

SAMSON

A Cautionary Tale

Hebrews 11:32-34

October 08, 2016

Today

Why is Samson in the faith chapter? Isn't this chapter reserved for "worthy" people? Abel. Enoch. Noah. Abraham. Joseph. You know people who routinely throughout their lives demonstrated faith and dependence in God.

Samson doesn't really fit this profile, does he?

As we noticed several weeks ago, Israel, as a general rule, had a problem remaining faithful to God. Certainly, this was the case throughout their wilderness travel, but especially once they got into Canaan, got settled and comfortable, they "forgot".

As you recall, it went like this:

1. The sons of Israel did evil in the eyes of the Lord
 - Served Baal
 - Forsook the Lord
 - Followed other gods
2. He gave them into the hands of plunderers – they could no longer stand before their enemies
3. They were severely distressed
4. The Lord raised up judges to deliver them
5. They did not listen to the judges – when the judges died the people would turn back and follow other gods – they did not abandon their practices or their stubborn ways.

They really went off the rails and YET still expected God to deliver them when they got in trouble.

Amazing Presumption!

More amazing still..... God delivered them!!!

Now the story of Samson

Right from the beginning – before Samson was even conceived – He was set aside by God.

- **Judges 13:1** - Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, so the LORD delivered them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years. ² A certain man of Zorah, named Manoah, from the clan of the Danites, had a wife who was sterile and remained childless. ³ The angel of the LORD appeared to her and said, "You are sterile and childless, but you are going to conceive and have a son. ⁴ Now see to it that you drink no wine or other fermented drink and that you do not eat anything unclean, ⁵ because you will conceive and give birth to a son. No razor may be used on his head, because the boy is to be a Nazirite, set apart to God from birth, and he will begin the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Philistines." ⁶ Then the woman went to her husband and told him, "A man of God came to me. He looked like an angel of God, very awesome. I didn't ask him where he came from, and he didn't tell me his name. ⁷ But he said to me, 'You will conceive and give birth to a son. Now then, drink no wine or other fermented drink and do not eat anything unclean, because the boy will be a Nazirite of God from birth until the day of his death."

What is a Nazirite?

A person who is consecrated or set apart for the service of God or voluntarily took a vow described in Numbers 6:1–21. "

This vow required the person to:

- Abstain from wine, wine vinegar, grapes, raisins, intoxicating liquors, vinegar made from such substances, and eating or drinking any substance that contains any trace of grapes.
- Refrain from cutting the hair on one's head; but to allow the locks of the head's hair to grow.
- Not to become ritually impure by contact with corpses or graves, even those of family members.

Samson had everything he needed to accomplish his task.

Just listen to a few examples of the advantages Samson had:

- **Judges 14:5-6** - He killed a lion with his bare hands.
- **Judges 15:14-15** - He wiped out 1000 Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey
- **Judges 16:2-3** - He uprooted a city gate, carrying it nearly 40 miles away.

Samson was not someone you messed with:

- He took what he wanted
- He was controlled by lust
- When denied he exacted revenge, leaving carnage and death in his path.
- He broke his vows to God
- He came to believe he was untouchable.

The Philistines feared and hated him, the Israelites adored him, and everybody knew WHO he was.

Samson was unique, distinctive, special.

The reason?

Israel NEEDED a hero and God intended to use Samson, as He did Gideon and Jephthah and Deborah and Barak, to liberate Israel from the Philistines. Samson's strength was not intended to be used for his own purposes and gain, but for deliverance and for the glory of God.

As we noted, Samson's long hair was the outward mark of his vow to God. From the date of his birth he never cut his hair.

Samson came to believe (as the Children of Israel believed) he could do whatever he wanted without consequence BECAUSE he was special – set apart. Throughout his life he had been successful and he had come to believe in HIMSELF.

Samson's strength didn't rest with his hair; however, Samson's strength came from God.

Finally, God had had enough. Samson believed in his own strength and intelligence – so be it.

- **Judges 16:20** - He awoke from his sleep and thought, 'I'll go out as before and shake myself free.' But he did not know that the LORD had left him.

Samson now found himself in unfamiliar territory – he was weak.

Just as his hair had been an outward sign of strength, now his baldness was an outward sign of weakness.

- His abandonment of his faithfulness to God made him weak.
- His sexual immorality made him weak.
- His need for revenge made him weak
- His reliance on himself made him weak.
- His lack of self-control made him weak.
- His disregard of godly counsel made him weak.

All these things made him weak long before he lost his hair.

What is the root of Samson's problems? **PRIDE.**

- Pride in his physical power.
- Pride in his position as a leader in Hebrew society.
- Pride in his set apart-ness.

- Pride in his abilities and prowess led him to believe he could get away with whatever he wanted to do.
- Pride led him to believe he could maintain un-Godly relationships and still maintain his relationship with God.

You see, Samson's physical strength became the source of his weakness. His power became the source of his pride. He'd never lost a fight. No one could defeat him. He was a man of power and prestige and it was his pride that brought him down.

- **Proverbs 16:18** - Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.
- **Proverbs 11:2** - When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.
- **1 Corinthians 10:12** - Let him who thinks he stands (strong) take heed lest he fall.

The root of all sin is pride:

Samson lost his hair and his eyesight and his freedom. He was placed in a position of an animal to grind grain. He was broken. His pride shattered.

What Samson refused to learn in plenty he would learn in hardship.

What's interesting about Samson's story is – that in spite of his colossal failure.

In spite of his walking away from God in his life.

In spite of his sexual immorality.

When he repented, God restored him AND restored his strength.

And in his final moments, the Bible tells us: "...he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus, he killed many more when he died than while he lived." (Judges 16:30)

He finally did, at the end of his life, what God had intended for him to do all through his life, break the hold of the Philistines.

What a waste and totally unnecessary!!! And completely of Samson's own making.

He never really got serious about living for God until the very end of his life – after everything had finally fallen apart.

This would be a hopelessly tragic story if it ended there – but it doesn't.

Samson is mentioned among the heroes of the faith!

Hebrews 11:32-34 - And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

Why is Samson in the faith chapter? The truth is, Samson was not faithful, but God is faithful. Samson is in the faith chapter because he put his faith in God's faithfulness.

This story is a living lesson in the grace of God. How a man who was beaten and blinded, humiliated by his own repeated stupidity, reached the bottom, turned around and discovered that God was waiting for him all the time. There's nothing heroic about Samson. All he did was turn around and find God. God is the hero.

Restoration of your relationship with God does not depend upon how good you are. If that is the criteria, Samson would definitely NOT be in the faith chapter. He came back – while he was still weak. He came back - while he was still shackled. He came back - while he was still blind. He turned back to God and God took him.

And God will take you too – all you have to do is turn around!