



BY FAITH

MAY 24 - AUG 2

(9) "Samson"

HIGHLIGHT: Selected verses from Judges 13—16

H

Below are excerpts from the overall passage for use with the APPLICATION and RESPOND. It will be beneficial for the group to read the whole passage to understand the entire context.

Judges 13 NLT

vv.1-7

1 Again the Israelites did evil in the Lord's sight, so the Lord handed them over to the Philistines, who oppressed them for forty years.

2 In those days a man named Manoah from the tribe of Dan lived in the town of Zorah. His wife was unable to become pregnant, and they had no children. **3** The angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah's wife and said, "Even though you have been unable to have children, you will soon become pregnant and give birth to a son. **4** So be careful; you must not drink wine or any other alcoholic drink nor eat any forbidden food. **5** You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and his hair must never be cut. For he will be dedicated to God as a Nazirite from birth. He will begin to rescue Israel from the Philistines."

6 The woman ran and told her husband, "A man of God appeared to me! He looked like one of God's angels, terrifying to see. I didn't ask where he was from, and he didn't tell me his name. **7** But he told me, 'You will become pregnant and give birth to a son. You must not drink wine or any other alcoholic drink nor eat any forbidden food. For your son will be dedicated to God as a Nazirite from the moment of his birth until the day of his death.'"

vv.24-25

24 When her son was born, she named him Samson. And the Lord blessed him as he grew up. **25** And the Spirit of the Lord began to stir him while he lived in Mahaneh-dan, which is located between the towns of Zorah and Eshtaol.

Judges 14 NLT

vv.1-4

1 One day when Samson was in Timnah, one of the Philistine women caught his eye. **2** When he returned home, he told his father and mother, "A young Philistine woman in Timnah caught my eye. I want to marry her. Get her for me."

3 His father and mother objected. "Isn't there even one woman in our tribe or among all the Israelites you could marry?" they asked. "Why must you go to the pagan Philistines to find a wife?"

But Samson told his father, "Get her for me! She looks good to me." **4** His father and mother didn't realize the Lord was at work in this, creating an opportunity to work against the Philistines, who ruled over Israel at that time.

vv.19-20

19 Then the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon him. He went down to the town of Ashkelon, killed thirty men, took their belongings, and gave their clothing to the men who had solved his riddle. But Samson was furious about what had happened, and he went back home to live with his father and mother. **20** So his wife was given in marriage to the man who had been Samson's best man at the wedding.

Judges 15 NLT

vv.3-6

3 Samson said, "This time I cannot be blamed for everything I am going to do to you Philistines." **4** Then he went out and caught 300 foxes. He tied their tails together in pairs, and he fastened a torch to each pair of tails. **5** Then he lit the torches and let the foxes run through the grain fields of the Philistines. He burned all their grain to the ground, including the sheaves and the uncut grain. He also destroyed their vineyards and olive groves.

6 "Who did this?" the Philistines demanded.

"Samson," was the reply, "because his father-in-law from Timnah gave Samson's wife to be married to his best man." So the Philistines went and got the woman and her father and burned them to death.

vv.13-20

13 "We will only tie you up and hand you over to the Philistines," they replied. "We won't kill you." So they tied him up with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock.

14 As Samson arrived at Lehi, the Philistines came shouting in triumph. But the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon Samson, and he snapped the ropes on his arms as if they were burnt strands of flax, and they fell from his wrists. **15** Then he found the jawbone of a recently killed donkey. He picked it up and killed 1,000 Philistines with it. **16** Then Samson said,

"With the jawbone of a donkey,
I've piled them in heaps!
With the jawbone of a donkey,
I've killed a thousand men!"

17 When he finished his boasting, he threw away the jawbone; and the place was named Jawbone Hill.

18 Samson was now very thirsty, and he cried out to the Lord, "You have accomplished this great victory by the strength of your servant. Must I now die of thirst and fall into the hands of these pagans?" **19** So God caused water to gush out of a hollow in the ground at Lehi, and Samson was revived as he drank. Then he named that place "The Spring of the One Who Cried Out," and it is still in Lehi to this day.

20 Samson judged Israel for twenty years during the period when the Philistines dominated the land.

Judges 16 NLT

vv.4-5

4 Some time later Samson fell in love with a woman named Delilah, who lived in the valley of Sorek.

5 The rulers of the Philistines went to her and said, "Entice Samson to tell you what makes him so strong and how he can be overpowered and tied up securely. Then each of us will give you 1,100 pieces of silver."

vv.15-17

15 Then Delilah pouted, "How can you tell me, 'I love you,' when you don't share your secrets with me? You've made fun of me three times now, and you still haven't told me what makes you so strong!" **16** She tormented him with her nagging day after day until he was sick to death of it.

17 Finally, Samson shared his secret with her. "My hair has never been cut," he confessed, "for I was dedicated to God as a Nazirite from birth. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as anyone else."

vv.20-22

20 Then she cried out, "Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!"

When he woke up, he thought, "I will do as before and shake myself free." But he didn't realize the Lord had left him.

21 So the Philistines captured him and gouged out his eyes. They took him to Gaza, where he was bound with bronze chains and forced to grind grain in the prison.

22 But before long, his hair began to grow back.

vv.28-31

28 Then Samson prayed to the Lord, "Sovereign Lord, remember me again. O God, please strengthen me just one more time. With one blow let me pay back the Philistines for the loss of my two eyes."

29 Then Samson put his hands on the two center pillars that held up the temple. Pushing against them with both hands, **30** he prayed, "Let me die with the Philistines." And the temple crashed down on the Philistine rulers and all the people. So he killed more people when he died than he had during his entire lifetime.

31 Later his brothers and other relatives went down to get his body. They took him back home and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol, where his father, Manoah, was buried. Samson had judged Israel for twenty years.

E

EXPLAIN

The purpose of this section is to deepen everyone's understanding of the Word.

We are not surprised to see names like Noah, Abraham, Moses, the Israelites going through the Red Sea in the roll call of the faithful (Hebrews 11). But "Samson" (v.32) is, to say the least, a little bit of a surprise. While we might remember Samson mostly for his relationship with Delilah and the terrible consequences of that relationship, she was only the last of at least three relationships that stemmed from his "slavery to passion." Here we have another reminder that God's ways are not our ways (Romans 11:34; Isaiah 55:8-9). Samson's story is found in Judges 13—16.

JUDGES 13

vv.1-7 We are reminded again of Israel's checkered relationship during the days of the Judges: they rebelled and **did evil in the sight of the Lord**, God disciplines them by handing them over to people **who oppressed them**, they cry out to the Lord, and he sends another Judge to deliver them. This time it would be Samson (a gift of God to **Manoah and his wife who was unable to have children**) who would **begin to reduce Israel from the Philistines**. What is not mentioned about any of the other Judges is that Samson was **dedicated to God as a Nazirite from the moment of his birth until the day of his death**. Nazirites were people of the vow. There were temporary Nazirites and perpetual Nazirites. As best as we can tell, the only other *perpetual* Nazirites were Samuel (1 Samuel 1:11) and John the Baptist (Luke 1:15). The three principle marks of a Nazirite were renunciation of wine and all products of the vine, no use of a razor, and avoidance of contact with a dead body (*Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, p, 575).

vv.24-25 God was faithful to His plan for **Samson, and blessed him by the stirring of the Spirit**.

JUDGES 14

vv.1-4 Samson's slavery to passion reared its head **when one of the Philistine women caught [his] eye**. This was definitely forbidden (see Deuteronomy 7:3-4) and **his mother and father objected** to this marriage that involved a Philistine. The Philistines were the ones **who ruled over Israel at that time**. V.4 is interesting: Samson's parents **didn't realize the Lord was at work in this**. God did not approve of Samson's rebellious intentions. He permitted it. And more—He overruled Samson's strong-headed determination to go against His will and used it to begin the process of Israel's deliverance from the Philistines. No man can keep God from accomplishing his purposes; His word will accomplish *all* He intends. He is the Lord God the Almighty (Isaiah 55:11 and Revelation 19:6). None of us will ever be able to understand God's ways—to see how he takes the good, the bad, and the ugly to accomplish His purposes for mankind that He loves dearly (Romans 11:33, 35). What the Enemy intends for evil, God intends for good.

vv.19-20 Samson's intentions are frustrated. And this seems to be the beginning of Samson's rescuing Israel from the Philistines. A bet at Samson's ill-conceived wedding turns sour and he **kills thirty Philistines of the town of Ashkelon** to pay off the bet. It appears that this was more than fleshly anger

and revenge on the part of Samson. Coffman quotes Keil, "This act is described as the operation of the Holy Spirit which **came upon Samson**, because it showed to the Philistines the superior power of the servants of Jehovah." There are times when we cannot understand God's ways, but, by faith, we believe He will do what is right (see Genesis 18:25; Romans 12:19). God has probably taken our misdirected actions and used them in such a way that sooner or later resulted in His glory—even though we may never see it.

JUDGES 15

vv.3-6 Samson has discovered that his father-in-law has given his wife to his "best-man" (15:1-2). He excuses himself—"**This time I cannot be blamed for what I am going to do to you Philistines.**" He uses **150 pair of foxes with torches attached to their tails to destroy their grain fields, vineyards, and and olive groves.** Discovering that Samson was the one who brought this devastation, the Philistines retaliated by burning to death Samson's "wife" and father-in-law (v.6). To which Samson responded by "killing many of them" (v.8).

vv.13-20 The Philistines have set up camp in Judah with the express purpose of capturing Samson for payback (vv.8-12). **The men of Judah delivered Samson (tied with new ropes) to the Philistines. The Spirit of the Lord comes upon him, and he snaps the ropes as if they were burnt strands of flax and kills a thousand Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey.** The fighting has exhausted Samson and, for the first time in the Judges record, he prays. It seems that he recognizes that his strength is from the Lord: "**YOU have accomplished this great victory by the strength of your servant.**" Samson reveals his true heart for the Lord. He recognizes that his strength is a gift from God, and that his life is dependent on God's "overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love." And God answers with mercy.

JUDGES 16

vv.4-5 The first 3 verses of this chapter remind us that Samson is still a slave of his animal lust as he seeks the services of a prostitute, and that God has still blessed him with supernatural strength. He pulls up the gates of the city (posts and all) and carries them a distance of 9 to 40 miles (depending on the exact location of the hill that is across from Hebron). **Samson falls in love with Delilah** though she doesn't have the same love for him. Samson sure never came out on the good side of his relationships. All Delilah had to do was **find out what made him so strong and how he could be overpowered and tied up securely. 1,100 pieces of silver** bought her betrayal of Samson.

vv.15-17 After telling Delilah several lies about his strength, **Samson finally shared his secret. He was a Nazirite.** His hair had never been cut. If it was, he **would become as weak as anyone else.** Blinded by his lust he fell into the trap that she had unsuccessfully set for him several times already.

vv.20-22 Samson was caught—not because his hair was gone, but because the Lord was gone. **The Lord had left him.** Samson and Israel, who was counting on him to deliver them, were humiliated. Their deliverer was not blind and had been reduced to a beast **forced to grind grain in the prison.** Why does it take so long for us to learn that this is not a good world to be bad in?

vv.28-31 Samson **prayed for strength just one more time.** This may be the faith that put him in the Hebrews Hall of Faith—that God could still use him to strike down the Philistines in spite of the mess he had made. And God did. Some estimate that 10,000 died at this festival. We do know there were 3,000 on the roof of the pavilion. With a great show of strength from the Lord, Samson collapsed the **two**

center pillars that held up the temple, and it crashed down on the Philistine rulers and all the people. He killed more when he died than he had during his entire lifetime. It was a resounding victory. Samson's family had no resistance when they came to get his body and bury him.

We can make terrible messes of our lives, but if in repentance we come to the Lord He can still do wonderful things with us. Compost (garbage) makes beautiful gardens.

A

APPLY

Be comfortable with some silence as people think back to the sermon or reread the text. Answer honestly. You don't have to answer every question.

1. What stuck out to you in what you heard in the sermon or read in the text?
2. How does Samson demonstrate faith in God?
3. What can we learn about God's sovereignty (He is in control at all times) from these passages?
4. Samson's strength came from God. (See Judges 15:18) What does this mean for you and me?

R

RESPOND

The purpose of this section is to take action with the truths you're learning. Answer honestly. Find someone who will hold you accountable to living out your response to Scripture.

1. At the end of Samson's life, we seek a humbled servant who seems to understand his sinful choices led to his circumstances. Although we don't get to see his conversation with God, there seems to be an underlying understanding that Samson has repented of his wrongs when he asks God for the strength to take out the Philistines. (Judges 16:28) How has your own repentance led you to finding God's strength?

Is there something you need to repent before God? Take time to do so now.

2. Fact: God is sovereign, in control of everything. We see this demonstrated In Judges 14:4, "His father and mother didn't realize the Lord was at work in this, creating an opportunity..." Where have you made decisions in like not living under this fact?

What attitudes or thought process might you need to change with the understanding that God is in control of everything at all times?