

JUDGES SESSION #18

In the last session we saw the fiery conflict between Samson and the Philistines as a result of his short-lived marriage. We now see...

G. Fearful Resentment

...as we pick up the story again in...

Judg 15:9-13

⁹ Now the Philistines went up, encamped in Judah, and deployed themselves against Lehi. ¹⁰ And the men of Judah said, "Why have you come up against us?"

So they answered, "We have come up to arrest Samson, to do to him as he has done to us."

¹¹ Then three thousand men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam, and said to Samson, "Do you not know that the Philistines rule over us? What *is* this you have done to us?"

And he said to them, "As they did to me, so I have done to them."

¹² But they said to him, "We have come down to arrest you, that we may deliver you into the hand of the Philistines."

Then Samson said to them, "Swear to me that you will not kill me yourselves."

¹³ So they spoke to him, saying, "No, but we will tie you securely and deliver you into their hand; but we will surely not kill you." And they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock.

- Samson's fellow Israelites (especially the tribe of Judah, no less!) can only respond to his frightening disturbance of the peace with **resentment** for his exploits
 - they accepted the Philistine domination without question, not recognizing the threat this posed to their own nation & culture
 - ...as is often the case: **compromise** was far more comfortable than **commitment!**
 - there were **3000** Judahites vs. **1000** Philistines here (plus Samson!) – but still no effort is being made to follow God's command to destroy the enemy!
- instead, his own people deliver him up to their enemies in order to keep peace!
 - ...we can get to the point in our own lives where we compromise so much with worldly values and sinful thoughts & behavior that we just give in; we no longer wish to fight the spiritual battle or flee temptation or live as people of integrity in our workplace – we become like Israel, not only giving in to ungodly pressures just to keep the peace, but having no tolerance for a Christian brother or sister who wants to stand up for what is right
- but as his people meekly bring the bound-up Samson to the Philistines, he produces another surprise: *verses 14-17...*
 - ¹⁴ When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting against him. Then 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.

¹⁵ He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, reached out his hand and took it, and killed a thousand men with it. ¹⁶ Then Samson said:

"With the jawbone of a donkey,
Heaps upon heaps,
With the jawbone of a donkey
I have slain a thousand men!"

¹⁷ And so it was, when he had finished speaking, that he threw the jawbone from his hand, and called that place Ramath Lehi.

- note Samson's **song** (in vs. 16)

"With the jawbone of a donkey, Heaps upon heaps, With the jawbone of a donkey
I have slain a thousand men!"

- it's a song which he composed & sang ...alone!

- in the Hebrew this is a 4-beat couplet with a play on words, literally reading:

"With the jawbone of an ass I have piled them in a mass!"

...it is a gruesome & vivid picture of breaking the tenacious jaw-like hold which the Philistines (considered 'unclean donkeys') had over Israel

Judg 15:18-20

Then he became very thirsty; so he cried out to the Lord and said, "You have given this great deliverance by the hand of Your servant; and now shall I die of thirst and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?" ¹⁹ So God split the hollow place that *is* in Lehi,* and water came out, and he drank; and his spirit returned, and he revived. Therefore he called its name En Hakkore,* which is in Lehi to this day. ²⁰ And he judged Israel twenty years in the days of the Philistines.

- these are Samson's first recorded words to God

What impression does this **prayer** make on you?

- well, he acknowledges God's role in the victory, but his emphasis seems to be more on himself than on God: "You'll be sorry if I die!"

- and yet God graciously meets his need with water from the rock, just like He did in the day of Moses

- Samson is reminded in this humbling weakness that **God alone is the Source** of his strength

- Samson becomes Israel's judge after this incident and he judges Israel for *20 yrs.* before the famous story of Delilah occurs

- normally in Judges see this cycle: deliverance, followed by judging & peace for x number of years, then the judge dies, and then Israel declines into 'whoring after other gods' once again

- this time, it is the **judge himself**, Samson, who **personifies the national failure** by his own personal failure

- he, like all the judges, points to the truth that a more perfect Messiah would be needed if Israel was ever fully & finally to be delivered from sin & bondage – a Deliverer who is both **powerful & pure!**

- in direct contrast with the earlier judge, Jephthah, Samson had many **advantages**:
 - his birth was predicted by an angel
 - he had godly parents who loved him
 - he was uniquely dedicated to God as a Nazirite
 - and he experienced the power of God's Spirit upon him even as a young man
- he should have – and *could* have – done much better; but his life story is marked by **tragedy** rather than by lasting success; it's a story with many lessons for us

H. Fatal Flaw

Judg 16:1-3

Now Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there, and went in to her. ² When the Gazites *were told*, "Samson has come here!" they surrounded *the place* and lay in wait for him all night at the gate of the city. They were quiet all night, saying, "In the morning, when it is daylight, we will kill him." ³ And Samson lay *low* till midnight; then he arose at midnight, 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.

- in a movie years ago some shipwrecked men are seen drifting aimlessly on the ocean in a lifeboat. As the days pass under the scorching sun, their rations of food and fresh water give out. The men grow deliriously thirsty. One night, while the others are asleep, one man ignores all previous warnings and gulps down some salt water. It was a tragic thing to do because he quickly dies.

Ocean water contains seven times more salt than the human body can safely take in. Drinking it, a person dehydrates because the kidneys demand extra water to flush the overload of salt. The more salt water someone drinks, the thirstier he gets. He actually dies of thirst.

When we lust, we become like this man. We thirst desperately for something that looks like what we want. We don't realize, however, that it is precisely the opposite of what we really need. In fact, it can kill us.

- Samson is a sad biblical example, drinking the 'salt water' of lust:
 - in this area he had a recurring problem: **He never learned to control himself**
 - every chapter of Samson's story begins with his eye on a woman!
- ...Gary Inrig called these 4 points the **Four Facets of Samson's Fatal Flaw**:
 - *he rejected **authority** (his parents);
 - *he adopted **pagan social values** ("she's pleasing to my eyes");
 - *he was a **legalist** (he was careful to keep the **hair on** his head long but had no concern about guarding the **thoughts in** his head);
 - *and he never learned to **control** himself
- Prov. 16:32 tells us: "It is better to have **self-control** than to control an army"
- Samson's great area of **indiscipline** was sex
 - Ambrose (an early Christian theologian) wrote: "Samson, when brave, strangled a lion; but he could not strangle his own love. He burst the fetters of his foes; but not the cords of his own lusts."

- couple of yrs. ago scientists reported 300 **whales** stranded on a beach as result of chasing *sardines* and getting caught in shallow water when the tide went out
- Samson was like that: a great whale chasing the sardines of small goals most of his life; he was finally beached by chasing the sardine of sexual pleasure
- yes, he was a mighty man; the strongest man who ever lived...something like **Superman**; but also vulnerable to his own brand of kryptonite
 - for some, our point of vulnerability will be ambition, money, drive for success, the need to be needed, worry, anger, etc.;
 - for Samson, it was **sensuality**

Let me pass along **FOUR PRINCIPLES** ABOUT SENSUALITY [from C. Swindoll]

1. Sensuous children can be born of *spiritual* parents
2. A sensuous person focuses on the *external* rather than on the internal
 - eg. in chap. 14, Samson refers 3 times to the Philistine woman in exclusively visual terms
3. The sensuous life brings one *anxiety* after another.
 - denial of physical gratification led to anger...led to violence...led to more violence
4. Sensuality may be dormant, but it is *never dead* – 20 years go by between the woman of Timnah and Delilah

- this story at Gaza provides the backdrop to another feat of strength: carrying the city's gateposts perhaps over 60 km!
 - ...in doing so, he provided a wonderful opportunity for Israel to 'walk in' and defeat this Philistine city now without any gates to protect it! – but of course, they didn't
 - ...and neither does Samson himself!
- this story also provides the backdrop to his final liaison with his most famous woman, **Delilah**
 - learn all about “Deadly Delilah” in our next session