

BIBLE STUDIES

*“Men From The Past With A Message For The Present”***SAMSON: THE HIGHEST PRICE EVER PAID FOR A HAIRCUT**
Judges 13 – 16

The study of Bible biographies is profitable for us because they reveal the true nature of life in a sinful world; teach us what temptations and pitfalls are to be avoided and reveal the tactics of the Devil who desires to defeat all of us. He does not have any new tricks to spring that he has not already used in days gone by. He just packages the old tricks in new wrappings

The man we are going to study ended up at a party to end all parties. He was the main entertainment and he literally brought the house down! But we get ahead of ourselves. Let's go back to the beginning of the story of a man who had a female barber and paid the highest price ever paid for a haircut!

There is no more tragic story in the Bible than the story of the man we read about in the book of Judges, chapters 13 through 16. The account given to us concerning the man Samson is both thrilling and tragic. His strengths and weaknesses have been told and retold. His beginning was dramatic, his ending disastrous.

What lessons can we learn from the strongman, Samson, who in many ways was a weakling?

His life can be divided into six intriguing chapters, the first of which is:

THE ENLISTMENT THAT DISTINGUISHED HIM.

“Now there was a certain man from Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had no children. And the Angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, “Indeed now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. Now therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or similar drink, and not to eat anything unclean. For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.” (Judges 13:2-5)

Very few parents are visited by an angel who visibly appears to them and tells them that they are going to have a child. But that was the way Samson's birth was announced to his mother. Samson was enlisted before his birth for a specific mission. He was one of several who was born to mothers who had previously been unable to bear children. His birth and life's work was announced by an angel: *“And he will begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.” (v.5)*

Samson was to be a Nazarite and that was to be his distinguishing characteristic. A Nazarite was one who was consecrated to the service to God. There were 3 stipulations regarding this divine calling, from the book of Numbers (6:1-21):

- They could not partake of the “fruit of the vine”, meaning abstinence from wine, in order to live a simple and sober life. Even Samson’s mother had to abstain during her pregnancy, as Samson was set apart from the womb: *“be careful not to drink wine or similar drink, and not to eat anything unclean. For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb.”* (Judges 13:4,5)
- Nazarites had to refrain from cutting their hair as an observable sign of their vow;
- Nazarites were to avoid contact with a dead body, which would disqualify them for Tabernacle worship. Samson’s birth and calling were similar to John the Baptist, who also was a Nazarite.

Samson was God’s chosen man for the hour. He was separated to God from birth; called and blessed by God (Judges 13:24a); he was empowered by the Spirit of God (Judges 13:24b) and *“He judged Israel twenty years in the days of the Philistines.”* (Judges 15:20)

However, he did not deliver Israel for he was defeated by the very foes whom he sought to defeat. There is wonder in the life of Samson, but there is also warning. We who have been born again by the Spirit of God have a specific mission to fulfill. We too have enemies that would foil God’s plans for our lives, namely, the world, the flesh and the Devil. We must be ever on guard lest we too fail to accomplish God’s design for our lives.

THE ENVIRONMENT THAT SURROUNDED HIM.

“Again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.” (Judges 13:1)

Israel’s enemy was the Philistines, who had occupied Israel for 40 years. God had given the land to Israel, but the Philistines had migrated from Egypt northward to Canaan along the seacoast and settled in what became known as Philistia. From there they terrorized the entire land. The Philistines were so firmly entrenched that the Israelites were of the opinion that it would do more harm than good to try to drive them out. By co-existing with pagans, complacent Israel was in danger of losing its ethnic and spiritual identity and of being assimilated by the Canaanite culture.

God raised up Samson to wage war against the enemy. He was not a good leader; he did not organize an army; he tried to do it all himself. He was a lone-ranger. Lone-rangers are prideful and arrogant persons who want to do it all themselves so that they will get all the credit. One of the better characteristics of good leaders is the ability to visualize the solution, organize for work and deputize workers. Samson did neither.

There is no record of Samson leading an army to defeat the Philistines. He personally menaced the Philistines unmercifully. He was a General George Patton type of fighter – “old blood and guts!” He wrought havoc upon the enemy and kept them in a frenzy! His zeal seemed to know no limits.

The conditions that faced Samson when he appeared on the scene were significant. The subjugation of Israel by the Philistines was so complete that the Israelites rebuked Samson for having resisted their enemies. When Samson waged war upon the Philistines his own

countrymen tried to dissuade him from carrying on guerrilla warfare against them and even wanted to arrest him and turn him over to the enemy! (Judges 15:9-12) They did not want the status quo disturbed. Better to be in servitude to the Philistines than go to war against them.

This situation comes strikingly close to expressing the sentiments of many of God's present day people concerning the encroachments of the world into the church of Jesus Christ. In these days of apostasy, it is not easy to take a truly separated position against the secular and sectarian trends that attack us. To do so will bring rebuke from some of God's compromising people.

THE ENGAGEMENTS THAT CHARACTERIZED HIM.

His feats of strength when engaging the Philistines are well documented. Repeatedly we read that *"the Spirit of the Lord came upon him"* empowering him:

Judges 13:25 – *"And the Spirit of the LORD began to move upon him...."*

Judges 14:5,6 – *"A young lion came roaring against him. And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat, though he had nothing in his hand."*

Judges 14:19 – *"Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily, and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of their men..."*

Judges 15:14,15 - *"The Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him; and the ropes that were on his arms became like flax that is burned with fire, and his bonds broke loose from his hands. He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, reached out his hand and took it, and killed a thousand men with it."*

Other exploits against the Philistines include the following:

Judges 15:4-5 – *"Then Samson went and caught three hundred foxes; and he took torches, turned the foxes tail to tail, and put a torch between each pair of tails. When he had set the torches on fire, he let the foxes go into the standing grain of the Philistines, and burned up both the shocks and the standing grain, as well as the vineyards and olive groves."*

Judges 15:8 – we read that *"he attacked them hip and thigh with a great slaughter."*

Judges 16:2-3 – When the people of Gaza tried to trap him, he just picked up the gates and carried them up a mountain! This is the actual wording: *"He took hold of the doors of the gate of the city and the two gateposts, pulled them up, bar and all, put them on his shoulders, and carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron."*

Samson, undoubtedly, performed many other mighty feats which are not recorded. His destructive energies employed against the oppressors of Israel are legendary. But we must remember, that apart from the Spirit of God he was as weak as other men.

THE ENTANGLEMENTS THAT TRAPPED HIM.

To this point we have seen the warrior in him, now we will see the weakness in him; we have been amazed at his feats, now we will be ashamed of his failures. The strongest of men became a weakling! Samson mastered Philistines, but Samson had not mastered Samson. His undisciplined fleshly passions started a spiritual landslide. This is what happened with Samson:

Judges 14:1 – *“Now Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines.”*

Judges 16:1 – *“Now Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there, and went in to her.”*

Judges 16:4 – *“Afterward it happened that he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.”*

We do not need Paul Harvey to tell us “the rest of the story.” Scripture details the account, books have been written about the affair and movies have been made about Samson and Delilah. One compromising step in Samson’s life led to another, until finally, lulled to sleep in the lap of an enemy woman, he is shorn of his personal holiness and power. Here is the sad collapse detailed in scripture: Delilah badgered Samson to tell her the secret of his strength. Samson played games with her saying:

- 1) *“If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, then I shall become weak, and be like any other man.”* (Judges 16:7)
- 2) *“If they bind me securely with new ropes that have never been used, then I shall become weak, and be like any other man.”* (Judges 16:11)
- 3) *“If you weave my hair to a wooden beam I’ll be as other men.”* (Judges 16:13,14)

Finally, he told her the secret of his strength:

“And it came to pass, when she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, so that his soul was vexed to death, that he told her all his heart, and said to her, “No razor has ever come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother’s womb. If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man.” Then she lulled him to sleep on her knees, and called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to torment him and his strength left him.” (Judges 16:16-20)

Unfortunately, his dalliance with Delilah as well as other of his fleshly flings, prove that, although he had uncommon strength, he did not have much common sense!

THE ENSLAVEMENT THAT RUINED HIM.

“So he awoke from his sleep, and said, ‘I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free!’ But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him. Then the Philistines took him and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza. They bound him with bronze fetters, and he became a grinder in the prison.” (Judges 16:20-21)

One of the saddest statements in scripture is in reference to Samson’s unconsciousness of his loss as the result of sin. Judges 16:20 states, *“He did not know that the LORD had*

departed from him.” There was a gradual diminishing of his God-awareness, an unconscious deterioration of his sense of the presence of the Lord.

Let us learn that:

- Sin binds – it will bind our testimony and influence for God and for good;
- Sin blinds – it puts out the eyes of reason, sense and faith;
- Sin grinds – it will grind character to bits, talents to powder, health to ruin, wealth to poverty!

Samson was a Nazirite in outward appearance, but he knew little of inward spiritual fortitude. It is so easy for us to profess much with our lips and to possess little with our hearts; to have a form of godliness but not the force of godliness. If Samson had been walking daily with the Lord his faith would not have collapsed. Spiritual decline usually begins very gradually. How important it is to *“abstain from all appearance of evil.”* (1 Thess. 5:22)

You will recall that Joseph was tempted by Potiphar’s wife to sin against the Lord but he overcame. (Gen. 39) Let us follow his example and not that of Samson. Remember, when fleeing temptation, do not leave a forwarding address!

THE ENTOMBMENT THAT FINISHED HIM.

Samson was restored to the Lord before his death. Judges 16:22 states, *“However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaven.”* He regained his hair but not his eyesight. Sin always leaves scars!

After his restoration, his last act of faith is recorded in Judges 16:28-30 – *“Then Samson called to the LORD, saying, “O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may with one blow take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!” And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars which supported the temple, and he braced himself against them, one on his right and the other on his left. Then Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines!” And he pushed with all his might, and the temple fell on the lords and all the people who were in it. So the dead that he killed at his death were more than he had killed in his life.”*

The end of the story of Samson is very tragic. Think of it! Samson, the Judge, the servant of God, hair cut, power gone, eyes blinded, a circus clown, the laughing-stock of the ungodly! Let his wreck be our warning! He is a warning to all of us of the pitfalls into which any of us, but for the grace of God, may fall. Always remember that the Devil is out to rob you of your reward and to rob God of an obedient servant.

And the story ends with these words: *“And his brothers and all his father’s household came down and took him, and brought him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of his father Manoah. He had judged Israel twenty years.”* (Judges 16:31)

CONCLUSION

Samson did numerous notable exploits slaying many Philistines. But he did not succeed in delivering God’s people from their enemies because he allowed his focus to shift from fighting God’s enemies to fulfilling his fleshly desires.

What can we learn from the rise and fall of Samson?

- Personal holiness is a must.
- It is possible to have a good beginning and yet end badly.
- Responsibility brings with it accountability.
- Might does not make right. He took the source of His strength lightly.
- He catered to his weakness.
- There is a high cost to pay for fraternizing with Philistines!

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