

Lesson 4 19 February 2012

Samson and the Philistines

Lesson Scope: Judges 13-16

Lesson Focus

Israel had again fallen into apostasy and moral decay. As a result, God allowed the Philistines to invade the land. In the midst of spiritual decline, Manoah and his wife remained faithful to the Lord. An angel foretold the birth of their son, who would "begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines" (13:5). He is the last judge recorded in the Book of Judges; the organized kingdom was established soon afterward.

Samson's life vividly portrays Israel's experience as a nation. Both had been set apart in consecration for the Lord's service. Like Samson, Israel failed in her commitment and was drawn away in adulterous relationships with the heathen. The folly of Samson is obvious, but Israel was guilty of the same failures.

Samson performed many mighty acts in his lifetime. It is clear, however, that he also made some foolish choices that led to his fall.

God can use His people mightily when they faithfully obey Him. When they disobey His commandments, however, they are powerless. Samson is an example of one who failed in separation. He maintained relationships with ungodly women and fell into moral sin.

We should carefully consider the warning to us of the dangers of ungodly relationships and learn from this lesson that failing in separation puts our spiritual lives in danger.

Lesson Aim: To glean truths from Samson's fall and recovery.

Theme Verse: [2 Chronicles 15:2](#). The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you.

Lesson Text:

"The Spirit ... Began to Move Him"

Judges 13:2-4 ² And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name *was* Manoah; and his wife *was* barren, and bare not. ³ And the angel of the LORD appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou *art* barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son. ⁴ Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean *thing*:

Judges 13:24-25 ²⁴ And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him. ²⁵ And the Spirit of the LORD began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

"Entice Him"

Judges 16:4-6 ⁴ And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name *was* Delilah. ⁵ And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength *lieth*, and by what *means* we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him; and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred *pieces* of silver. ⁶ And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength *lieth*, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee.

Judges 16:15 ¹⁵ And she said unto him, How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart *is* not with me? thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength *lieth*.

"The LORD ... Departed From Him"

Judges 16:16-21 ¹⁶ And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, *so* that his soul was vexed unto death; ¹⁷ That he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I *have been* a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any *other* man. ¹⁸ And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath shewed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand. ¹⁹ And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused

him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. ²⁰ And she said, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him. ²¹ But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house.

"Samson Called Unto the LORD"

Judges 16:28-30 ²⁸ And Samson called unto the LORD, and said, O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes. ²⁹ And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left. ³⁰ And Samson said; Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with *all his* might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that *were* therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than *they* which he slew in his life.

Questions for Study

"The Spirit ... Began to Move Him"

1. What are some principles in these verses that help us develop godly character?

"Entice Him"

2. Wherein did Samson's strength lie?
3. What are the pitfalls of close worldly associates?
4. What lessons can we learn from the persistence of Delilah?

"The LORD ... Departed From Him"

5. How did it come to pass that Samson did not know when the Lord was departed from him?
6. What are the results of sin?

"Samson Called Unto the LORD"

7. What lessons can we learn from Samson's end?
8. Was Samson a strong man? Explain.

Analyzing the Passage

The tribe of Dan, from which Samson came, was on the Philistine's border. "The Spirit of the LORD began to move him" (Judges 13:25) suggests the

beginning of God's working in a special way through Samson. Delilah was most likely a Philistine. She had no true love for Samson (Judges 16:5) and was easily bribed with large sums of money. Physically, Samson appeared as an ordinary man, which caused the Philistines to suppose his great strength lay in some secret medium. Samson's Nazarite vow becomes a type of the total commitment and consecration of the Christian life—of permanently renouncing the world with its sinful pleasures and being set apart for the service of God. Nazarites were to abstain from wine and grapes. They were forbidden to cut their hair or to touch a dead body. Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist were Nazarites for life as opposed to taking the vow for a defined time. Samson's first apparent mistake was his relationships with ungodly women. He continued trifling with danger after Delilah's intent became obvious. She stated explicitly the desire to bind (fasten) Samson, to afflict (brow beat or depress) him. Pressed (Judges 16:16) indicates applying pressure to the point of destroying his resistance.

Principles and Applications

"The Spirit ... Began to Move Him"

1. Godly parents are an aid to developing godly character (Judges 13:2-4, 24-25). Samson's parents filled their place well. The Lord blessed Samson early in his life. Godly parents take their children to church and send them to Christian day schools. At home they insist on honesty and good work ethics. They also minimize the amount of worldly influence they are exposed to. At an early age, they dedicate their children to godly service. Godly parents do all that is in their power to help their families build godly character.
2. Wrong associates propel one on a downward course (Judges 16:4-5). The people we associate with will influence us. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly" (Psalm 1:1). The Scriptures teach us to choose our companions carefully. Good friends will help our families build good character, but wrong associates quickly influence us on a downward course.

"Entice Him"

3. The enemy is intent on destroying God's people (Judges 16:5-6). The Philistines had one goal—to bind Samson. Satan today has one goal and that is to destroy God's people. We have an adversary who is just as intent

on destroying us as the Philistines were intent on binding Samson. Let us be aware of Satan's power to destroy, and yet focus on the Lord and His power to guide and keep us.

4. Men fail when they ignore clear danger signals (Judges 16:6). Did Samson know that the Philistines wanted to destroy him? He should have known. Samson thought he could resist temptation in his own strength. This idea might not be so far from us. We tend to think, "It won't happen to me." To harbor sinful thoughts or to tamper with temptation is treading on very dangerous ground. The Scriptures clearly teach us to "avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away." A special plea is given to parents to be aware of the small danger signals. Moral sin, such as Samson fell into, tempts youth. Wise parents are aware of where their youth are and of what they are doing.

5. Men fall when they yield to the enticement of the enemy (Judges 16:17). Separation is important to our spiritual life. We cannot tamper with temptation and expect in the end to have victory over it. We defend ourselves by maintaining a safe distance from known sources of temptation. Practicing separation in our appearance, in our speech, and in all of life will spare us from many dangers and establish the foundation for a godly posterity.

6. Men fail when they lightly esteem sacred things (Judges 16:17). Our love for God influences the way we treat sacred things. We take seriously the ordinances of the church. We do not take Communion without properly preparing ourselves. Baptismal and marriage vows are a sacred promise to God and the church. Being faithful to our vows shows our love to God and His Word. When Samson desecrated his covenant with God, it brought his downfall. We want to learn from Samson's fall and place a proper esteem on sacred things.

"The LORD ... Departed From Him"

7. The Lord departs from those who carelessly sleep in the midst of danger (Judges 16:19-20). God calls us to be "children of the day"—to be awake, sober, and vigilant. To sleep spiritually in these last days will be our downfall. The brotherhood helps us guard our lives and choose a safe path for our families. We will not coast into heaven, but as Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

8. Overconfidence in one's self blinds one to his own weakness (Judges 16:20-21). It is very possible for us to become overconfident. God has blessed us with material prosperity and a godly heritage. If we place our

trust in these things, we will become like the church of Laodicea. "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17). Let us search our hearts to discover our true spiritual condition.

"Samson Called Unto the LORD"

9. Those who recognize their own weakness call out to God for strength (Judges 16:28). Samson's condition was pitiful. He was bound and blinded by the Philistines. In this condition Samson called on God, the true source of his strength. Together, as the people of God, we recognize our human weakness and depend on the Lord for spiritual strength and wisdom. God's power can work mightily when His people recognize their weakness and look to Him for victory.

10. God gives renewed strength to those who call upon Him in sincerity (Judges 16:30). God heard Samson's sincere cry and answered by renewing his strength. God mercifully gave Samson another opportunity. Today God in mercy hears the repentant sinner and extends to him salvation. God gives renewed energy to the faint-hearted and weary saints who sincerely call upon Him.

11. God gives victory to those who rely on Him (Judges 16:30). Samson's last victory was his greatest, and he stands as a monument to God's grace and mercy. Satan tempts those who fail with the thought that all is lost and it is useless even to try. But, praise God, there is grace to press onward with renewed courage and determination to do our best for the Lord.

Important Teachings

1. Godly parents are an aid to developing godly character (Judges 13:2-4, 24-25).

2. Wrong associates propel one on a downward course (Judges 16:4-5).

3. The enemy is intent on destroying God's people (Judges 16:5-6).

4. Men fail when they ignore clear danger signals (Judges 16:6).

5. Men fall when they yield to the enticement of the enemy (Judges 16:17).

6. Men fail when they lightly esteem sacred things (Judges 16:17).

7. The Lord departs from those who carelessly sleep in the midst of danger (Judges 16:19-20).

8. Overconfidence in one's self blinds one to his own weakness (Judges

16:20-21).

9. Those who recognize their own weakness call out to God for strength (Judges 16:28).

10. God gives renewed strength to those who call upon Him in sincerity (Judges 16:30).

11. God gives victory to those who rely on Him (Judges 16:30).

Answers to Questions

1. What are some principles in these verses that help us develop godly character?

Manoah and his wife heard God speaking through the angel and carefully obeyed God's will, even though it must have seemed radical. God speaks clearly through His Word and the church, and we develop character by obeying the written and spoken Word. We practice a distinct line of separation between ourselves and the world. This means refraining from some legitimate things in order to help us remain true to God and to avoid offending our brethren. The Spirit moved Samson; when the Spirit speaks to us, we need to listen.

2. Wherein did Samson's strength lie?

Samson's strength lay in his covenant relationship with Jehovah.

Samson's long hair symbolized this covenant. To expose this symbol to the Philistines would break his covenant. Samson's physical strength was tied to his obedience to Jehovah. Our strength also lies in our covenant with God.

3. What are the pitfalls of close worldly associates?

The lines of separation become blurred, and our families will not be able to tell whether our true friends are among God's people. Our resistance to their influence may weaken. We will become like those we are around. As time went on, Samson could not resist the daily pressures from Delilah.

4. What lessons can we learn from the persistence of Delilah?

Delilah had no concern at all for Samson. All she wanted was the Philistines' money. Her persistence was selfish. Satan is persistent in his attempts to destroy us. He has no intention of leaving God's people alone. We must prepare ourselves for spiritual conflict that will take all of our resources.

5. How did it come to pass that Samson did not know when the Lord had departed from him?

Samson had played with temptation so long that he was deceived into

thinking that it would not matter. For him to sleep while Delilah cut his hair was reckless and was a culmination of a process of resisting the voice of the Lord. Samson's communication with God had long been broken. We also can lose our spiritual vitality in small steps, and the Lord could depart from us and we would not know it.

6. What are the results of sin?

Sin took Samson farther than he wanted to go. Sin blinded Samson; it led him into the hands of the enemy, who bound him and made him grind in the prison house. Sin brings spiritual bondage and eventually spiritual death. Samson could not escape the awful consequences of his choices.

7. What lessons can we learn from Samson's end?

Samson's prayer was sincere. God hears and answers sincere prayers. However, Samson's prayer also seems shortsighted; he thought only of revenge for his two eyes. We must have a broader vision than that in our goals and prayers. Samson lived with the Philistines and also died with them. If we want to die with the people of God, we must first of all live with them. Let us not wait till the end of life to do things for the Lord with all our might.

8. Was Samson a strong man? Explain.

Samson was given special physical strength from the Lord to begin to deliver Israel. Because of his spiritual weakness and failure, God eventually took his strength.

Summarizing the Lesson

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:11-14).

Research Guide

1. Doctrines of the Bible (Daniel Kauffman) includes a chapter on "Self-denial" that makes some broader applications.
2. A Bible dictionary is helpful in understanding the requirements of the Nazarite vow.