

The Bible From 20,000 Feet Part 28

Judges chs. 13 - 16

Tuesday Night Bible Study, June 16, 2009

--INTRO

--in this lesson we're going to see dramatic illustrations in the life of Samson about a theme that is repeated over and over again throughout the Bible – "The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak. Therefore watch and pray lest you enter into temptation." (Matthew 26:41)

--recap of context of the book of Judges...

--the first generation of Israel in the Promise land made the critical mistake of only partly obeying the Lord's command to execute His judgement on the nations and their depraved cultures in the land of Canaan.

--the second generation of Israel in the Promise Land forgot about their heritage and rather than following the Lord they intermarried with the remaining Canaanites and followed their pagan ways.

--over the 400 years that followed Israel repeated the cycle over and over again of turning away from the Lord, followed by the Lord delivering them into the hands of their enemies, followed by them crying out to the Lord for deliverance, followed by the Lord raising up judges to deliver them from their enemies, followed by a period of peace, followed by Israel turning from the Lord again and being delivered back into the hands of their enemies.

--Israel being delivered over to their enemies and suffering military defeat prevented them from suffering further spiritual defeat... for when they were at their weakest point physically they reached their strongest point spiritually...the place of dependence on the Lord.

--God wanted them to have military and spiritual strength but they could only maintain that state for limited periods of time.

--the supernatural circumstances of Samson's birth....

--God's plan for Samson's life began before he was born at a time when Israel was once again suffering at the hands of their enemies.

-- Judges 13:1-7: "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. 2 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. 3 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. 4 Now therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or similar drink, and not to eat anything unclean. 5 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." 6 So the woman came and told her husband, saying, "A Man of God came to me, and His countenance was like the countenance of the Angel of God, very awesome; but I did not ask Him where He was from, and He did not tell me His name. 7 And He said to me, 'Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. Now drink no wine or similar drink, nor eat anything unclean, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.'"

--the Angel of the Lord appeared to Samson's mother and told her that he would be a Nazirite...

--in the Old Testament Law that God gave Israel, He gave instructions for Nazirite vows which were usually taken for limited periods of time during which a person would dedicate himself to the Lord's service for a special purpose.

--as a sign of this special dedication to the Lord Nazarites could not cut their hair while they were under the Nazirite oath. (Numbers 6:5)

--in all the Bible there are only 3 people who were Nazarites for life, and all 3 were given that calling while they were in their mother's womb... Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist.

--of these three Samson was the only one who failed miserably to follow God's calling for his life...rather than walking in the Spirit Samson walked in his flesh and forfeited God's plan for his life.

--the same choice is before us...to walk in the flesh or walk in the Spirit...if we walk in the flesh we will suffer as Samson suffered, but if we walk in the Spirit we will experience all that God has planned for us.

--Samson strays from the path God called him to...

--"So the woman bore a son and called his name Samson; and the child grew, and the Lord blessed him. And the Spirit of the Lord began to move upon him at Mahaneh Dan between Zorah and Esctael." (13:24-25)

--God had called and empowered Samson to lead Israel out of bondage under the Philistines, but the first thing recorded about his adult life is his lust for a Philistine woman and his decision to marry her.

--this sin struck at the heart of Israel's problem, as it was intermarriage with the Canaanites which had corrupted Israel. (Judges 3:6)

--14:1-3: "Now Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines. 2 So he went up and told his father and mother, saying, "I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife." 3 Then his father and mother said to him, "Is there no woman among the daughters of your brethren, or among all my people, that you must go and get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?"And Samson said to his father, "Get her for me, for she pleases me well."

--Samson didn't know her; he only saw her – it was a flesh-based attraction.

--verse 4:"But his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD — that He was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines. For at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel."

--while Samson followed his eyes to find a Philistine wife, God brought one to him who rather than fulfilling Samson's lust would end up arousing Samson's anger towards the Philistines to get his attention back to where it should be – to fight against the Philistines rather than embracing them.

--on his way to meet the Philistine woman, Samson encounters a roaring lion which provides opportunity to introduce the supernatural strength God gave Samson in order to lead Israel to victory against the Philistines... 14:5-6: "Now to his surprise, 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."

--through God's Spirit working in him, Samson was like the incredible hulk or superman... picture a person tearing apart a lion with his bear hands!

--on a deeper level Samson's encounter with the lion provides an object lesson...

--1 Peter 5:8-9 likens Satan to a roaring lion... "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith..."

--while Samson exhibited amazing strength by tearing apart a lion with his bear hands, at the same time he exhibits profound weakness when he encounters Satan as a roaring lion!

--through the Philistine woman Samson is essentially defeated and drug away by the roaring lion of Satan!

--by God's grace He chastens Samson and rescues him from this roaring lion by causing his marriage to the Philistine woman to be aborted during the wedding feast.

--nearer the time of the wedding, Samson passed by the carcass of the lion he killed and saw a bee hive in it and took some of it's honey... Judg 14:9: "He took some of it in his hands and went along, eating. When he came to his father and mother, he gave some to them, and they also ate. But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion."

--the reason he probably didn't tell his parents where the honey came from was because he had to violate his Nazarite vow in order to get the honey

--while under a Nazarite vow the law prohibited people from going near a dead body (Numbers 6:6)

--this is one more example that shows how Samson followed his flesh rather than the Spirit... he gave into his desire for the sweetness of honey rather than denying that desire for the higher calling of dedication to the Lord under the Nazarite vow.

--in our lives how many times are do we face a similar choice... between something that is sweet to our flesh or something that is sweet to our spirit?

--Samson's choice to indulge in the honey sparked a chain of events that ruined his wedding and marriage... (and when we follow our flesh we too suffer negative consequences in the long run!)

--Judges 14:12-20: "Then Samson said to them, "Let me pose a riddle to you. If you can correctly solve and explain it to me within the seven days of the feast, then I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing. 13 But if you cannot explain it to me, then you shall give me thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing." And they said to him, "Pose your riddle, that we may hear it." 14 So he said to them: "Out of the eater came something to eat, And out of the strong came something sweet." Now for three days they could not explain the riddle. 15 But it came to pass on the seventh day that they said to Samson's wife, "Entice your husband, that he may explain the riddle to us, or else we will burn you and your father's house with fire. Have you invited us in order to take what is ours? Is that not so?" 16 Then Samson's wife wept on him, and said, "You only hate me! You do not love me! You have posed a riddle to the sons of my people, but you have not explained it to me." And he said to her, "Look, I have not explained it to my father or my mother; so should I explain it to you?" 17 Now she had wept on him the seven days while their feast lasted. And it happened on the seventh day that he told her, because she pressed him so much. Then she explained the riddle to the sons of her people. 18 So the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down: "What is sweeter than honey? And what is stronger than a lion?" And he said to them: "If you had not plowed with my heifer, You would not have solved my riddle!" 19 Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily, and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of their men, took their apparel, and gave the changes of clothing to those who had explained the riddle. So his anger was aroused, and he went back up to his father's house. 20 And Samson's wife was given to his companion, who had been his best man."

--God empowered Samson to perform mighty feats of strength against the Philistines, but the only time he engages that potential is for selfish reasons... he never breaks out of the selfish mode to fight against the Philistines for the sake of Israel rather than himself.

--because of Samson's actions, his would be father-in-law gave his bride to another man, which infuriated Samson more and caused him to burn vinyards, olive groves, and grain stores of the Philistines.

--the Philistines then retaliated and burn to death his ex-bride and her father. Then Samson tells them, "Since you've acted like this, I won't stop until I get my revenge on you." 8 He attacked them viciously and slaughtered many of them. Then he went down and stayed in a cave in the rock of Etam." (Judges 15:7-8)

--another picture of the result of following the lust of the flesh... rather than enjoying marriage he ended up living alone in a cave! The lust of the flesh always promises one thing but results in the exact opposite!

--rather than weakening the Philistine rule over Israel, Samson's selfish exploits threatened to strengthen the Philistine rule over Israel...

--Judges 15:9-10: "The Philistines went up and camped in Judah, spreading out near Lehi. The men of Judah asked, "Why have you come to fight us?" "We have come to take Samson prisoner," they answered, "to do to him as he did to us."

--the tribe of Judah then sends 3000 men to arrest Samson...

--Judges 15:11-15: "Then three thousand men from Judah went down to the cave in the rock of Etam and said to Samson, "Don't you realize that the Philistines are rulers over us? What have you done to us?" He answered, "I merely did to them what they did to me." 12 They said to him, "We've come to tie you up and hand you over to the Philistines." Samson said, "Swear to me that you won't kill me yourselves." 13 "Agreed," they answered. "We will only tie you up and hand you over to them. We will not kill you." So they bound him with two new ropes and led him up from the rock. 14 As he approached Lehi, the Philistines came toward him shouting. The Spirit of the LORD came upon him in power. The ropes on his arms became like charred flax, and the bindings dropped from his hands. 15 Finding a fresh jawbone of a donkey, he grabbed it and struck down a thousand men."

--it's interesting how the Spirit of the Lord didn't empower Samson until he was threatened by the Philistines; it was the will of the Spirit to drive back the Philistines, and Sampson only briefly walked in step with the Spirit... how different his life could have been!

--Scripture then jumps to the end of Sampsons life after his limited rule as a judge of Israel for 20 years, and at the end of his life we see that he is still dominated by the lust of the flesh.

--the chapter starts with an account of Samson seeing a prostitute in Gaza while the people of the city closed the city gates and surrounded the house where he was at in order to try and capture him; rather than being caught he ripped the gate off the wall and carried it to a nearby hilltop...again using his strength for the wrong purpose.

--then we see Samson with another woman named Delilah who talked him into revealing the secret of his strength; until this time he had lied to her about it.

--Judges 16:15-22: "Then she said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and have not told me where your great strength lies." 16 And it came to pass, when she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, so that his soul was vexed to death, 17 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." 18 When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, "Come up once more, for he has told me all his heart." So the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hand. 19 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. 20 And she said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" 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. 21 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. 22 However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaven."

--what a picture of sin that is... the lust of the flesh is a trap from satan to steal our spiritual strength!

--apparently when his hair grew back he regained some strength, but being blind he could not use that strength to escape; instead he became a circus act for the Philistines...

--Judg 16:23-30: Now the lords of the Philistines gathered together to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god, and to rejoice. And they said: "Our god has delivered into our hands Samson our enemy!" 24 When the people saw him, they praised their god; for they said: "Our god has delivered into our hands our enemy, The destroyer of our land, And the one who multiplied our dead." 25 So it happened, when their hearts were merry, that they said, "Call for Samson, that he may perform for us." So they called for Samson from the prison, and he performed for them. And they stationed him between the pillars. 26 Then Samson said to the lad who held him by the hand, "Let me feel the pillars which support the temple, so that I can lean on them." 27 Now the temple was full of men and women. All the lords of the Philistines were there — about three thousand men and women on the roof watching while Samson performed. 28 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!" 29 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. 30 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."

--supernatural strength in the Christian life...

--after Christ returned to heaven and sent the Holy Spirit to take His place on the earth, there was no longer a place for Nazarite vows and being dedicated to the Lord for a limited time of special service.

--in a sense every Christian is a life-long Nazarite because we are all called to live lives of special dedication to the Lord.

--when we entered a relationship with the Lord we became the temple of the Holy Spirit...

--every moment of every day God's Spirit dwells inside us.

--when we walk in our flesh we grieve the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30), but when we walk in the Spirit we become the hands and feet and voice of Jesus to others.

--there is a sense in which we are "married" to the Lord. (Romans 7:4)

--1 Cor 6:18-20: "Flee sexual immorality... Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

--when we walk in the Spirit, our faith, joy, hope, and purpose in Christ are unstoppable just as Samson was unstoppable!

--there are many great examples of this, such as Stephen in the book of Acts and the apostle Paul whose preaching could not be stopped... they preached Christ and rejoiced in Him all the way to the moment of their martyrdom.

--may the prayer of Ephesians be answered in our lives... "be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith... that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:16-19)