

# The Fall Of Sampson

by Mike Attwood

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*This sermon delves into the downward journeys of Samson, highlighting his disobedience, self-will, and the consequences of his actions. It explores the themes of spiritual compromise, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the treachery of the Philistines. The sermon emphasizes the importance of being set apart for God, fully dependent on the Holy Spirit, and not being assimilated with the world.*

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**Scripture:** Judges 14:3, Judges 14:6, Judges 14:18, Judges 14:19, 1 Corinthians 7:39, Hebrews 11:34

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## Description

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## Transcript

All right, we're in the 14th chapter of the Book of Judges, and I'm going to read the first nine verses, although I think we may get to cover most of the chapter this morning, but just for purposes of reading, read verses one through nine. It says, And Samson went down to Timnath and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines. And he came up and told his father and his mother and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines.

Now, therefore, get her for me to wife. Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren or among all my people that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me, for she pleaseth me well. But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the Lord, that he saw an occasion against the Philistines.

For at the time, the Philistines had dominion over Israel. Then went Samson down and his father and his mother to Timnath and came to the vineyards of Timnath. And behold, the young lion roared against him.

And the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid. And he had nothing in his hand, but he told not his father or his mother what he had done. And he went down and talked with the woman, and she pleased Samson well.

And after a time, he returned to take her and he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion. And behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion. And he took thereof in his hands and went on eating and came to his father and mother and he gave them and they did eat.

But he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion. And again, God will bless that reading of his precious word to us this morning. I want to focus our attention this morning on Samson's downward journeys.

And just wanted to mention some things about the structure of the chapter that I find kind of fascinating. We mentioned, I think, last time, but there's five occasions in this chapter, where Samson, it says, went down. And so we see it verse one, Samson went down to Timnath.

We see it verse five, then went Samson down and his father and his mother to Timnath. Verse seven, and he went down and talked with the woman. Verse 10, so his father went down onto the woman and Samson made their feast.

And then the final one, verse 19, it says in the spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon. So five times, we have this idea of he went down. And so that gives us our title, Samson's downward journeys.

And it's just as he's geographically going down, we can see there's a spiritual downward journey as well that goes along with this. The other thing that I hadn't really noticed, but in each of these five sections that are surrounded by the idea of he went down, there's a secret, it's a chapter that's full of secrets. And so in each five sections, there's a secret that is in this particular context.

And so the first one, we notice in verse two, sorry, in verse four, this first section, he went down to Timnath. In verse four, we see a secret here. His father and his mother knew not that it was of the Lord, that he saw an occasion against the Philistines.

So it's the secret of Jehovah's purpose. This purpose is hidden from everybody. But God has a purpose in all this.

He's going to use it in a very clear way to begin to deliver Israel from the dominion of the Philistines. So that's the first one. The second secret is in verse six.

And it's the second time they went then went Samson down on his father. And it says, in verse six, the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him. He rent him as he would have rent a kid and he had nothing in his hand, but he told not his father or his mother what he had done.

So he keeps a secret from his parents. He don't tell them about killing the lion. And then in the next section, when verse seven onwards, he went down and talked with a woman, she pleased Samson well.

Verse nine, he took thereof in his hands and went on eating, that's the honey, came to his father and mother, he gave them and they did eat, but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion. So another secret, he's keeping a secret from his parents, not only that he killed the lion, but also that he had now got the honey from the carcass of the lion. And it's another secret.

And then another secret is secret number four is Samson's riddle that he tells this riddle. And you'll notice, again, in verse 16, Samson's wife wept before him and said, thou dost but hate me and lovest me not.

Thou hast put forth a riddle unto the children of my people and has not told it me.

And he said to her, behold, I have not told it to my father nor my mother. So again, this secret that we find. And then the final one, he didn't explicitly say he didn't tell them, but in verse 19, it says the spirit of the Lord came upon him and he went down to Ashland, slew 30 men of them and took their spoil and gave a change of garments to them.

And what the secret there is, is the secret of the power of the Holy Spirit upon Samson's life. And it's interesting that that's going to create curiosity amongst the Philistines. What is the secret of this man's strength? You see, they're going to want to know that.

And that's going to set the tone for the rest of the book. So we've got five downward spirals. We've got five secrets.

And then I just want you to observe as well, just through the repetition of a word in the text, and that is the word told or told not. We see it, verse two, he came up and told his father and his mother. So there he's telling.

But verse six, remember we already read that, but he told not his father and his mother what he had done. Verse nine, again, towards the he told them, told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion. Verse 16, again, we just read that the children of my people and has not told me and I've not told it to my father.

And then verse 17, she wept before him the seven days while their feast lasted and it came to pass on the seventh day that he told her. So told and told not it kind of repeated word and phrase. Now, again, maybe that kind of stuff doesn't interest you, but I love looking at things that connect the structure of the text.

I find it very helpful in opening up the passage and understanding it. So we mentioned last time that Samson went down to Timnath and he saw this woman in Timnath of the daughter of the Philistines. And again, he's being governed by the eyes.

He sees this woman and he then verse two, it says, he came up and told his father and his mother and said, I've seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines. Now therefore get her for me to wife. And we mentioned this good that he at least told them he's not been secretive at this point, but from the language you would sense that he's already maimed up his mind.

It's not a case of seeking their approval, seeking their blessing on it. He's decided and basically his language, get her for me to wife. And it was, this is a done deal.

I've made up my mind. Don't even dare confuse me with any facts. I've already decided this is the way I want to go.

And sometimes we can be like that in our praying to the father, we can come to him in prayer, asking him to approve and give his blessing on the decisions that we've already made based on the wrong motives. Could be based on lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, pride of life, but we come. George Mueller said a very interesting thing.

He said, when you're seeking the guidance of God, the first place you have to get to is to have no will of your own in the matter. That's a hard thing, isn't it? Because often our prayers are kind of driven by our

will. This is what we want to see.

This is what we want to happen. And Lord, would you rubber stamp my plans? And so we certainly see something of this in Samson. Get her to be my wife.

And why does he want this? Well, it's simple. She pleases me well. It's all about the fact that she pleases me well.

No thought of, does she please the Lord? No thought of, would this be a pleasing decision to my parents? It's all about me. And so verse three, his father and mother said to him, is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren or among all the people that thou goes to take a wife with uncircumcised minds? Samson said to his father, get her for me for she pleases me well. And so it's really an interesting thing, isn't it? This idea of pleasing.

Realistically, we're either living to please ourselves or to please the Lord. And there's no kind of neutrality. It's one way or the other.

And so it's good to examine ourselves. What are we living for? What's our motivation of life? And it seems that so often, it's all about selfish pleasure, especially in the culture as a whole. We're in a culture that is self-absorbed.

It's all about self-esteem, self-love. You owe it to yourself is the mantra of society as a whole. And we live in that society, and it's hard for us not to come under its influence.

And so who are we wanting to please? And it's interesting in 2 Corinthians, we'd already studied this before, but in chapter 5, verse 14 and 15, it says, for the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that if one died for all, then we're all dead, and that he died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again. And yet there is something in all of us where things that please me well seem to be a high priority in my life. And so it's a challenge to us, isn't it? What are we living? Who are we living to please? Is it the Lord? Is it self? She pleases me well.

And it's interesting too, what a contrast we have here between Samson, she pleases me well, and the Lord Jesus, who not only was subject to his earthly parents, but he always did those things that pleased the Father. Not pleasing himself, not coming to do his own will, but to do the Father's will, to finish his work. And so what a wonderful contrast.

And we would say this, that Samson's pathway was marked by self-will rather than subjection. Self-will rather than subjection to his Father's will and subjection to his parental authority. Self-will is what determines the pathway of this man, Samson.

And of course, a very practical thing is the eyes. We said the lust of the eyes. And there is that danger of what we call the second look.

There's a first look which can't be helped, but then the danger of the second look. And we see so many examples of this in the Word of God, where a person looked a second time, so to speak. The story of Lot, he saw the well-watered plains of the Jordan.

Of course, he'd taken a first look at Egypt, and when he saw the well-watered plains of Jordan, it affected his decision, it affected his choice, and of course would have consequences. David and Bathsheba saw this woman, and he looked again, and we know the story. And then Achan, in Joshua chapter 7, remember, he saw a goodly Babylonian garment, and he took it.

And so we've got to be careful about what we see. So his father and mother say to him, is there not a woman of the daughter of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of this uncircumcised Philistine? So his parents appeal to him to look elsewhere for a wife, among the brethren, among my people, the people of God. This is where you should be looking, not amongst an uncircumcised Philistine.

And of course, they were doing what they should. They were warning the unruly, just as elders are meant to warn the unruly, those that are out of rank, that are intent on doing their own will, rather than being in subjection to divine will. And so everything about the proposed relationship was wrong.

And so it certainly would be incorrect to suggest that God sanctioned this fleshly union. Mixed marriages were contrary to his word, and still are. And so we want to just look at some scriptures that would show us that what he was doing had clearly been prohibited by God.

And so look at the book of Deuteronomy, please, Deuteronomy chapter 7, in verse 13, Deuteronomy 7, sorry, verse 3. Well, let's read from verse 1. It says, When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land, whither thou goest to possess it, and has cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou. And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee, thou shalt smite them and utterly destroy them. Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them.

By the way, in scripture, marriage is a covenant. It's a covenant relationship before God, a very serious thing. Make no covenant, neither shalt thou make marriages with them.

Thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shall thou take unto thy son. And then look back to Exodus 34. I just want you to see this is throughout the Bible that he, Samson, and his parents would be well acquainted with, would be very familiar with.

Exodus 34, verse 12. Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, whither thou goest. Let it be for a snare in the midst of thee, lest it be a snare in the midst of thee.

But you shall destroy their altars, break their images, cut down their groves, for thou shalt worship no other God. For the Lord, whose name is jealous, is a jealous God. Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go whoring after their gods and do sacrifice unto their gods.

And one called thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice, and thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go whoring after their gods. Thou shalt make thee no molten gods. And again, part of it is that there is a recognition that if you marry somebody who is a worshiper of false gods, that influence will influence you, and you will depart from the living God.

And so this is why it is so clearly prohibited. And of course, we know in the New Testament from 2 Corinthians, that we're not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. And so the word of God is clear.

But just as Samson is motivated by self-will, tragically, today, many of God's people are motivated by the same thing. They see somebody, she pleases me well, and there's this determination. It doesn't matter what God has to say, or my authorities have to say, whether it's the elders of the assembly, or whether it's parental authority.

It doesn't seem to matter. There's a willful deaf ear to all spiritual appeals. And many have done this and thought that their situation will be different.

It's all going to work out fine for me. I know this is clearly warned against, but everything's going to be fine. And so there's that mentality.

And just look at one scripture that I think is so clear, so precise in this matter. And it's in 1 Corinthians, in chapter 7, 1 Corinthians chapter 7, in verse 39, 1 Corinthians 7, verse 39. It says, the wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth.

But if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will. And then this last phrase, only in the Lord. Now, this is true for Christian widows, but let me suggest to you, it's true for every Christian.

The criteria is, we should marry only in the Lord. Because again, how can two walk together unless they be agreed? And the threefold cord is not easily broken. And so if husband and wife, their lives are bound up with the Lord Jesus, then there's a threefold cord.

It's not easy to break. And so this is clearly God's will. But Samson is not concerned at this moment on God's will.

He is concerned with self-will. And yet nevertheless, verse 4 says, his father, his mother knew not that it was of the Lord. In other words, God is going to use even Samson's self-will to bring about his will.

Now, God is good at that, right? Remember at the cross, there's a lot of self-will going on, isn't there? Amongst the nation of Israel, we will not have this man. It's self-will. We will not have this man to reign over us.

And yet self-will was used to bring about God's will that he had determined before the ages began, that Christ would die on Calvary. And so self-will is involved, but his will is accomplished. And isn't it wonderful to worship a God like this, who's able even to take self-will and turn it for his own good and glory.

And so this incident actually would result in Samson killing 30 men, chapter 14, verse 19, burning up the enemy crops, chapter 15, verses 1 through 5, slaughtering a great number of the Philistines in chapter 15, verse 7 and 8, and the slaying of a thousand men in chapter 15, verse 15. So before the dust would settle, Samson, although he had not planned these things, God worked them out just the same, and a lot of damage is going to occur to the cause of the Philistines as a result of this. And Samson doesn't consummate the marriage with this woman either.

And so God works it out in a marvelous way. Seems like each time Samson cheerfully falls for an unsuitable girl, the Lord harnesses the young man's self-indulgence for his own purpose and makes sure that as a result of it, the Philistines suffer, but ultimately Samson would also suffer as well. So that was the first journey that Samson makes.

And there's just this little statement at the end of verse 4, at that time, the Philistines had dominion over Israel. And what was different about this dominion? It wasn't that they had a war with them or brought them into subjection, but they dissimulated with them. They got on well together.

Basically, they had won without firing a shot. Their influence came over the children of Israel just by assimilation. And so we've got to watch for that too, that friendship with the world is enmity with God, and it's very easy to have wrong relationships and actually come under defeat and dominion just by wrong relationships.

And so we've got to watch that. And certainly that's the case with the Philistines, at least at this stage. Look at verse 5, journey number 2. It says, Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath, and behold, the young lion roared against him.

So Samson's choice put his parents in a very difficult situation too. They had to compromise because of his stubborn refusal to listen, to reason, and to scripture. And often our choices hurt others as well as ourselves.

Other people are implicated. Can you imagine these parents? I mean, they've seen this miraculous birth. Their hopes were raised.

They call him sunshine because he's brought sunshine into their lives. And they've had this prophecy that he's going to begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines. And now you can imagine every step as they go down to Timnath is filled with heartache and sorrow.

He's doing this, and they know he's not supposed to do this, and how hard it must be for them. His parents must have thought back to the amazing events prior to his birth, the words of the angel, all the efforts to raise him in this proper godly atmosphere. All their hopes seem to be evaporating before their eyes at this particular time.

And yet, as bleak as things looked, God was still at work. It seems that along the journey, he got separated from his parents because his parents are not aware of this lion incident. And I'm certain that they would not encourage him to visit the vineyards along the way.

That would not be a good place to go. Because should a person, under a Nazirite vow, go near to such a place? Remember, again, Numbers chapter 6, and particularly verses 1 through 4, this Nazirite vow, it says, The Lord spake to Moses, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, say unto them, When either man or woman shall separate themselves to a vow of a Nazirite, to separate themselves to the Lord, he shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, shall drink no vinegar of wine or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes or dried. All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree from kernels even to the husks.

Now again, the best way to avoid those kind of things is to stay away from where they are. If you have a problem with alcohol, don't hang around the bars, right? I mean, just don't do that. Here's a man, he's on this vow, this vow that has been placed upon him, and he goes to a very dangerous place for a man who's not to eat even a grape.

Why would you hang around in a vineyard that is full of grapes? This is just not a good decision. And again, we see Samson, for all his upbringing, he is making one bad decision after another. She pleases me well, get her for me.

Wrong decision number one. Decision number two, going in this vineyard. And Christians, we're meant to be holy unto the Lord, and there are certain places, certain pastimes, certain literature that are out of bounds.

And we need to be very careful about those things. These things are going to ruin our separation unto God and make us ineffective. And so a roaring lion comes across this path.

Now again, we wonder, did God send a lion as a warning to him as he's walking in the wrong path? Sometimes the Lord warns us that we're on a wrong path. He had a warning from his parents. He had the warning of the Word of God.

And now could it be that the Lord has given him a third warning, this roaring lion, you're on the wrong path, you're heading in the wrong direction, wake up, Samson. And of course, if he'd not been on the pathway of disobedience, he would not have met the lion. And yet we read an amazing thing.

It says, the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him. And he rent him as he would have rent a kid. And he had nothing in his hand.

But he told his father, he told not his father or his mother what he had done. So I want to mention something that I think is important to you. We've got to forget about the notion that Samson is some kind of incredible Hulk, some kind of Arnold Schwarzenegger, you know, kind of Mr. Universe spends a lot of time in the gym.

He's got amazing abs and you know, muscles that are just sometimes we think that but I think early on in this passage, we're shown that this is not the case. It's the Spirit of the Lord that is the source of his strength. And of course, it's connected with the Nazarite vow, but it's the Spirit of the Lord that comes upon him and enables him to do this.

And so it clearly wasn't naturally evident that Samson strength was to do with this physique. If you look at chapter 16, in verse five, it says the Lords of the Philistines came upon to her and said to entice him and see where in his great strength lieth. And by what means we may prevail against him that we may bind him to afflict him, we will give the every one of us 1100 pieces of silver.

And so it's not evident the reason for his strength. It's not because he's super fit, super healthy, has this amazing body. In fact, just look at Hebrews 11, just an amazing scripture that I think we need to put into the mixture here that I think is significant.

Hebrews 11, verse 34. It says, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to fight the armies of the aliens. And all through Judges, have we not seen that God is using the weak and foolish things to accomplish his purposes? Here's a man, I think, who naturally is weak physically.

And he's also, as we've seen, he has some very significant spiritual weaknesses as well. And God is going to use Samson, nevertheless. But it's the spirit of the Lord that is the source of this great strength.

Out of weakness were made strong. The Philistines knew there's something extraordinary about his power. And it was none other than the spirit of the Lord.

Because we're warned ourselves about a lion, aren't we? A roaring lion walking about seeking whom he may devour. And like Samson, we can't possibly defeat this lion in our natural strength, right? Because lions are very fierce and very scary. Like if we met a lion, and there's not a cage between us and it, I don't feel like we'd feel very confident.

And especially if it started roaring at us, I think all of us would be, well, we wouldn't know what to do. We'd be in the right fix, wouldn't we? And so certainly, our enemy is, I know he's sneaky, I know he's subtle, I know that sometimes he appears in the age of light, but sometimes he's a roaring lion. And we don't want to underestimate him.

And it's only the spirit of God upon our lives, that can give us victory. As we seek his power and depend on him, call upon him throughout the day, it's only then that we can enjoy victory over the roaring lion. There's no way we can do it in our own strength, it's impossible.

And so God's spirit will give us power to do battle against him. So thus in the vineyards of Timnath, again, it's a wrong path, yet the Lord enabled Samson to see what could be achieved if he allowed God's strength, the power of the Holy Spirit, to work through him. Samson's only resource against the lion, because notice it tells us, and it's very important we notice it, in this verse, it says that he had nothing in his hands.

He would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand. In other words, in and of himself, he has nothing. The only resource that is available to him is the spirit of the Lord.

And again, it's a reminder, isn't it, for all of us, that his power is sufficient. The lesson for us, I hope, is clear. The power of the indwelling, empowering Holy Spirit is what we need to be able to hurt the enemy, defeat the enemy, and walk in victory.

It's the power of the Spirit. But he told not his father or mother what he had done. Was it a sense of guilt that silenced Samson, the fact that he had compromised his Nazirite ship by going in self-will to the vineyards of Timnath? There was a communication breakdown.

And of course, when we're in wrong places, doing wrong things, it tends to shut our mouths, right? It tends to cause us to stay quiet when we should speak, perhaps, because we know that we're doing wrong things in wrong places. He started out by telling his parents, although it certainly wasn't looking for their advice in verse 2, when it says he told his father and his mother, said, I've seen this woman, but now he holds back from his parents. He doesn't confide in them.

Can we be open with our parents? Can we be open with our brethren? Can we be open with our spouses about things in our lives or other things that we seek to hide from them? And if we're seeking to hide them from them, unless it's some surprise birthday gift or something like that, then there's probably something wrong. So again, open communication is affected in a definite way by deceit and wrongdoing. So now we come to journey number three in verses seven through nine.

He went down and talked with a woman and she pleased Samson well. And after a time he returned to take her and he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion. And behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion.

So he went down and talked with a woman. She pleased Samson well. So we're still on the same idea that it's all about pleasing him.

This is the thing. Refusing to hear the warnings the Lord had been faithful to give, he moves on regardless. No doubt rejoined his parents, continued his descent to Timnath, where he talked with a woman.

Prior to this, he'd simply seen her. No arrangements had been made. Perhaps at this time, the betrothal is arranged.

And so on returning another time to take her, we come to the next step in the systematic breaking of the Nazirite bag. And again, what is the motive? Why does he go through this vineyard once again? Why is he going in that particular direction? It says he returned to take her and turned aside to see the carcass of the lion. If the lust of the eyes was the first thing we saw from 1 John 2, right? Now the pride of life.

He's turning in to see the scene of his amazing victory, where he tore this lion apart. Was that his motive? The pride of life to gloat in his victory? When it really was not his victory at all. It was the victory of the Lord.

The Lord had given the victory. And again, we must be very quick when we see any kind of blessing, any kind of usefulness in our service. We need to be very quick to ascribe glory to the one who gave the victory, and that is the Lord.

And so he goes in, and of course, he noticed something about this carcass. He noticed the bees that are around the carcass. There was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion.

Now we've got another little temptation coming his way. And so what does he do? As he saw the bees, although it was strictly forbidden for him to touch a dead body, part of the Nazirite vow, and yet he disregards the instructions. Now again, it's interesting, this morning in my personal devotions, I was reading in Leviticus chapter 5. I came across this interesting verse, and perfect timing in relation to this study.

It says in Leviticus 5, it says, or if a soul touches any unclean thing, whether it be a carcass of an unclean beast, or a carcass of unclean cattle, or the carcass of unclean creeping things, and if it be hidden from him, he also shall be unclean and guilty. And so again, here's Samson. He's touching something that he shouldn't be touching as a Nazirite.

Shouldn't be in a vineyard, and he shouldn't be messing around with dead bodies, and disregarding clear instructions from scripture. And yet he does it. He took this honey.

It says, he took thereof, in verse 9, in his hands, and he went on eating, and then he came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat, but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of a lion. So he goes on eating, two-thirds of the Nazirite vow are already being broken down by self-will, and he comes to his father and mother, and he gives it to them, and they did eat, and tragically, he's not content to break it himself. He once again includes his parents, and defiles them in the process.

And you see, sin by its very nature spreads. Remember, the woman took of the fruit of the tree, and then what does she do? She just keep it to herself? No, she gave it to the man. Through one man's sin, came into the world, death by sin, death passed upon all men, for all have sinned.

And so once again, he does this, and then he hides his actions from his parents, because shame silences you. So now journey four. Verse 10, so his father went down to the woman, and Samson made there a feast, but so used the young men to do.

So the downward spiritual path of any believer invariably has adverse effects on others. Now we're not going to hear about Manoah and his wife, they're going to fade from the scene. In fact, she's not even mentioned here, his mother's not mentioned at all.

The father most likely is here in a formal capacity to claim the woman as his son's bride. No doubt filled with a heavy heart, and maybe that the mother's not even there, because she can't bear the thought of it. Remember, it was the angel of the Lord that appeared to her on two occasions.

And so the father has to do this. And of course, oblivious, he has no idea that God is going to bring good out of this sad situation. And again, it's good to remind ourselves, isn't it, that sometimes out of sad situations, God is able to bring good and glorify his name.

So Samson made a feast, for so used the young men to do, and it came to pass, when they saw him, they brought 30 companions to be with him. We read in Matthew 9.15 about the friend of the bridegroom. Sadly, it seems that Samson was a loner, and he had no friends amongst the tribe of Dan, amongst his own people.

No friends that will stand with him in the wedding, don't have a best man. So the Philistines have to provide this for him. And so they provide 30 men for him.

And it says, it came to pass, when they saw him, that they brought 30 companions to be with him. And Samson said to them, I will now put forth a riddle unto you. If you can certainly declare it me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I'll give you 30 sheets and 30 change of garments.

And so he sets forth his famous riddle. He brings this riddle out of the experience of his sin and broken vows. And so in a sense, it's bad enough to disobey God, but then it's kind of almost making a joke of it, bringing it, you know, kind of using it as the basis of a riddle, kind of treating it as a very light thing.

And it's somehow a new sense of sinking into spiritual insensitivity. And again, shows maybe the low place he puts on his Nazirite ship. And so there's a large reward and an expensive prize.

And the Philistines took the challenge willingly. You know, this is a big deal in those days, clothing was expensive. It wasn't cheaply manufactured in China or some sweatshop in Southeast Asia.

It was expensive. And so the prospect of these garments was very valuable to them. And so it says, if you cannot declare to me when shall they give me 30 sheets and 30 change of garments? They said to him, put forth a riddle that we may hear it.

And he said unto them, out of the eater came forth meat and out of the strong came forth sweetness. And they could not in three days expound the riddle. So here's the riddle.

Interesting that I think Tate and Lyle, they have this golden syrup, Lyle's golden syrup. And right on the tin is this scripture text. Out of the eater came forth meat, out of strong came forth sweetness.

I guess Tate and Lyle were formed in the days where the Bible was held in high esteem. And so they used it on their product. But anyway, nevertheless, here it is.

And so up to now, the Philistine strategy had been one of assimilation, as we've said, by being nice. But now it's about to cost them something. And their true character emerges.

And so after three days of not being able to expound the riddle, it says, it came to pass on the seventh day that they said to Samson's wife, entice thy husband that he may declare unto us the riddle, lest we burn thee and thy father's house with fire. Have you called us to take that we have? Is it not so? And so their true character comes out. Rather than lose the bet and lose the money, they're willing to burn to death one of their own, all their property, the daughter and the father.

So they encourage her to be subtle in her dealings and find out what Samson's riddle was. And instead of, again, communication, very poor here. Instead of her telling Samson, look, this is what's going to happen to us.

Maybe he'd have been sympathetic. Maybe he could have dealt with things without all of this happening. But it says that Samson's wife wept before him.

Verse 16, and thou dost but hate me, lovest me not. Thou hast put forth a riddle unto the children of my people and hast not told it me. And he said to her, behold, I have not told it to my father, and shall I tell it to thee? So Samson may have been strong enough in God's power to tear a lion limb from limb.

But he couldn't resist a woman's tears and persistent nagging. So woman's manipulative powers can be legendary. And the bottom line is a woman's tears wore down the man who had slain a lion.

And it's not going to be the first time. This is all a foreshadowing of what's going to come with Delilah and her tears. And so here's this man who is given supernatural strength to do great things, but he cannot handle a woman's tears.

So it says she wept before him the seven days while their feast lasted, and it came to pass on the seventh day that he told her because she lay sore upon him, and she told the riddle to the children of the people. And so once she was told, she quickly betrays him just like Delilah would do. And again, notice there's absolutely no loyalty in the Philistines.

None whatsoever. They're only loyal to themselves. So he's going to be betrayed by two women that he falls in love with who are Philistine women, but their loyalty ultimately is to their own people, not to him or to Samson's God.

And so basically, that Philistine character appears once again, and we see it very clearly. And so it's treacherous in the end, even though they were being nice, we see their real nature coming out here. They're not afraid of doing things to themselves, their own people.

They're not afraid of treachery and all of these things. And so these events, as we said, foreshadow what would lead ultimately to Samson's imprisonment and death. And so it says, verse 18, and the men of city said unto 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 had not found out my riddle. He certainly was a man with words, wasn't he? I mean, you know, if we called our prospective bride, a cow, I don't know that that would go down too well. And so he goes from a riddle to a proverb.

And certainly is a man of words and eloquence. We're going to see that as time progresses, he's certainly a man of words and eloquence. But sadly, not a man of character.

And it's true that you can be eloquent, and yet not a man of character. A lot is looking for character. Yeah, it's good if you have eloquence as well, but he's looking for character.

You plowed with my heifer. I'm not sure what she thought about being called a heifer. But that's what she's called, this female cow.

If you had not sought to be unequally yoked, this wouldn't have happened, you see. And there's something involved in this. You see, heifers were not used for plowing anyway.

They never used a female to yoke, to plow. It's always a male oxen that was involved in plowing. And so there's something wrong with the whole setup to begin with.

And so we clearly see this here. So now quickly, we come to journey five. In verse 19, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he went down.

This time, his journey is not motivated by lust. The Spirit of God comes upon him. Remember, God is working behind the scenes here.

He has a purpose in all of this. And the purpose is that he saw an occasion against the Philistines. And that's why the Spirit of the Lord comes upon this man at this time.

And he goes down to Ashkelon, 25 miles from Timnath, 40 kilometers journey. And perhaps he does that because he doesn't want the man to know where he got these garments. And so he's going far enough away, so that it would take time for word to get back, where he procured these garments to pay for the gamble that had been set forth a riddle.

And so it says, he went down to Ashkelon, and he slew 30 men of them, and took their spoil, and gave change of garments unto them which expounded the riddle. And his anger was kindled, and he went up to his father's house. And again, we just want to notice that this kindled anger, God's going to use it, going to overrule it, because it's going to set in motion, as we've already said, a series of events that are going to do a lot of damage to the Philistines.

But isn't it interesting that Samson's battles all seem to be for personal reasons, not directly because of his concern for the well-being of his people, but it's kind of like personal vendettas behind it. But again, God is still going to use it. And he's going to use him to begin to deliver Israel from the dominion of the Philistines.

And so his anger is kindled. It says he went up to his father's house. But then again, we see another little hint at how treacherous the Philistines really are.

Samson's wife was given to his companion, whom he had used as his friend. And so the ultimate act of betrayal, Samson's done his part. He's done everything he should.

But the Philistines just quickly stab him in the back, and they give his betrothed-to-be wife to another man. We might just conclude, our time has just about gone with this simple thought. We wonder what could have been accomplished for God if Samson had have retained his Nazarite vows, and had not have been motivated by self-will, but had been devoted fully to God's will.

Could it have been that he wouldn't have just begun to deliver Israel, but could it have been that God could have used him to effectively deliver Israel? And we come to the final question. What could we accomplish for God if we were really set apart unto the Lord, and fully dependent upon the Holy Spirit? Instead of being assimilated with the world, and the religious, we would be on a fence for God, taking the battle to the enemy of our souls. So, may God encourage us with this very challenging, very practical passage from his precious word.

Amen.

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