

**The Cost of a Divided Heart**  
**Judges 16**  
**Notes**

**A Christian cannot love the things of the world and the things of God simultaneously**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

One of the golden rules of playing football is, “no matter what you do, do it full speed.” The reason for this is that half-hearted play can result in a busted play, or worse yet, injury. Only going half-speed is a sure way to get hurt. I was reminded of this lesson as a freshman in college. I played guard because I was fast, and our team did lots of traps and pulls. So, because I was 270 and ran a 4.6, I was also put on the kickoff team.

The kickoff team was supposed to go down full steam and try to tackle the ball carrier. Simple task. Well, this one kickoff the ball went on the complete opposite side of the field, and I knew I was not getting there, so I was trotting down the field about  $\frac{3}{4}$  speed looking around when all of a sudden this little 175 lb. guy caught me under my chin and lifted me off my feet and laid me on the ground. It was the kind of hit that made the short clips. The reception I received from my linemen when I got back to the sidelines was horrible, not to mention the splitting headache I had.

How did that happen? How did a guy who weighed 100 lbs. less than me get such a good lick on me?

He was able to have such an impact on me because on that play, I was playing with a divided heart. I was not fully engaged in the game, and it cost me.

Jesus tells us in Mt. 6:24 that we cannot serve two masters.

We cannot, as Christians, as disciples of Jesus, live with divided hearts.

What does it mean for a believer to live with a divided heart? A believer who lives with a divided heart tries to placate God with passive obedience and simultaneously tries fulfilling the desires of the flesh.

The result is a believer who never achieves his or her full potential for the glory of God; who never plumbs the depths of the intimacy of Jesus; who never sees the glorious impact of faithfulness; and who continually knows and feels like they are missing an important opportunity for Christ.

As we close our time with Samson this morning, we are reminded through Samson’s life, the cost of a divided heart.

A man with such potential, who squandered it all away on self-idolatry. A man who was meant to begin to liberate the nation of Israel from her oppressors, who was more concerned with fulfilling the lusts of his own flesh.

Let me ask us this morning: Are you living with a divided heart? One foot walking with Jesus and the other pursuing the things of the world? How is that working for you?

A divided heart will lead to ruin in all its pursuits.

This morning, as we close our time with Samson, we will examine the cost of a divided heart.

## **II. A DIVIDED HEART PURSUES FLESHLY DESIRES (1-3)**

When we last left Samson, he just finished killing 1,000 men, was revived by God, and we learned he judged Israel 20 years.

*Now Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there, and went in to her.<sup>2</sup> When it was told to the Gazites, saying, "Samson has come here," they surrounded the place and lay in wait for him all night at the gate of the city. And they kept silent all night, saying, "Let us wait until the morning light, then we will kill him."<sup>3</sup> Now Samson lay until midnight, and at midnight he arose and took hold of the doors of the city gate and the two posts and pulled them up along with the bars; then he put them on his shoulders and carried them up to the top of the mountain which is opposite Hebron.*

These three short verses don't seem like much, but they are full of pretense for what will take place in Samson's immediate future.

Samson, with his divided heart, continues to pursue fleshly desires.

We have previously noted that Samson is ruled by his pride, his greed, and his lusts. This episode is no different.

In this episode we see Samson having no regard for the call of the Lord on his life.

His divided heart pursues the elevation and the fulfillment of all things of the flesh, but in doing so it proves to be his undoing.

When faced with a decision, a divided heart will usually take the path of least resistance.

This means if we have been filling our hearts with the Word of God and allowing the Spirit of God to fill us and empower us, when we are faced with temptation, worldly influence, or sin, we can easily see the sin and through the power of God make a decision that glorifies God.

When we have a divided heart, the path of least resistance comes from the world. Why? Because we have not been filling our heart with the Word, but with the world.

So, when faced with a temptation, worldly influence, or sin, we take the path of temptation, influence, or sin.

In these verses we see Samson taking the path of least resistance and we also notice two results of pursuing our fleshly desires.

### **a. A DIVIDED HEART PLACES SELF IN DANGEROUS SITUATIONS (1)**

It wasn't enough that Samson tried to take a wife from among the pagan people, he now goes into the capital city of the Philistines and finds a prostitute to lay with.

Samson goes into their most fortified city and places himself in the most compromising situations.

When we live with a divided heart, we are laying aside biblical wisdom because we are not filled with the Spirit of God. And when we are not filled with the Spirit of God we make dumb decisions, like putting ourselves in dangerous situations.

Samson knew his calling, but he had been filling his heart with the treasures of the world, so his heart was drawn to the fullness of the world's sin.

We know that sin, once conceived, gives birth to death.

Samson needlessly places himself in greater and greater danger. Why?

Maybe its pride. Maybe its self-assurance. Maybe it's the fact that nothing has happened that he hasn't been able to fix.

His divided heart kept driving him deeper into danger.

We must remember the goal of Satan is to steal, kill, and destroy. He usually doesn't do this in one fail swoop, but in a series of tiny acts, thoughts, and maneuvers.

Without godly intervention Satan slowly moves the needle of our hearts away from the things of God, toward the things of the world.

Think about your own life for a moment. Remember the times you made some really dumb decisions.

Did you make those decision in a vacuum? Or did you make those decisions after being out of the Word of God for a while? After not spending time in prayer for a while? Going seasons without Christian fellowship?

You may find yourself there right now. You recognize the pattern. Can I encourage you to call upon the Lord this morning? You don't have to continue down the path to danger. Stop and turn to the Lord.

The second, thing that happens when we pursue fleshly desires is that we seek to look better than others.

#### **b. A DIVIDED HEART LOOKS TO BE BETTER THAN OTHERS (2-3)**

So, in pursuing fleshly desires Samson places himself in unnecessary danger. He somehow gets word that there is an ambush waiting for him.

During the middle of the night, he gets up, heads past the gate guards, and literally pulls the doors of the city gates and their posts out of the ground and carries them uphill 40 miles to a hill that faces Hebron, the city of God's people.

Why did Samson do this? Was it necessary? No. Samson once again acts in accordance with his own self-interest in mind.

He used the gifts God gave him for his own prestige. He simply wanted to look better and give the impression of power and strength.

When we have a divided heart that is pursuing fleshly desires, we will often do things for no other reason than to look good to others.

A divided heart uses the gifts God has given not to advance the kingdom of God, but to advance the kingdom of self.

Think about your life. Think about your job. Do you work to feed your family, to provide clothes and a roof? Do you use your gifts so that you can sow into the kingdom of God?

Do you view your job to gain more stuff to enjoy, more things to show off to others?

Do you use your gifts in the church to genuinely serve others, or to look good or lord a position over others?

A divided heart is not focused on the things of God, but on pursuing the glory of the flesh.

### III. A DIVIDED HEART FORFEITS THE POWER OF GOD (4-21)

*<sup>4</sup> After this it came about that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. <sup>5</sup> The lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, "Entice him, and see where his great strength lies and how we may overpower him that we may bind him to afflict him. Then we will each give you eleven hundred pieces of silver." <sup>6</sup> So Delilah said to Samson, "Please tell me where your great strength is and how you may be bound to afflict you." <sup>7</sup> Samson said to her, "If they bind me with seven fresh cords that have not been dried, then I will become weak and be like any other man." <sup>8</sup> Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh cords that had not been dried, and she bound him with them. <sup>9</sup> Now she had men lying in wait in an inner room. And she said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" But he snapped the cords as a string of tow snaps when it touches fire. So his strength was not discovered.*

*<sup>10</sup> Then Delilah said to Samson, "Behold, you have deceived me and told me lies; now please tell me how you may be bound." <sup>11</sup> He said to her, "If they bind me tightly with new ropes which have not been used, then I will become weak and be like any other man." <sup>12</sup> So Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them and said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" For the men were lying in wait in the inner room. But he snapped the ropes from his arms like a thread.*

*<sup>13</sup> Then Delilah said to Samson, "Up to now you have deceived me and told me lies; tell me how you may be bound." And he said to her, "If you weave the seven locks of my hair with the web [and fasten it with a pin, then I will become weak and be like any other man." <sup>14</sup> So while he slept, Delilah took the seven locks of his hair and wove them into the web]. And she fastened it with the pin and said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" But he awoke from his sleep and pulled out the pin of the loom and the web. <sup>15</sup> Then she said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when your heart is not with me? You have deceived me these three times and have not told me where your great strength is." <sup>16</sup> It came about when she pressed him daily with her words and urged him, that his soul was annoyed to death.*

*17 So he told her all that was in his heart and said to her, "A razor has never come on my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaved, then my strength will leave me and I will become weak and be like any other man."<sup>18</sup> When Delilah saw that he had told her all that was in his heart, she sent and called the lords of the Philistines, saying, "Come up once more, for he has told me all that is in his heart." Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hands. <sup>19</sup> She made him sleep on her knees, and called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his hair. Then she began to afflict him, and his strength left him. <sup>20</sup> She said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" And he awoke from his sleep and said, "I will go out as at other times and shake myself free." But he did not know that the Lord had departed from him. <sup>21</sup> Then the Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes; and they brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze chains, and he was a grinder in the prison.*

This is the most famous story in the book of Judges. In this episode in the life of Samson we observe how a divided heart forfeits the power of God.

The more God blessed Samson the more he thought his power was his. "Samson's heart used God's blessings as a reason to forget God" (*Judges for You*, ed. Tim Keller, 152).

A divided heart forfeits the power of God precisely because a divided heart is not divided for long.

A divided heart, without intervention, begins to rely on self and when we do this, we have no power, no might, no wisdom, and no defense against sin.

#### **a. A DIVIDED HEART RELIES ON SELF (17-20)**

It is interesting to see that, earlier, Samson's strength allows him to tear the gates of a city down and carry them some 40 miles, but yet again, he is powerless when it comes to tears.

Samson must have known what Delilah was doing. She was a Philistine. She worked for the enemy.

The governors of the Philistines wanted Samson so bad they paid this woman the equivalent of around \$19 million! So, she was going to do whatever was necessary to extract this information from him.

He knew her end game, but he kept playing. Why? Because he relied on himself.

And what happens when we rely on self?

#### **b. A DIVIDED HEART LEADS TO HUMILIATION (21)**

The saddest words in Samson's entire story, maybe in the book of Judges come from verse 20, "But he did not know that the Lord had departed from him."

Samson was unable to see how completely dependent he was upon God's grace.

He was so caught up with himself, he had so deluded himself that he did not even realize the power of God was no longer his.

He thought he would approach this issue like all the others, but to his surprise he was quickly defeated.

In his defeat he is completely humiliated.

His eyes that focused on lust we gouged out.

The capital city in which he tore the gates from, he is now enslaved in.

Once able to roam anywhere he wanted, he is now chained as a prisoner.

Earlier, he torched the grain fields of the Philistines, now he is grinding grain in a mill.

Unrepentant sin can only lead to humiliation.

God's power flows from a commitment to love and serve God.

When we allow a divided heart to draw us from the Lord, the power that once fueled our lives is forfeited and we begin to rely on our own power and wisdom which can only lead to our humiliation.

Samson, the once great strongman of Israel is reduced to a slave in a mill.

What has sin cost you? What has arrogance cost you? What is it costing you now? What is pride costing you? Reconciliation? Restoration? Renewal?

Don't allow sin, when you know the endgame, to ruin you.

As we close the final scene in Samson's life, we see that a divided heart can only be healed by repentance.

#### **IV. A DIVIDED HEART CAN ONLY BE HEALED BY REPENTANCE (22;28-30)**

*<sup>22</sup> However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it was shaved off.*

*<sup>28</sup> Then Samson called to the Lord and said, "O Lord God, please remember me and please strengthen me just this time, O God, that I may at once be avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes." <sup>29</sup> Samson grasped the two middle pillars on which the house rested, and braced himself against them, the one with his right hand and the other with his left. <sup>30</sup> And Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" And he bent with all his might so that the house fell on the lords and all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he killed in his life.*

For some reason, the Philistines allowed Samson's hair to grow back. In this verse we see a glimmer of hope, don't we?

During a festival celebration to the pagan god, Dagon, the Philistines and all their national leaders were celebrating their victory over Samson, so they brought him out to the crowd to humiliate him further.

Samson asks a young man to help him hold the columns holding up the roof of the temple they were in.

Then, Samson prays and asks God for the strength to avenge himself.

But I want you to notice something important about his prayer.

He says, "O Lord God." He addresses God as his personal God and not simply a god.

Next, he asks God to remember him.

In this short sentence we see Samson, though not fully correct in his understanding of his role as deliverer, finally turn to the Lord, finally recognize that God is the source of his power, and finally call out to the Lord as his personal Lord.

We see a divided heart healed through repentance.

As Samson turns to the Lord, he is strengthened and in the power of the Lord Samson collapses the temple, taking out more people during his death than his life.

In this act, he not only brings the temple of the false god to ruin, but he also brings all of the government and political structure of the Philistines to ruin, allowing for Israel to have a start to rebuild and free themselves from Philistine rule.

Samson's healing and his fulfilling his godly purpose only took place when repentance was upon his heart.

The same is true for us today.

We will only be able to live out our purpose in life as we turn our hearts fully to the Lord and to do that, we must be a people who learn to live in repentance.

Don't allow pride or fear to keep you from experiencing the freedom that is offered in Christ.

When you turn and repent of your sin, your pride, greed, lust, envy, and selfishness, you receive forgiveness and power to fulfill the purpose God has for your life.

## V. CONCLUSION

Let me ask us this morning. Are you living with a divided heart?

As we complete the story of Samson, we have learned a lot about sin, self, and God's grace.

We have seen the results of a heart divided between God and the world.

**The home of Elvis is in Graceland, Tennessee. In 2021 Elvis' estate is valued at between \$400-\$500 million. So many years after his death, thousands of people take the tour and listen to his life's story. The sad thing is, the story will never change, because he has lived his life and what he has achieved, whether good or bad, will be told over and over again for all eternity.**

What will your legacy be? What story will be told about your life after you have lived and died?

Will it be a legacy of a divided heart? A heart that was split between living for Christ and living for self?

For serving and giving your all for God's glory, or serving and giving your all for temporary gain?

Will it be something that God will be proud of? If your answer is "no" and you are still alive, you can change that future. However, you must make the choice to change the outcome which will mean deciding to live totally dedicated to God.

You can make that decision today. You may be here, and you don't have a relationship with God, but you say, "I want one." I have good news. You can.

You may be here today and have had a relationship with Christ for many years, but you know in your heart, you have not lived a life dedicated to Jesus. You to, can change that today.