

Samson - Judges 13:1-16:31

Introduction

- We continue our lessons in the book of Judges this week and come to the story of Samson. If I was to ask you, what do you know about Samson what would you say? Maybe you remember that he was strong, that he had long hair, and that he had a weakness for women, particularly prostitutes from the Philistine nation.
- I was in high school during the early 1970's and I had long hair. In fact, it was down to the middle of my shoulder blades. I also spent my junior year in the weight room for my PE classes. I started out bench pressing around 100 pounds. By the end of the year, I could bench press almost 200 pounds, and could leg lift about 350 pounds. I was strong. But, was I Samson? I had long hair and I was strong, but that didn't make me Samson. So, what was the difference?
- The book of Judges goes through what is called the Judges cycle over and over again. (1) The people fell away from God and served other gods. (2) The people would be oppressed by another nation. (3) The people would cry out to God. (4) God would bring a deliverer to them and they would follow God again, then the cycle started again. We have seen this cycle many times throughout the book of Judges.
- God had promised through Joshua in **Jos. 23:16** *When you transgress the covenant of the Lord your God, which He commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, then the anger of the Lord will burn against you, and you will perish quickly from off the good land which He has given you.*
- If the nation of Israel abandoned Yahweh, the true God, and worshipped other gods, they would be punished and the wrath of God would come upon them. We have seen this over and over again in Judges. Let's look at Judges 13-16.

Lesson

- **Jud. 13:1** *Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, so that the LORD gave them into the hands of the Philistines forty years.*
- Again, the nation of Israel (1) Did evil and abandoned God and His ways; (2) God brought an oppressor. What do you expect to see next? We expected the people to cry out to God, but they did not. Surprising?
- *The opening first two elements...are merely announced (13:1), not described; a notice of Israel's response to the oppression is lacking altogether...Yahweh's raising up a deliverer takes an entire chapter, but thereafter the deliverer never rallies the Israelite troops in battle against the oppressor, and there is no announcement of victory over the oppressor. – Daniel Block, Judges, Ruth*
- What happened in the life of Samson was entirely a work of God. Samson while physically strong, was morally weak, and yet God used Him to fulfill his purposes.
- **Point #1:** God provided a deliverer
- **Jud. 13:3,5** *Then the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, "...For behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall come upon his head,*

for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines.”

- What is the Nazirite vow? *The Nazirite vow is delineated in Numbers 6:1-21 and contains three stipulations: the Nazirite was to abstain from all products of the vine; his hair was to be left uncut during the period of the vow; he was not to defile himself by contact with a dead body...It is clear from the Samson stories that he concerned himself only with the regulation concerning his hair.* – Arthur Cundall, Judges
- Samson was often in contact with dead bodies, he killed most of them himself, and **Jud. 14:10** indicates he did not abstain from products of the vine. The only thing that was constant about Samson’s Nazirite vow was his long hair, and that led to his downfall after it was cut off.
- God told Samson’s parents that Samson was to be a Nazirite from his birth and that his purpose was to be the beginning of the deliverance from the Philistines, and finally completed during the time of Saul and David. Notice that God still cared for his people and provided a deliverer even though they didn’t ask for one. In fact, it is only after Samson started stirring up the Philistines against Israel, that they cried out to God. The Israelites had become complacent and were willing to serve the Philistines, and unfortunately their gods, instead of serving the true God.
- They needed encouragement to turn back to God and the person God had chosen and used for this was Samson, imperfect though he was, was mentioned in the The Faith Hall of Fame in Heb. 11:32-33 *And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions.*
- **Point #2:** God worked in Samson’s life
- **Jud. 13:24-25** *Then the woman gave birth to a son and named him Samson; and the child grew up and the LORD blessed him. And the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him.*
- Notice what these verses tell us: (1) Samson was blessed by God. This is the common word for “bless” in the Old Testament. It indicates that God prospered Samson. God worked in his life. This was totally a work of God and not based upon something that Samson had done. (2) God began to stir Samson. God moved in Samson’s life. God agitated Samson so that he would act for God. It was time for Samson to do the work God wanted.
- Would Samson have done great things for God if God had not started working in his life? *From the following narratives one concludes that, left to himself, Samson would never have become involved in God’s or even Israel’s agenda; and, left to themselves, the Israelites would have been satisfied to continue to coexist with the Philistines. But Yahweh had other plans. He must preserve his people as a separate entity. Therefore, through his Spirit God intervenes in Samson’s life so that that the agenda set for him in 13:5-7 may begin to be fulfilled.* –Block
- **Point #3:** God empowered Samson

- **Jud. 14:4** *However, his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD, for He was seeking an occasion against the Philistines. Now at that time the Philistines were ruling over Israel.*
- Samson desired a Philistine woman to be his wife. God had told the Israelites to only marry those from Israel and not to be married to the Canaanites around them, for they would be corrupted and then would then stop worshipping the true God. What does this verse tell us? (1) It was from God; it was part of God's purpose and his parents had forgot that God had a purpose for Samson's life. (2) God was seeking an opportunity to deliver His people. Israel was under subjection to a foreign nation and it was time to change the situation.
- Samson was the chosen tool to "*shatter the status quo*". It had gone on long enough and if the people would not call upon their God, God had to work in their stead. This woman that Samson desired was the opportunity that God used to rile up the Philistines.
- *If the Israelites did not have the heart to take actions against the Philistines, God will cause the Philistines to take action against them.* –Block
- There are three instances where we see God working: (a) A lion
- **Jud. 14:6** *The Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily, so that he tore him as one tears a young goat though he had nothing in his hand; but he did not tell his father or mother what he had done.*
- God infused Samson with superhuman strength and he tore the lion apart. He did it because of the empowering that came from God. To Samson the strength he had against the lion encouraged him that he would be able to terrorize the Philistines. Samson was tricked by having his wife tell the answer to the riddle he had proposed to them. What happened?
- (b) 30 from Ashkelon
- **Jud. 14:19** *Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily, and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of them and took their spoil and gave the changes of clothes to those who told the riddle.*
- The Spirit of Lord came upon Samson again with superhuman strength and Samson alone killed thirty men from Ashkelon to take the changes of clothes needed to fulfill his "*promise*" based upon the riddle being answered correctly. God worked and empowered Samson to advance God's agenda to stir up the Philistines through Samson His tool.
- Because Samson did not get his wife back when he visited her, he burned the fields with the help of 300 foxes. The Philistines were not too happy with Samson and brought their army to Judah and demanded that Samson be handed over to them, or else...
- 3000 of Judah came to Samson and said to him, **Jud. 15:11** "*Do you not know that the Philistines are rulers over us? What then is this that you have done to us?*" God was working in the lives of the Israelites, for they had taken for granted that the Philistines were ruling them. God wanted them to be committed and worshipping Him. God was going to deliver them, whether they wanted it or not.
- Next, we see the (c) 1000 from Lehi

- **Jud. 15:14-15** *And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily so that the ropes that were on his arms were as flax that is burned with fire, and his bonds dropped from his hands. He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, so he reached out and took it and killed a thousand men with it.*
- Samson surrendered and when Samson arrived at the Philistine city of Lehi, God came upon Samson “*mightily*” again. Samson’s work was not done yet and Yahweh destroyed the flax, but not his hands. Samson’s release was totally a work of God and not based upon Samson’s strength. The result? Samson took a jawbone of a donkey and killed 1,000 men. Notice the progression: 1 lion, 30 from Ashkelon, and 1000 from Lehi. All of these were initiated by Yahweh to redeem Israel.
- **Point #4:** God worked through Samson’s weakness
- **Jud. 16:1** *Now Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there, and went in to her.*
- Samson’s weakness was again on display. He was ruthless and self-centered and morally weak. Though he was physically strong, his heart was not committed to God and His ways 100%. Samson again went to a Philistine woman, this one a prostitute. After being trapped...
- **Jud. 16:3** *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.*
- Once again Samson’s strength ‘*saved*’ him, but did you notice the difference this time? There was no mention of Yahweh coming upon him mightily. Again Samson went back:
- **Jud. 16:4** *After this it came about that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.*
- The lords of the Philistines came to Delilah to betray Samson and find out the secret of his great strength. Samson and Delilah went back and forth and finally Samson told her the truth:
- **Jud. 16:17** *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.”*
- Samson finally revealed that his strength came from God.
- *This confession is remarkable for two reasons: First, it declares to Delilah and the reader that Samson’s awareness of his high theological and spiritual calling...Secondly, in a highly significant moment Samson refers to the deity by the generic designation Elohim rather than the name of Yahweh. –Block*
- Delilah called for the soldiers, Samson’s hair was cut off, but...
- **Jud. 16:20b** *...but he did not know that the LORD had departed from him.*
- Samson didn’t recognize the predicament he was in. Samson thought he could do it on his own, but God had abandoned him. Samson’s eyes were gouged out, he was chained, he was put in prison, and he became a slave to the Philistines.
- **Jud 16:22** *However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it was shaved off.*

- This statement is so subtle and almost passes our notice, but there is also a ray of hope that the writer told us about. All was not lost; the hair grew back. We don't know how long Samson was in prison or how long the hair grew. Finally, Samson turned to God, his will was broken, he acknowledged God's work in his life, and he asked for God's help.
- **Jud. 16:28** *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."*
- While 3,000 men and women looked on, Samson seized the central pillars of the building, broke them, destroying the building. He died as well as those inside. Those that died were more than he had killed in his entire life. Samson began the delivery from the Philistines. Samson was a one-man wrecking crew, wasn't perfect, but God still used him in a mighty way.
- **Application**
- (1) We are to be totally committed to God
- **Prov. 3:5-7** *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and turn away from evil.*
- God is the process of transforming us into His image and our part is to trust in Him. We can't do everything on our own. We have to turn to God and trust Him. We are called to follow what His Word tells us; we are to turn away from evil and turn towards God. God can use us when we are totally committed to Him.
- (2) We are to realize that God can use us, even when we are not perfect
- **2 Cor. 12:9-10** *And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.*
- Paul had weaknesses and God used him in a mighty way in preaching the gospel and writing a good portion of the New Testament. God wants to use us, even in our weakness, for we have to realize that we cannot accomplish great things for God if we think we can do it without God.
- (3) We need to understand that God dwells within us and will not abandon us.
- **1 Cor. 3:16** *Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*
- We are not like those in the Old Testament, like Samson, who had to worry about God's presence and power coming and going. Once we became a believer the Holy Spirit came to live within us. God is within us to control, to guide, and to bring us back to Him.