

- Back in Sydney at school I remember an afternoon where I thought i saw my good friend Matt.
- So I called out, 'Matt!' and this person turned around but it wasn't him. It was some other guy.
- So I sheepishly pretended to look beyond them and kind of pretend that I'd seen my man and do a little 'G'day' head nod and wave as if everything was going fine and tried to play along just to make sure I wasn't looking like a complete fool.

- I wonder if you've had a similar experience?
- Thinking you recognise someone but in the end it's someone different?

- Well today we get to look at the second part of the story of Samson. And what we'll see is something similar.
- We will see him as a saviour and a rescuer who kind of looks like another saviour and rescuer.
- This morning we will see
 - A shocking enemy (15:1-8)
 - A strange victory (15:9-17)
 - A friend's betrayal (16:4-22)
 - God's ultimate victory (16:32-31)

- An antagonised enemy (15:1-8)
 - I don't have any experience in this, but i would say that if you want to be in you father in law's good books, don't go and beat up 30 people of his nation as we saw last week.
 - Look with me at 14:19...
 - So in Chapter 15, Here comes Samson with a young goat to bring to his wife after some days.
 - the modern day equivalent would be bringing a bunch of flowers and chocolate.
 - It looks like he's going to make up with his wife...make it all better...he's bringing a peace offering!
 - But being the womaniser type character that he is, Samson just said "i'm going into my wife's room"
 - Yes. It's ambiguous as to what this means and it's left like that in the Hebrew but it definitely has some sexual overtones here.
 - But, The father does not allow him, because she's actually now a wife to one of Samson's good mates.
 - So the Father of the wife, what does he do?
 - Apologise to Samson? Send him on his way? 'Bad luck old chap'?
 - Nope.
 - He offers Samson, his younger daughter! Like a commodity!
 - As if he's saying 'Oh sorry we're all out of stock of that one, but here's a new model!'
 - It's sickening!
- This is the type of people that the Philistines are.
 - They Sacrifice children and are sexually immoral.
 - This is why The Lord, Yahweh commanded the Israelites to drive them out completely back in Joshua!
 - If the Philistines and Israelites live together,
 - the Israelites would obviously take on the corruptness of the Philistines.
 - Which they do, since they constantly do evil in the sight of the Lord.

- And we'll see exactly how bad it gets next week...
- Back to the story,
- So Samson seeks to get revenge. An eye for an eye, tooth for tooth revenge and this is what we'll see for the rest of this chapter.
- How does he do this?
 - Samson miraculously catches 300 foxes, ties the pairs together with rope, puts a flaming torch between them, and lets them loose into the Philistines grain storage, vineyards and olive gardens!
 - Yes it is easy to think, 'poor foxes, what an evil man Samson is, someone call the RSPCA!'
 - But we need to be reading this from a Jewish perspective!
 - This is a clear 'one up' for Samson...it's getting a left hook into the sides of the Philistines. And all the Israelites hearing this later this would laugh and cheer!
- So What will the Philistines do? Well, they go and burn the father in Law and Samson's wife to death...Wow..shocking
- No, they don't go and chase down Samson but They kill their own!
- ...And so Samson struck them with a big blow, killing many of them and retreating to a cave. Eye for eye, tooth for tooth.
- But you see, This is a good start for Samson!
 - the enemy is weak and divided
 - a right hook into the philistines side...cue the benny hill music again.
 - But more seriously, God's promise that Samson will begin to rescue Israel (13:5) is happening in these small battles! God uses the imperfect Samson to fulfil his perfect plan.
 - The Israelites are left cheering and laughing but the Philistines are left licking their wounds, mourning and plotting revenge.
- A strange victory (15:9-17)
 - Alright so if this is a movie, we cut from Samson in the cave to the Philistines plotting to get revenge. To capture him, to kill him.
 - Samson humiliated them, he was taking away their authority and they aren't happy.
 - So the Philistines come and camp in Judah, the royal tribe
 - who in Chapter 1 actually asked the Lord what to do and did what he commanded. So all these years later, how will they react to the Philistines wanting to capture Samson? Well even though there's no direct threat to them, they instantly crumble.
 - There's no protest,
 - There's no protecting of their own saviour, it's almost as if they just shrugged their shoulders and went off to get Samson!
 - Not only that, but they actually blame Samson! They agree to betray him!
 - They ask him, 'Samson! Don't you know what you've done? Do you know who they are? They make the rules around here! Why did you have to mess with them of all people! Don't you know what this will mean for us?'
 - And this is sad. They've become complacent with the status quo. They don't care that Israel is living under the philistines, they don't care for the promised land, they don't ask the Lord what to do. They have a sinful complacency.
 - They just want to stick to the status quo.
 - And Samson agrees to go, as long as they don't kill him themselves.

- So, imagine our movie, cut from the cave and look at the camp of Lehi.
- Here's the tribe of Judah walking in this man who is bound. It looks hopeless for him. Then pan over to the Philistines.
 - There's over 1,000 of them to come and get this one man.
 - They think they've got this in the bag. They have there man. They are cheering and shouting already.
- But then suddenly, Samson's ropes become like charred linen. The Philistines have no idea what is happening but we do. Look with me at V14, The SPIRIT OF THE LORD came on him.
 - God's promises are still on track.
 - Samson is going to begin to rescue the Israelites from the philistines,
 - Full stop. End of story. It's going to happen. No matter what.
 - The Philistines trying to stop Samson is as useless as me standing in front of a flying freight train and trying to stop it with my bare hands. It's useless!
- And so now we get to see another victory for Samson, for Israel and for the Lord.

- To put it simply, He grabbed a fresh jawbone of a donkey and killed 1,000 of the philistines. A strange but awesome victory.
 - So a jawbone wouldn't exactly be my weapon of choice to try and save my bacon.
 - It's quite a weird weapon of choice, but for Samson, it works. Why? Because the victory is actually Yahweh's victory. He's the one who empowered Samson.
 - It's God's victory. (and a strange but awesome one at that)
 - And samson mentions it in V18.
 - So after God graciously providing water for a parched Samson, we are told that he Judges Israel 20 years.
 - Although, this isn't 20 years of freedom. Look with me at V20, Notice that he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines. There's still work to do. God's people aren't yet free.
 - So let's read on.

- In 16:1-3 we see another attempted attack on Samson from the Gazites (a clan of the Philistines).
 - He goes into a prostitute (yep, That's what the Hebrew actually says)...whoops. Here, we see that Samson is far from a perfect saviour.
 - The Gazites plot to kill him but Samson outsmarted them and took the city gates with him!
 - The Gazites go to sleep thinking they'll catch him in the morning
 - But he just gets up in the middle of the night, walks around, probably sees some sleeping men, casually picks up the city gates and goes for a 64km hike!
- But more seriously, what we see here is God's man.
 - Who isn't even able to be touched by his enemies and he takes away the enemies safety, their gates

- So let's recap.
 - What we've seen is that nothing can stop God's promises. Neither a sinful Samson nor over 1,000 philistines nor some crafty Gazites can stop God's promises coming to pass.

- But what about something different? What about a lover's betrayal? Well, let's see.
- Let's look at 16:4: Samson loved a woman whose name was Delilah.
- And will this love story have a happy ending? Well let's find out.
 - V5:....
- The one whom he loved was promised silver by his enemies in return for his life.
 - \$15 Million dollars worth of silver.
- She agrees.
- She asks Samson how one might be able to subdue him. He lies, she follows the lie, wakes him up saying that the philistines were upon him and he breaks free. 3 times this happens!
- Until she nagged him, literally, 'pressed into him with words every day and she urged him till his soul was short of death.'
- So, he told her everything. He told her that he was a Nazarite, dedicated to God, supposed to be holy (although he wasn't at all) and if his head was shaved, then his strength would leave him.
 - In Leviticus we are told that the shaving of the head would signify the end of a Nazarite's vow.
 - So why did he tell her? Well, he probably just didn't take his calling as a Nazarite seriously. He may have thought that strength was a play thing.
 - And so, he probably got what he deserved.
- He was betrayed by one whom he loved.
 - Delilah had his head shaved,
 - his strength was gone,
 - the philistines captured enemy number one,
 - gouged out his eyes
 - and took him to grind grain in prison like an animal.
- It looks hopeless. Israel's saviour, in the hands of their enemies. Being treated like an animal.
- But there is still hope. The story doesn't end there. God's plans are still at work.
 - In fact, He has his man right where he needs to be.
- Read 16:22 aloud with me:...
- There is a thread of hope.

- Well, In January two years ago there was a great victory for Australia. After loosing three series straight we had finally reclaimed the ashes!
- After 5 glorious test match cricket victories over our rivals, what did we do?
- Well Australia threw a party! They interviewed the heroes, there was music, there was even a little bit of break dancing from one of the players. Victory was sweet!

- And it's the same for the Philistines! They thought they had defeated their enemy!
- The philistines throw a party. There's 3,000 of them right in the temple of dagon, their false god.
- They've been plotting for this moment! They praise their god saying that he has given samson into their hands. Victory is sweet.
- So, They have some wine, relax maybe there was a cool philistine trio playing in the background.
- Then they call for Samson to come and entertain them as if he was a circus performer!
- So he came out, the man who previously tore apart a lion.

- He came out blind, helpless and being led by a servant. He performed for them and he asked to be placed among the pillars so he could feel them.
- The leaders of the philistines were there. 3,000 men and women.
- Then in his final breaths, Samson said to the lord, V28...
 - Okay, Well vengeance for his two eyes he asked for but God has *his* plan and his man in the right place.
- God renewed his strength and samson pushed the pillars down. V30....
- What was that? “thus he killed many more in his death than while he lived”
 - His greatest victory was in his death...I wonder if that sounds familiar to you?

- Samson was born to a woman who couldn't give birth. An angelic messenger told her that she would give birth. And that 13:5 'he will begin the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the philistines'.
 - During his lifetime, his enemies hated him.
 - They constantly plotted to kill him
 - In the end, he was betrayed by one of his closest. For some silver.
 - He was mocked, treated like an animal,
 - But his greatest victory was in his death.
 - Does that remind you of anyone? Could we mistake this person for someone else?

- Let me tell you of another person.
 - There was a girl in Bethlehem who couldn't possibly give birth, for she was a virgin.
 - An angel told her that she would give birth.
 - An angel told his father that her baby will save his people from their sins. (matt. 1:21)
 - This baby was born and grew up.
 - There were people who hated him, who plotted against him, who tried to kill him but failed (John 5:59)
 - In the end, he was betrayed by one of his closest friends, for some cash.
 - He was mocked, treated like an animal.
 - He was crucified
 - And yet His greatest victory was in his death and then eventual resurrection.
- Yes. Jesus.
- Samson ultimately points us to an even greater saviour who saves his people from an even greater enemy; sin and death.
- In fact, Jesus wasn't just promised to Mary but way back in Genesis to Adam and Eve!
 - When Adam and Eve first sinned, God told the serpent, the evil one, the one that tempted them, that he will be defeated. That there will be one who will crush his head! (Gen 3:15)
 - And this promise is weaved throughout the whole Old Testament until we see its perfect fulfilment in Jesus Christ himself.
- He is a perfect, sinless saviour who saves us, his people, completely from our sins as was promised from the very beginning.

- God has rescued us from the worst evil that will ever be.
 - He has rescued us from eternal death and he has sealed us up for eternal life.
- He has promised, that he has prepared a place for us:
 - At the start of John 14...(:2-3) My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and

prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

- And One day, Jesus will come back, and take his people to be with him in eternity and live with them.

So let's pull this all together..

- What does Samson's story show us?
 - Well it shows us that what God says goes.
 - Samson's sinfulness couldn't stop God's promises
 - Whatever schemes the philistines conjured up, they couldn't stop God's promises.
 - And Samson points us to our perfect saviour, Jesus Christ.
 - In his death and resurrection, he took our sin and defeated death.
 - He crushed the evil one just as it was foretold in Genesis.
 - He reigns victorious over sin and death.
 - And he will come again to judge and to take his people to be with him forever.
 - We can be assured that this is certain.
 - Nothing will get in his way because:
 - God's word is true.
 - His promises are sure.
 - What he says goes.
 - And God's promises will come to pass!
- So, For those of you who here who have turned to Christ, be assured that God's word is a sure thing.
 - In this world, everything is uncertain
 - Our Jobs,
 - our finances,
 - Our health, our families health, our safety.
 - So we can't rely on these things
 - But in this world of uncertainty, there is only one thing that we can be sure of.
 - And that is the word of God and all the promises that it contains.
 - Of God's love, of our forgiveness and of eternal life.
 - These are the things which we can rely on.
- For those of you who haven't.
 - To be part of God's promises of forgiveness and eternal life, turn back to him.
 - Turn away from those things that are against God's will for your life and turn to him.
 - Ask God for forgiveness and put your trust in Jesus Christ; the ultimate saviour.
 - He promises to forgive all who turn to him with a true and sincere heart.
 - And Come under his sure word and promises today.