

## SAMSON, THE MAN OF GREAT STRENGTH

Judges 14:1-15:20 (Key verse 15:14)

"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."

Last week we learned about the birth of Samson and how he was set apart as a Nazarene. In the two passages we shall cover today we shall see the grown-up man Samson, how he lives and how God uses him. What is more interesting is the countless compromises Samson makes yet God still grants Samson strength to defeat the Philistines. As compared to all the other past Judges, Samson appears to be arrogant and overconfident in himself, letting his lust and violent temper run wild. Yet in all this it appears that God was working to achieve his purposes. Who then is this God? Who is our God who can work in this way? May we learn through this passage the power of the Spirit of God that comes upon ordinary people to achieve the work God.

Just to recap a bit on what a Nazarene mean since Samson was born under a Nazarene vow. A Nazarene must abstain from wine and other fermented drink (i.e. alcohol). They must not drink grape juice or eat grapes or raisins. They must not eat anything that comes from the grapevine, not even the seeds or skins. No razor may be used on their head, they must let their hair grow long. They must not go near a dead body.

Now let us look at verse 1-3, Samson went down to Timnah and saw there a young Philistine woman. 2 When he returned, he said to his father and mother, "I have seen a Philistine woman in Timnah; now get her for me as my wife. 3 His father and mother replied, "Isn't there an acceptable woman among your relatives or among all our people? Must you go to the uncircumcised Philistines to get a wife?" But Samson said to his father, "Get her for me. She's the right one for me." Samson wanted to marry a Philistine woman a union that was expressively forbidden by God (Deut 7:1-5, Jug 3:5-7). The Philistines were uncircumcised people, in our time it means the Philistines were unbelievers whereas Israel was a believing nation, set apart for God. Even when his parents tried to counsel him, that the woman he wanted to marry was an unbeliever, Samson said to his father, "Get her for me. She is the right one for me". Samson insisted on what he wanted instead of what God wanted or what was pleasing before God. It was love at first sight for Samson. The feelings of love were more important than anything else. On top of that, the fact that Samson saw the young woman and that she was pleasing in his sight, implies that his interest in her was entirely superficial. His bases to marry her was based on what he saw and what he wanted, he had no regard for what was pleasing before God or what God desired. In verse 3 he tells his father, "Get her for me. She is the right one for me". Samson placed too much trust in his human judgement of what he saw, instead of submitting and yielding to God's will. All that mattered to Samson was what he wanted, and he persisted until he got his way. At the same time this was God's plan to begin the process of delivering the nation of Israel from the Philistines. God was going to use this marriage to confront the Philistines as we shall see as we go along [4]. However still, due to Samson's insistence on his way and disregard for God's command, in the following passages we shall also see the consequences of his disobedience. We shall see how the Philistine woman is the start of a very hard life for Samson, a life of fights, revenge, rage and a brutal death of his wife and father in law. All because Samson chose to live based on what he wanted with no regard for God.

While Samson, his father and mother went down to the town where the Philistine lady lived in Timnah, as they approached the vineyards of Timnah a young lion came roaring toward him [5]. Let us look at verse 6 at what happened, "6 The Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon him so that he tore the lion apart with his bare hands as he might have torn a young goat. But he told neither his father nor his mother what he had done." The spirit of the lord came powerfully upon Samson, that he tore the lion apart with his bare hands as though it was a young goat. In spite Samson's behavior, being near the vineyards and on his way to make wedding preparations to an uncircumcised Philistine woman. The Spirit of the lord came mightily upon Samson, and the lion was like a goat before Samson.

Some months later when Samson went back to marry the lady, he went to the dead lions body. It had a swam of bees and honey where he scooped out the honey ate some and gave some to his parents [8-9]. Avoiding a dead body was a requirement for a Nazarene, yet Samson ignored all that, went to the carcass of the dead lion and scooped some honey out of it. He could not even tell his parents where he got the honey because he knew he had compromised his Nazarene vow [9b].

After the wedding preparations were complete, Samson travelled back to his fiancée's hometown for the feast. These feasts lasted seven days and were primarily consisted of drunkenness. Thirty Philistine men were also chosen to be Samson's companions. Samson the young groom, who was probably drunk, in an effort to embarrass the 30 men, asked them an impossible riddle of his own experience with the lion

[10-11]. Look at verse 12-14, "Let me tell you a riddle," Samson said to them. "If you can give me the answer within the seven days of the feast, I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty sets of clothes. 13 If you can't tell me the answer, you must give me thirty linen garments and thirty sets of clothes." "Tell us your riddle," they said. "Let's hear it." 14 He replied, "Out of the eater, something to eat; out of the strong, something sweet." For three days they could not give the answer."

From verses 15-17, we can see that four days had passed, and the men could not solve the riddle and they threatened Samson's wife to trick Samson into telling her the answer to the riddle otherwise they would burn her and her father's household. And due to her insistence on Samson to reveal the riddle to her, Samson finally told her and she in turn explained the riddle to her people. When the Philistines revealed the answer to Samson, he knew that his wife had betrayed him and he burned with anger. Look at verse 19, "Then the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon him. He went down to Ashkelon, struck down thirty of their men, stripped them of everything and gave their clothes to those who had explained the riddle. Burning with anger, he returned to his father's home." Yet again the spirit of the lord came in power upon Samson, he struck down thirty of the Philistine men. Still fuming in anger, he left his wife and returned to his father's home. And his father in law seeing that Samson had left his wife and thinking that Samson hated her decided to give Samson's wife to another person, one of Samson's companions who had attended the feast [20].

After Samson had cooled down from his anger, he took a young goat and went to visit his wife, only to find that he was given to his companion [15:1-2]. Samson had brought a young goat as a peace offering in hopes that he would reconcile with his wife. However, only to be bombarded with the news that his was had being given to another person. Thoughts of reconciliation turned into rage as he heard his father in law say the unthinkable in verse 2 "I was so sure you hated her," he said, "that I gave her to your companion. Isn't her younger sister more attractive? Take her instead." Samson became so furious and angry that he felt justified to revenge, look at verse 3, "Samson said to them, "This time I have a right to get even with the Philistines; I will really harm them." Through using three hundred foxes he had caught and a torch. He burned up the shocks, standing grain together with the vineyards and olive groves of the Philistines as indicated in verses 4-5. And when the Philistines heard that this happened out of Samson's anger because his wife was given to his companion by his father in law. The Philistines went up and burned Samson's wife and his father in law [6].

Look at verse 7-8, "Samson said to them, "Since you've acted like this, I swear that 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." Samson was filled with anger, fury and vengeance went and slaughtered many Philistines. The Philistines then resolved that this was it, that it was time to capture Samson and so they went and camped in Judah and spread within the area of Lehi. They too wanted to avenge what Samson did to them, look at verse 10, "We have come to take Samson prisoner," they answered, **"to do to him as he did to us."** Since Israel understood that they were under the rule of the Philistines and that there was no way they could overpower them, they decided to send three thousand men from Judah to the cave to capture Samson in order to hand him over to the Philistines [it appears that they too were afraid of Samson since they sent 300k men]. After they promised him that they would not kill him themselves, they bound him with two new ropes with an agreed plan to hand him over to the Philistines [11-13].

Let us all read 14-15, "As he approached Lehi, the Philistines came toward him shouting. The Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon him. 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." As Samson approached the Philistines like a prisoner and looking all helpless, they shouted for joy, for now they were about to have their revenge. However, the spirit of the lord came powerfully upon Samson. The spirit did not just come upon him, it came powerfully upon him. The ropes tied on him melted and the bindings dropped from his hands. He found a jawbone of a donkey from somewhere on the ground and struck down thousand Philistine men. The jawbone, was most convenient, it was simple weapon, it was a ridiculous weapon however with the power of the Spirit of the Lord upon Samson, the jawbone became a successful weapon. We too have Philistine kind of enemies who come towards us shouting. They remind us of our past sinful life, they keep shouting in our ears our past failures, things we regret to have done. Yelling at us, look at yourself do you really think God can use you? Shouting at us, you are a failure, give up, you messed up, you are a bad example and so on. In fact we ourselves are our worst enemies. We tell ourselves many lies. And since Samson was been given to his enemies by his very own people. We too may even have our very own friends or people comforting us instead of challenging us to live by faith. However, when the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon this one man Samson. Even a simple weapon such a jawbone of a donkey could defeat thousand Philistine men. It does not matter who is on your side or not or what our enemies are shouting, it does not matter what we tell ourselves. When the Spirit of the Lord comes upon us in power, we can fully overcome our enemies. We can fully live lives Jesus has called us to live, the life of faith. Acts 1:8 says, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." This is the promise of God to those who believe in Jesus, that even though it may appear as though we are tied down, with indecision due to many ideas and

thoughts, with fear, keep falling into same sin over and over again and so on. When God pours out His Spirit upon us with power, we will live victorious lives fulfilling what God has called us to do. This is but God's mercy upon.

Though Samson is identified as one of his nation's foremost judges, Samson never made any attempt to drive Israel's enemies out of the land. In fact, he was happy to interact with the Philistines, even to the point of marrying one of them. He goes on a feast with them and even broke his Nazarene vow by getting drunk with them. Though he was only interested in serving himself, the Lord would use Samson's selfish choices to secure Israel's deliverance. Throughout his selfish, proud and arrogant walk, whenever Samson had to face up with the Philistines the spirit of the lord came in power upon Sampson and he defeated the Philistines. Though the lord empowers Samson with His spirit, Samson's life is not attractive. His life is filled with rage, fury and restlessness. He loses his wife and father in law in a terrible way, they get burned to death because of his recklessness. Through Samson life we can see God's amazing grace, through the power of the spirit if of God Samson is greatly used to deliver the nation of Israel. Samson did not look any strong, however when the spirit of God came upon him in power, he could kill a lion as though it was a goat, he could kill thousand of men with a jaw of a donkey.

In this passage I see something amazing and wonderful about God. That God uses Samson through the power of His Spirit. It was only when the Spirit of God came with power upon Samson that he was able to defeat the Philistines. To defeat the Philistines as we learned from the previous passage was what Samson was called to do by God. Samson's life show that he was an imperfect person and sinful, yet when the Spirit of God came upon him with power he could be used by God to fulfill the will of God. I too am a sinner, I am stubborn, many times wanting things to be done my way or the way I think they should be done and thus can easily become impatient with others. I too have my own passions and desires in this world. I find myself lacking in many things, taking too long to make big decisions, while time is not on my side. There is much God that can be done for the kingdom of God, for his ministry on earth and time is so little. Yet I find myself too slow and wasting time to honor and yield to the will of God. For example, I believe it is God's will that I marry yet I am dragging to surrender and marry. Though I serve bible studies, I find myself lacking in truly loving my bible students and fully serving them as Jesus would serve them. Lacking in being fully committed to advance the kingdom of God by being active in sharing his gospel message to campus students. I have even set a reminder on my phone for prayer time for certain times of the day, yet when the alarm comes on, I will be fully consumed by other things. The only time I can pray seem to be only in the morning and sometimes in the night before sleep time. How can I lead others through bible studies? How can I even deliver this message? When my heart many times is self-seeking and easily fall into unbelieve and despair. I learn through this passage that, it is all possible because of the power of the Spirit of God. Any desire for the work of God I may have, and any initiative I may find myself doing for God is but all because of the power of the spirit of God. I need the Spirit of God to come upon me with power. God's spirit may not give me the strength to lift this podium like Samson, but I believe it is God's spirit power that enables me to stand here today and deliver this message. Literally, I am not trying to sound spiritual or anything, if you had to zoom into my heart you will see a war zone. At some point I even wanted to ask the leadership to relieve me of serving messages or any leadership role because of my struggle with the marriage decision [since I could only see lack of faith on my side]. But somehow, I could not bring myself to genuinely pray about it, I just could not ask the Lord to relieve me to serve messages. My tougue literally refused to utter such words and so, I gave up. This passage has revealed to me, that it is because of the power of the spirit of God that I can deliver the Sunday messages. It is by the power of the spirit of God that I can serve bible studies, face each day by faith and work by faith. This is such a bit of relieve, that it is not by my strength to seek to try this or that for God, but that His plans will be achieved by the power His spirit. I mean to even to just have faith in God for our salvation, It is because of the power of the spirit of God. May God have mercy on me as I struggle to repent from my sins, I only ask that God may not take away the power of his spirit from me so that I may continue to have living hope in the kingdom of God and live by faith day by day.

In conclusion, I thank God who gives us strength by the power of His spirit to fulfill His plans, to struggle to do what He has called us to do. In John 14:15-17 Jesus says, "15 'If you love me, keep my commands. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be[a] in you.'" May the spirit of God come upon you and me, in power so we may practically obey His word and fulfill His plans for our lives. Amen.