


The Flawed Life of Samson

Part 4 Jawbone Justice

TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

A publication of , the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. *—Psalm 145:11*
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. *—Joshua 22:5*

2019.3.31



Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- **What behaviors or words** most easily push your "Don't mess with me!" button?
Tell about a time you desperately wished you **also** had a "Do over." button.
- Are Proverbs 10:29 and 21:15 a **comfort** to you...or are they a **terror**? Explain.
- How should Matthew 7:1-2 **recalibrate** your "Don't mess with me!" button?
- What is something that you condemn as "wrong", and have never done? _____
How in the world is Romans 2:1 true of **that** situation?
How might Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28 shed light on this issue? (So, **have you** done that?)
- Read 1 Peter 2:21-25. **What** is "this purpose" (v. 21) to which we've been called? (see v. 20)
What was "Christ's example" that he left for us to follow? **Why** is that example so hard to follow?
Have you "died to sin"? Do you "live to righteousness"? How do you know?
In what situations are you tempted to "revile and threaten" (v. 23)?
Decide "**one step**" to take (below).

*Wronged by someone?
You can learn to trust God to vindicate you.
Let a biblical counselor help.
counseling@tcc.org*

Application-Challenge

If you're a Christian, take the initiative to decide: "I'm putting down the jawbone. I'm withdrawing from the conflict. I'm not going to escalate this any longer."
Instead, have a conversation with that neighbor, co-worker, friend or family member.

Take One Step: What is one small, concrete step of obedience you will put into practice this week?



Sermon Summary

Almost everyone I know, Christian, non-Christian, has a "don't mess with me" switch. You guys know what I'm talking about. It happens when something or someone gets on your last nerve. It's Friday afternoon and your boss dumps a bunch of work on you that has to be done right now! All of a sudden, "boom" the "Don't mess with me" switch goes off. It's as if we become someone else. Jekyll and Hyde! Some of us have spent years apologizing for a moment when the switch flipped. We did something. We said something. We wish we could have a "do over"—but we can't. And we have to live with the fallout. All of us have this switch. It might be when someone messes with your money, or when someone messes with your family, or when someone challenges your authority, or steps into your area of responsibility.

What do you do when your switch goes off? Samson lived under a code called "Lex Talionis"—the law of retaliation (Exodus 21:23-25). It seems brutal to us, and in fact, Jesus called us to a higher standard (Matthew 5:38-39): rather than retaliate at all, he is asking us to return evil with good. He is calling us to love our enemies, not just in our hearts, but with our actions. But "lex talionis" was designed to curb overzealous retaliation: "Because you killed my chicken, I'm going to burn down your house." Lex Talionis established the principle of "equitable reciprocity": a chicken for a chicken, an ox for an ox. The punishment must fit the crime. When someone hurts us we have a tendency to hit back twice as hard.

OK, let's pick back up with Samson's story. He married a Philistine woman that he wasn't supposed to marry. The wedding goes about as bad as a wedding can go. Samson ends up killing about 30 of the wedding guests. Then, Samson goes to make amends—and finds out that his father-in-law had given his wife away to someone else (Judges 15:1-2)! All of a sudden Samson's "Don't mess with me" switch goes off and he has a choice to make. Predictably, Samson chooses a brutal, over the top response of vengeance (15:3-5)—exactly what law of lex talionis was designed to prevent. Samson went after their whole economy, destroying a whole year's produce. This affected not just his (guilty) father-in-law, but hundreds, if not thousands, of other people. You can imagine how the Philistines felt about this. Do you think they had a measured, lex talionis response? No—they burned Samson's wife and father-in-law to death! Does Samson turn the other cheek? Does he have an equitable, in-kind response? He says: "As they did to me, so I have done to them." (15:11), but instead Samson found the jawbone of a donkey and killed a thousand men with it (15:15)! Notice how things escalate. What starts as a civil dispute between a father-in-law and a son-in-law could have been settled over a steak dinner. They should have been able to figure this out. Instead, the national economy of Philistia was wrecked. Then two people are burned to death. Then 3000 people are drawn into a national manhunt, which escalates to Samson killing 1,000 men with a jawbone. A civil dispute ends in mass murder!

As people of the cross, we are called to a new standard (Romans 12:17-19). Revenge feels satisfying; it appeals to the desire for justice which we all have. A switch flips when someone violates our personal moral code. Something inside of us says, "You shouldn't have done that. Now you'll pay." We all felt it on September 11. For over a decade an international manhunt searched for the man who was responsible—Osama Bin Laden. We crave justice, and that's where our desire for revenge comes from: "Are they just going to get away with that? Is anyone going to do anything about that? Is there any sense of justice in this world? Is there a God who sees and judges?" There is this something within us that says, "This world has to have order to it. And if no one else is going to do something about this, I'm grabbing a jawbone." But if we are not careful, we will do horribly immoral things for what feels in the moment like a very moral reason. Romans says, don't do that. Instead, he says, "leave room for the wrath of God." Resist the urge to grab the jawbone. When we try to exact revenge, what we are saying is: "God, you are not very good at your job. You don't serve up punishment fast enough. You don't serve it severe enough. So I'm going to pick up a jawbone and do what you should have already done." But as followers of Christ we are called to "leave room for God's wrath" (Romans 12:19). That is one of the most difficult things for Christ's followers to do. Revenge is not about a conflict between you and someone else. It's about a conflict between you and God, where you have to decide, in that moment when someone causes you pain and your switch is flipped, is God good at his job?

Am I going to take a deep breath and step back and give God room or am I going to take his place and assume a prerogative that he has not given to me? We need to be the ones who say, "I'm putting down the jawbone. I'm withdrawing from the conflict. I'm not going to escalate this any longer." Jesus is our example here. When unjustly treated He refused to pick up the jawbone. Instead he left room for God to be God (1 Peter 2:21-23). And that's what we need to do as well.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

"Five Question Bible Study" (see page below) is a simple way to study any passage.
Let's use it to learn about trusting God to bring justice...

Monday— Psalm 5

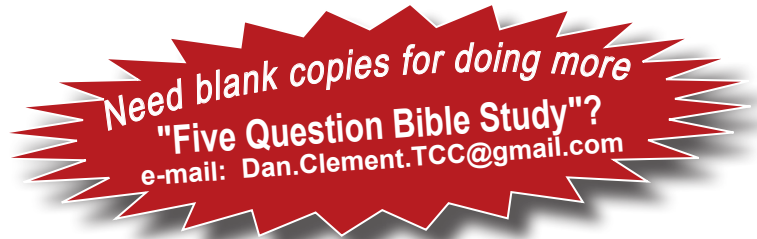
Tuesday— Psalm 7

Wednesday— Psalm 9

Thursday— Psalm 10

Friday— Psalm 11

Saturday— ***In preparation for worshipping your risen Lord tomorrow with your church family,*** study Luke 22:31-53.



Bible Text: _____

Date: _____



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) is it found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text?