

CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE- PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 12A

JUDGES

CHAPTER 15

INTRODUCTION

In our previous lesson, we learned that Samson was specially consecrated to the LORD as a Nazarite to be an “unknowing deliverer” of Israel from the oppression of the Philistines. God chose him to save His covenant people because the children of Israel seemed to accept their lot under the Philistines. God still remained faithful to His covenant even at this point of Israel’s history. Unlike all previous occasions, the children of Israel cried to the LORD for deliverance from the oppression of their enemies, but this time, the LORD took the initiative to deliver His people from the Philistines. We shall learn that at one stage, the leaders of Judah also helped the Philistines to apprehend Samson, handing him over to them. One gets used to being under oppression especially with more than 300 years of servitude. The cycle of persecution – repentance – deliverance – peace – sin – persecution – etc. was too much for them to take. Israel simply surrendered and stopped fighting to

be holy and free. What a sad state of affairs Israel was in.

Samson had not lived up to his calling as a Nazarite. He was physically endowed with superhuman strength from the LORD but he became morally weak. Sometimes Christians are like him, materially blessed but spiritually weak. The greatest danger for many Christians is to assume that outward blessings or circumstances always indicate God’s approval of the inward, hidden spiritual condition. The life of Samson illustrates this sad truth—a strong man but revealed to be morally weak. On the other hand, Samson ended a weak man, but yet stronger than he ever was before.

Society today has deified sex, money and power. These attractions have usurped the place of God, and Christians are not exempted from being tempted. Samson’s defeat did not happen overnight. A little self-indulgence may seem harmless but it is doubly dangerous and devastating. It is a true saying: “A thought becomes an action; an action becomes a habit; a habit shapes a character; and character reaps a destiny.” In this episode of the life of Samson, we can see this slowly and surely developing and it shaped Samson’s life which destroyed him at the end.

OUTLINE

1. Samson’s Revenge (15:1-8)
2. Samson is betrayed (15:9-13)
3. Samson kills (15:14-20)

COMMENTARY

Samson's Revenge – 15:1-8

In the preceding chapter, Samson was angry that he was tricked by the Philistines through his wife in revealing the solution of the riddle which he posed to the wedding guests (14:14). In anger, Samson left his in-laws and returned to his father's house. Some time later in the months of April/May (time of the wheat harvest), Samson decided to return to his in-laws to be with his wife. He brought a young goat with him. This was customary as it acted as a token of reconciliation. When he reached his wife's home, his father-in-law refused him entry into his wife's bedroom, saying that he had given her in marriage to Samson's best man.

His father-in-law gave the reason that he thought Samson was angry with his daughter and would not return to her. He offered Samson the hand of the younger and prettier sister. Samson was not interested and was furious. He was determined now to settle the score with the Philistines, whom he considered the real culprits. He caught 300 foxes or probably jackals because the latter run in packs. It was not easy to trap and catch these foxes (or jackals) let alone 300 of them. It shows that Samson was determined. Obviously, he did not accomplish this in one day. He might have taken a few days to catch them. He tied their tails together in pairs; put

a torch between their tails and set them loose into the corn fields of the Philistines. The stocks of corn of the Philistines were destroyed including those, which were not yet harvested. The vineyards and olives were also destroyed. It was a devastating blow to the Philistine farmers. Already, Samson displayed some great strength and stamina, but this method of retaliation was borne out of his own desire to see justice down in his life.

He could have taken this opportunity to abandon his desire to marry another Philistine woman and heed the earlier counsel of his parents and faithfully keep the Nazarite vows (14:3). But he was rebellious, stubborn and proud. Nevertheless, while his ways were not good, God turned the event to fulfill His plan and purpose to deliver His people.

It was the Philistines' turn to be enraged as a result of Samson's deed. They enquired about the person who destroyed their crops. The people answered that it was Samson, because his father-in-law, the Timnite had taken his wife and given her to another. The Philistines then came and burnt Samson's wife and her father. This was a senseless act of anger and revenge. One sin leads to another and so sin multiples. This provoked Samson to carry out a vicious slaughter of the Philistines. He single-handedly killed a band of Philistine soldiers. Knowing that his

enemies would retaliate, he hid himself in a cave in Etam.

Can we say, “All this bloodshed and destruction would have been avoided if only Samson had been faithful to God and kept his Nazarite vows?” He never would have experienced this kind of personal tragedy. Samson was glaringly disobedient. One can choose to sin, but the consequences of one’s sin is not within one’s control. This was not the end yet. More sin would ensue as sin begets sin.

Samson is Betrayed – 15:9-13

The Philistines marched into Judah, pitched their tents in Lehi preparing to invade. The men of Judah demanded from the Philistines the reason for this aggressive and warring attitude towards them. They told the men of Judah that it was because of Samson and their objective was to capture and kill him. The response of the men of Judah to Samson was not only surprising but shocking. “Knowest not thou that the Philistines are rulers over us? What is this that thou hast done unto us?” (15:11) They should have been proud of Samson, their strong man, who was able to face up to the Philistines and who could deliver them and offer them freedom from slavery. But they preferred the status quo of peace and comfort and not to rock the boat. Israel had gotten so used to sin and idolatry

and under bondage and captivity that their behaviour was shocking, to say the least!

They would rather compromise at any price than to be committed to the LORD God who had given them the land so that they would worship and serve Him and be abundantly blessed in all ways. The children of Israel had so degraded themselves by compromising with their uncircumcised rulers that they were prepared to deliver Samson in exchange for peace and comfort at any price.

The Judaeans came to Samson at Etam where 3,000 men were hiding. Samson justified his action in destroying the cornfields of the Philistines because of what they had done to him. The Judaeans, instead of supporting Samson and recognising him as God’s man, told him that they were there to bind and hand him over to the Philistines! This is shocking! How low could the Judaeans fall? Samson’s reaction was remarkably gentle with his people. He had every right to be absolutely furious with these traitors. Instead, he did not attack nor kill them. He submitted to them but made them promise not to kill him. They gave their promise, and bound Samson with two new ropes.

Samson Kills – 15:14-20

They brought Samson to the Philistines. When the Judaeans came

to Lehi where the Philistines' camp was, the Philistines wasted no time. They shouted against him but at that moment, the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon him. Samson snapped the ropes like weak threads. He found a jaw-bone of an ass, probably lying on the ground nearby and used it as his weapon. He killed 1,000 Philistines with it single-handedly! It was no mean feat. He shared his victory with his people saying that he had killed 1,000 Philistines with a jaw-bone. He called the place where he won the battle, Ramath-lehi, which means "the height of a jaw-bone."

This portion of the account gives testimony to the truth that when a Christian puts his trust in God, he can have the power and strength to deal victoriously with his enemies. The LORD did not fail Samson, at the right moment empowered him with His Spirit. After the battle, he was exhausted and very thirsty almost to the point of death. At that moment, Samson prayed to the LORD (15:18). This is the only prayer recorded beside the one he would pray just before his death. It was a beautiful prayer. He opened his prayer by acknowledging that it was the LORD who gave him the great victory. He also acknowledged that he was only the LORD'S servant. At this juncture, Samson was conscious of his calling and was living up to it. He then asked

the LORD for water because he was thirsty and dying. It was a cry of despair. Imagine Samson, who had just won a great victory, now praying for water to drink to quench his thirst. The LORD heard his prayer, miraculously supplying water. The LORD split a spot on the jaw-bone and water flowed out of it. Samson drank the water and was revived. He called the place where he drank the water, "Enhakkore" which means "the spring of One calling." Moreover, the LORD established Samson's judgeship. He judged Israel for 20 years. No details of Samson's judgeship are given.

PRACTICAL VALUE

Samson's weakness was sexual lust. He had a weakness for beautiful women. Everywhere he went his eyes wandered and there would be a woman whom he could not resist. God's Word teaches us to flee from temptation, not to trifle with it. We are not even taught to fight it, but to flee from it! So, it is also important to realise that the company we keep may have a greater influence on us than we think. We should always desire the fellowship of faithful, committed and godly Christians.

To be unequally yoked is not a small matter. Christians today have no fear of God in them for they regard marriage with unbelievers as not a sin

for if they did, they would not have entered into such a relationship in the first place. Dating evangelism is self delusion aimed at fulfilling the desire of a carnal heart thinking that God is fooled by such a noble reason. Samson’s failure to obey God was turned by the Almighty God into an avenue where the enemies of Israel were dealt with and Israel was delivered. Israel did not wish to be delivered but God wanted it and Israel was delivered nonetheless albeit the motive and reason behind Samson’s deeds were selfish and self serving.

Finally, let us not be deceived. While God blesses us with physical and material blessings just as he endowed Samson with superhuman strength, we should not think that we are automatically spiritually right. When God has blessed us, we must take care not to become complacent lest we become blind to the sins in our life.

Take heed of Paul’s exhortation to the Christians in Ephesus: “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.” (Ephesians 5:15) is also applicable to us today.
AMEN

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Judges 15:1-8; Isaiah 33:1.

TUESDAY: Judges 15:9-13; Hebrews 13:20-21.

WEDNESDAY: Judges 15:14-20; Philippians 4:19.

THURSDAY: Judges 15:1-20.

FRIDAY: Judges 15:1-20.

Discussion Questions

1. How justifiable do you think Samson’s actions are in 15:3-5 and 15:7-8? What is the result on each occasion?

2. What do you think of Judah’s words and deed in 15:9-13? What does it reveal concerning Israel’s spiritual state?

3. What does the incident of 15:18, 19 teach us regarding God's ability to supply every need of His servants?

4. What could be the possible reason God did not take away Samson's strength the moment he broke the Nazarite's vow?

5. Is there a difference between the Spirit of God coming upon Samson here as opposed to the filling of the Holy Spirit in Exodus 31:1-5?

6. Can a person who is not born again be filled with the Holy Spirit albeit to do God's work and will? Explain your answer.

7. Do the OT saints have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in them? Cite Bible verses to support your view.
