Which means in of himself, he doesn’t look like Chris Hemsworth. He looks like a regular guy.

Samson is the very picture of a person consumed by their own desires and lusts. His preference for foreign women eventually becomes his undoing.

Samson is the very personification of foolishness. Even when the Spirit comes upon him in power, it is always despite his foolish and impulsive antics. We learned last week that we are not here dealing with a Spiritual man, but a carnal man who nevertheless has an undeniable calling to judge Israel.

Transition: Today we’re going to look at the contrasts between Samson and the Christian life.

1. Jesus is the fulfillment of everything that Samson pointed toward.
2. God has poured out his Spirit on all people—every nationality, gender, social status in life.
3. God's Spirit enables the NT believer.

Let's look at those few basic points today.

1. All of Samson's potential is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus. Samson, like so many other heroes of the faith, is a mere foreshadowing of God's Son who would ultimately fulfill all that those flawed leaders pointed to, including David.

- More than a thousand years after the angelic visit to Samson's mother, another angel gave a young virgin a similar prediction: "Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus" (Luke 1:31).
- While the first angel told Samson's parents that he would "begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines" (Judg. 13:5), the other announced to Jesus's parents that "he will save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).
- While both had Angelic birth announcements, only Jesus had a multitude of angels singing for joy "glory in the highest" (Luke 2:13–14).
- Jesus, like Samson, was publicly displayed for his enemies to mock. Yet, unlike Samson, Jesus went to his death willingly and innocently.
- Even though Samson dies, taking out 3000 enemies of Israel, Jesus, by contrast, defeats sin, death, and the grave.
- Whereas Samson ruled Israel for 20 years with mixed results, Jesus inaugurated a Kingdom that cannot be shaken nor destroyed. It isn't a kingdom of territory, with city walls and moats and soldiers on the towers. It is a Kingdom of transformed hearts whose lives are hidden in Christ with God.

This brings us to our second point of contrast...

2. God has poured out his Spirit on all people—every nationality, gender, and social status in life. Jesus has done what no other leader in Israel or the world could ever do. He has ransomed our very lives from the sin that drove us away from him.

In John 3, Jesus has an interesting conversation with a master teacher, a man named Nicodemus. Nicodemus honestly wants to understand what Jesus' message is all about. So, he comes to Jesus in a clandestine fashion under the cover of night to probe further.

Jesus tells him in no uncertain terms that unless he is born again, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. Then he reveals the purpose for which he came. So that all of us may have eternal life.

John 3:14–21 “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. ¹⁶ For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Anyone who believes in him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God. ¹⁹ This is the judgment: The light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For everyone who does evil hates the light and avoids it, so that his deeds may not be exposed. ²¹ But anyone who lives by the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be shown to be accomplished by God.”

After Jesus ascends to heaven, the Disciples wait to be filled with the Spirit. Until it happens, until the Spirit descends on them, they don't even know what Jesus is talking about. ***Their only frame of reference is with guys like Samson, or Samuel, or David, and the prophets.*** In their Bible, the Spirit only came upon certain individuals at various times to accomplish a particular purpose. And now Jesus has been telling them that the gift of the Father is coming—God's presence is being poured out on everyone who believes. Just as Jesus taught in John 3 to Nicodemus, all who believe and repent will be baptized in the Spirit, restored and made new from the inside out.

On the day of Pentecost, when the believers are all gathered in prayer and waiting for God—suddenly they hear the sound like a howling windstorm; they feel the rush of power as the Spirit indwells and enables them—God's transforming presence invades their lives—and they see and hear the sign of the fiery tongues—signifying that God is bringing the once broken people of the world back together into one family on earth who all speak the same “language” of grace in the Spirit.

And how does Peter interpret this event? He cites the prophet Joel chapter 2:

And it will be in the last days, says God, that I will pour out my Spirit on all people; then your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. ¹⁸ I will even pour out my Spirit on my servants in those days, both men and women and they will prophesy. ¹⁹ I will display wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below: blood and fire and a cloud of smoke. ²⁰ The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the great and glorious day of the Lord comes. ²¹ ***Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.***

²² “Fellow Israelites, listen to these words: This Jesus of Nazareth was a man attested to you by God with miracles, wonders, and signs that God did among you through him, just as you yourselves know. ²³ Though he was delivered up according to God’s determined plan and foreknowledge, you used lawless people to nail him to a cross and kill him. ²⁴ ***God raised him up***, ending the ***pains of death***, because it was ***not possible for him to be held by death***.

Unlike Samson and other Old Testament leaders, the regenerating, restoring presence of God has now been poured out on all who believe. Jesus was crucified for our sins, but defeated our greatest enemy—death and hell. And has now rained the glorious presence of the Spirit on all who trust in Christ.

Believer, you have the presence of God living in you right now. You may not always see Him, or sense Him. But you have God’s very Spirit dwelling in you.

So what does that mean for the believer?

3. God's Spirit enables the believer to live in resurrection power. Samson's strength was an enhancement of his normal physical power. So that he could begin the project of ridding the world of the Philistine scourge—which largely is accomplished later with David, and Nebuchadnezzar actually wipes them out as a people.

By contrast, the believer now has the indwelling Spirit of God, not so we can tear lions apart with our bare hands, or pull down columns on our enemies, but so that we may live victoriously in the Christian life.

- **We are empowered to make the good confession.** Paul told the Corinthians in 2 Cor 4:13, "And since we have the same *Spirit of faith* in keeping with what is written, '*I believed, therefore I spoke,*' we also **believe**, and therefore **speak**." Notice the order here. Paul says, "We have the Holy Spirit who gives faith and enables us to believe. Then we confess that which the Spirit inspires in our hearts." 1 Corinthians 12:13 "no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit."
- **We are enabled with godly desires.** When the Spirit regenerates the spirit of the believer, bringing us back to life and opening our blind eyes to the truth, then He begins to give us internal impulses that are at odds with the desires of our flesh. Galatians 5:16–17 "I say, then, walk by the Spirit and you will certainly not carry out the desire of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don't do what you want." The believer still and always will struggle with the desires of the flesh. But now, unlike believers in the OT, the Spirit is present to counter my sinful impulses. He brings conviction, gives us a vision for life in Christ, and inspires and encourages us when we fall.

Listen, when you come to faith in Jesus, you do not just receive a change of *status*—you receive a born-again nature. And those two natures inhabit the one person—a sinful nature that, like Samson, wants to do and to have whatever seems right in my own eyes. But now a new nature, a reborn spirit where the Holy Spirit of God resides to counter those impulses. To enable us to live according to the pattern of sound teaching.

- **We are enabled to demolish the devil's strongholds.** Now, in the book of Judges we have seen repeatedly that the enemies of Israel, first the Canaanites, then the Midianites, and then the Philistines, have all moved in to Israel's territory and set up strongholds against them. From these strongholds, Israel's enemies oppressed and introduced idolatry among God's people. The Judge was called, anointed, and raised up for the purpose of pushing these forces of darkness back, out of the land, calling God's people back to faithfulness to the covenant of Moses.

Now, in the NT, the believer also has the power to pull down these strongholds of the devil. These include:

- (1) False beliefs and pretentious arguments: 2 Cor 10:3–5 "For although we live in the flesh, we do not wage war according to the flesh, ⁴ since the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but are **powerful through God** for the **demolition**

of strongholds. We demolish arguments ⁵ and every proud thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take *every thought captive* to obey Christ.” Paul tells us that spiritual battle is not waged with the same carnal weapons that are used in the natural sphere—our weapons aren’t carnal or of the flesh, another way of saying “natural.” Our weapons are supernatural and, because of that, have supernatural power because they are *through God*. We destroy the weak and silly arguments of atheism, the new paganism that has gripped our culture, the repackaged idols of sexual perversion (they’re really old gods—as old as the book of Judges); the pagan practices of child sacrifice—now taking place on the altars of convenience or affirming a socio-political identity. The Church has not in this hour been called to shrink back, to cower, or to hide. We are called to take up the “armaments” of the Spirit in this war against the truth and the knowledge of God. Let me ask you today believer: *Are you a capable apologist for the Christian faith and the Gospel? Have you taken the time to become biblically and theologically literate so that when the hordes of hell seek to overrun us, we are ready and able to fight the good fight. There is no weapon formed against us that can prosper.*

We also see in this passage that God has given us powerful spiritual weapons to...

- (2) Take our own thoughts captive. It’s not just that the truth of God’s word is powerful and effective, like a double-edged sword to cut through the miasma of pagan thinking that has blinded the minds of so many today—it’s that we as Christians are enabled to take our own thoughts captive and bring them into obedience to God’s Word. So let me ask all of us today: *Believers, are we spending more time saturating ourselves in God’s truth than we are in Entertainment, or leisure, or podcasts and radio shows?* Paul told the Corinthians that in the midst of their carnality, their worldliness and thinking, that they had actually been given the mind of Christ. The presence of God’s Spirit brings the mind of Christ. Meaning we have this innate ability to think like Jesus. But we must cultivate that in the Word. Our minds and thoughts must be taken captive to the truth.

Conclusion: Samson's story captures the glaring contrast between *human weakness* and *God's strength*. Despite possessing immense physical power enabled by the Spirit, Samson repeatedly succumbed to his own weaknesses, yielded to temptation, pursued his own desires, and strayed from God's path. His flaws left him vulnerable and enslaved. Samson serves as a powerful example that when we place our hope in ourselves or others, we become weak and enslaved, but when we place our faith in Jesus, our true strength is restored by the power of the Spirit. And we can enjoy the new, resurrection life of Christ.