

SAMSON, JUDGE OF ISRAEL

BIBLE TEXT : Judges 13:1-25; 15:14-20; 16:4-6, 15-31

LESSON 15 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him" (Hebrews 10:38).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Judges 13:1-25

¹ And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years.

² And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name *was* Manoah; and his wife *was* barren, and bare not.

³ And the angel of the LORD appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou *art* barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son.

⁴ Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean *thing*.

⁵ For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.

⁶ Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance *was* like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible: but I asked him not whence he *was*, neither told he me his name:

⁷ But he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean *thing*: for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death.

⁸ Then Manoah intreated the

BIBLE REFERENCES:

The Judge, Samson

- 1 Israel was again in oppression because of their sin, Judges 13:1; 2:3, 11-15
- 2 True to the promise, God raised up someone to lead the Israelites out of their pitiable state, Judges 13:2-25; 2:16-19
- 3 Samson became a deliverer and judge in Israel, Judges 15:14-20;

Exodus 3:9-10

⁹ Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.

¹⁰ Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

The Man, Samson

- 1 Carelessness regarding his vows to God, and a trifling with sin, brought great temptation to Samson, Judges 16:4-6;

James 1:13-15

¹³ Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

¹⁴ But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

¹⁵ Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

Genesis 3:6

⁶ And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

Proverbs 1:10

¹⁰ My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.

Proverbs 4:14

¹⁴ Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil *men*.

Matthew 26:41

⁴¹ Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.

- 2 The temptation became too great for him and he broke his vows, Judges 16:15-17;

Numbers 30:2

² If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.

Deuteronomy 23:21-22

²¹ When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee.

²² But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee.

Ecclesiastes 5:4-6

⁴ When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for *he hath* no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed.

⁵ Better *is it* that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.

⁶ Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither

LORD, and said, O my Lord, let the man of God which thou didst send come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born.

⁹ And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah; and the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field: but Manoah her husband *was* not with her.

¹⁰ And the woman made haste, and ran, and shewed her husband, and said unto him, Behold, the man hath appeared unto me, that came unto me the *other* day.

¹¹ And Manoah arose, and went after his wife, and came to the man, and said unto him, *Art* thou the man that spakest unto the woman? And he said, I *am*.

¹² And Manoah said, Now let thy words come to pass. How shall we order the child, and *how* shall we do unto him?

¹³ And the angel of the LORD said unto Manoah, Of all that I said unto the woman let her beware.

¹⁴ She may not eat of any *thing* that cometh of the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean *thing*: all that I commanded her let her observe.

¹⁵ And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, I pray thee, let us detain thee, until we shall have made ready a kid for thee.

¹⁶ And the angel of the LORD said unto Manoah, Though thou detain me, I will not eat of thy bread: and if thou wilt offer a burnt offering, thou must offer it unto the LORD. For Manoah knew not that he *was* an angel of the LORD.

¹⁷ And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, What *is* thy name, that when thy sayings come to pass we may do thee honour?

¹⁸ And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it *is* secret?

¹⁹ So Manoah took a kid with a

say thou before the angel, that it *was* an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?

Matthew 24:12

¹² And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

2 Peter 3:17

¹⁷ Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know *these things* before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.

3 Without God's support and strength Samson became an easy prey, Judges 16:18-21

4 Samson's repentance and retention of basic faith and confidence in God, despite his sin and the consequent adverse circumstances, brought about his restoration to God's favor, Judges 16:22-28;

Habakkuk 2:4

⁴ Behold, his soul *which* is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.

John 3:36

³⁶ He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

Romans 1:17

¹⁷ For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

Hebrews 11:32-34

³² And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:
³³ Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

³⁴ Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

5 The restored Samson was able to accomplish more at his death, in God's plan for him, than in his entire life, Judges 16:29-31

NOTES:

Faith in God

The Holy Spirit has seen fit to record, in the Old Testament, the story of Samson, as well as a New Testament reference to one of his godly virtues; but it cannot be said that his whole life is one that should be accepted as a model in consistent godliness and righteousness. We find that Samson was impetuous at times, often moved by nothing More than vanity and anger; that he was possessed with incredible strength, yet often as gullible and as easily deceived by. his enemies as a little child.

What then do we find of good in Samson's life? We find that he had faith in God, and the faith that he did have was that which God finds of great value, regardless of the one in whom it is found, or how minute the quantity may be. (**Matthew 8:10** ¹⁰ When Jesus heard *it*, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. **Matthew 17:20** ²⁰ And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.) It is true that Samson's heart was stirred much too often by earthly motives; but still there were times when he listened for the voice of God, and often in those times he was truly inspired of God to deeds of

meat offering, and offered *it* upon a rock unto the LORD: and *the angel* did wondrously; and Manoah and his wife looked on.

²⁰ For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar. And Manoah and his wife looked on *it*, and fell on their faces to the ground.

²¹ But the angel of the LORD did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he *was* an angel of the LORD.

²² And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God.

²³ But his wife said unto him, If the LORD were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have shewed us all these *things*, nor would as at this time have told us *such things* as these.

²⁴ And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him.

²⁵ And the Spirit of the LORD began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

Judges 15:14-20

¹⁴ And when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him: and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and the cords that *were* upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands.

¹⁵ And he found a new jawbone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith.

¹⁶ And Samson said, With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass have

heroic proportions. Some of the incidents of the Scriptural text are good examples of Samson's faith and courage, in that he was never discouraged or dismayed at the seemingly impossible odds with which he was forced to cope. God also commended his courage and faith in those trying circumstances, showing its quality by including Samson's name in the list of the heroes of faith given as examples for all the world to examine and profit by (**Hebrews 11:32-34** ³² And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: ³³ Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴ Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens).

Nowhere else in the Bible are recorded such ordinarily impossible feats as those of Samson's life. Samson's reasons for fighting the Philistines were not altogether perfect, it is true; nevertheless, it was the will of God that the Philistines be destroyed because of their rejection of Him and His worship, for which they had substituted the base and licentious practice of idolatry. God's word of judgment was fulfilled, one way or another, and the Bible bears witness to the devastation Samson wrought in the ranks of the Philistines.

To the everlasting shame of his own countrymen, the Israelites, we read that they had no desire to help him; but, on the contrary, they bound him with new cords and turned him over to the Philistines that they might torture and kill him. It is of small credit to the people of the world that God has oftentimes had to use men and women of very limited ability and talent to accomplish His desires in the world. Men of high position, great wealth, and rare talent are seldom seen in the ranks of God's warriors, because their hearts are full of pride and vanity and they deem it beneath their position in life to stoop to the work of God (**1 Corinthians 1:20-29** ²⁰ Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? ²¹ For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. ²² For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: ²³ But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; ²⁴ But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. ²⁶ For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: ²⁷ But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; ²⁸ And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: ²⁹ That no flesh should glory in his presence.). But the Psalmist says, "His work is honourable and glorious" (Psalm 111:3).

Inconsistencies

Samson's faults were all too many. The continually recurring inconsistencies in his life were a stumbling block to himself and to those around him. Still, he had a heart and spirit that was willing. God can use a willing heart. Such willingness of heart, a sincere faith that will trust God no matter how impossible the odds against one, and a holy boldness that knows no fear of numbers and is not

I slain a thousand men.

¹⁷ And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking, that he cast away the jawbone out of his hand, and called that place Ramathlehi.

¹⁸ And he was sore athirst, and called on the LORD, and said, Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant: and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?

¹⁹ But God clave an hollow place that *was* in the jaw, and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived: wherefore he called the name thereof Enhakkore, which *is* in Lehi unto this day.

²⁰ And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years.

Judges 16:4-6

⁴ And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name *was* Delilah.

⁵ And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength *lieth*, and by what *means* we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him: and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred *pieces* of silver.

⁶ And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength *lieth*, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee.

Judges 16:15-31

¹⁵ And she said unto him, How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart *is* not with me? thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength *lieth*.

¹⁶ And it came to pass, when she

afraid of the face of clay, are weapons that God can, and will, use for His glory and for the advancement of His Kingdom.

To the natural observation, the circumstances with which Samson was faced as the Philistines came to capture him were impossible for victory. His own countrymen were against him. The Philistines numbered in the thousands, and it seemed it would take a full army to extract Samson from their clutches.

If Samson had been a man of rare talent or superior intellectual powers he might have devised some ingenious method of escaping capture by the Philistines. He had no wealth, or he might have hired an army to help him in his battle against the enemies of Israel. He was not a man of authority in civil government, since they had no king or ruler, or he could have commanded his people to stand and fight against the Philistines. But Samson had something that was greater than all these. He had faith in God; and with that faith in God and the jawbone of an ass Samson killed a thousand Philistines. Let all who attempt to excuse themselves from serving God by decrying their lack of talent or ability consider Samson's weapon. He used the weapon at hand, and with God's help he wrought a tremendous victory.

Moses sought to be excused on one occasion from going to do the work that God had given him to do, and was afraid that the people to whom he was sent would not recognize his authority as being from God. God asked him what he had in his hand. Moses told God he had a rod in his hand. God worked a marvelous miracle with that rod, to prove to Moses, and to the Israelites and Egyptians, that he had sufficient power and authority from God to carry out what God had commanded him (**Exodus 4:1-5** ¹ And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee. ² And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. ³ And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it. ⁴ And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand: ⁵ That they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee.). If we will but trust God, and let Him have His way with us, we can work some great victories for the advancement of the Kingdom of God, to the glory of God, with what we have at hand.

Samson's Need of Help

Samson's inability to help himself made him look to God for help, and this was what God desired. There is no limit to what God will do for the soul that will lean heavily upon the arm of God for help in the time of need. God desires to reveal Himself to the sons of men, and needs but a willing and fully surrendered heart as an instrument for that revelation to abundantly prove Himself and the reality of His salvation. One of the most serious charges God brought against the nation of Israel, His own chosen people, was that they limited Him. "Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel" (Psalm 78:41). Not so with Samson. There seemed to be nothing so impossible of achievement that it would cause Samson to doubt God's ability to give him victory.

Samson is listed with the other heroes of faith, because he exhibited that faith. Samson no doubt had some of the same spirit that David had when, as only a shepherd boy, he dared to rebuke the armies of Israel for their cowardice and went out to face the

pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, *so* that his soul was vexed unto death;

¹⁷ That he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I *have been* a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any *other* man.

¹⁸ And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath shewed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand.

¹⁹ And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him.

²⁰ And she said, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him.

²¹ But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house.

²² Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven.

²³ Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice: for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand.

²⁴ And when the people saw him, they praised their god: for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us.

giant Goliath with nothing but a slingshot and five stones. David believed God, had faith to trust God in perilous times, and proved it by slaying Goliath with but one stone hurled from his slingshot. In later years, Peter and John, also, were persecuted and threatened for their testimony for Christ, but went back to their brethren and prayed to God to "grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word" (Acts 4:29).

Godly Separation

We are not to misconstrue the facts of Samson's life and believe that God was glorified in Samson regardless of any of his failures or sins. **So** long as Samson kept his vows to God, and kept his salvation, God was glorified; but when he neglected his soul's welfare, and failed to pay his vows to God, Samson became a reproach to God, and God had no pleasure in him.

Samson's foolish associations with the Philistines brought his life of freedom to an inglorious end. He was taken captive; his eyes were put out; and he was made to grind in the prison house of Gaza. He became the recipient of all the ridicule the Philistines could heap upon him. Samson's associations with the Philistines were contradictory to the Word of God. The Bible gives us very plain and specific instructions, both in the Old and New Testaments, that there is to be no fellowship, marriages, or any unnecessary association with those who do not honor God, or His Son Jesus Christ.

The business of everyday commerce pertinent to our livelihood often necessitates much association with the world. However, such associations are to remain on a business basis, and our personal lives are to remain free from all contacts that will discourage our service to God. We are to shun all those associations and habits of custom and style that the world deems important if they dim our appreciation of God, take our time or attention from God, or bring reproach upon the standard of God's Word and His people; and we are to have nothing to do with them. (**1 Corinthians 5:9-10** ⁹ I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: ¹⁰ Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. **James 4:4** ⁴ Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. **2 Corinthians 6:14-18** ¹⁴ Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? ¹⁵ And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? ¹⁶ And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ¹⁷ Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, ¹⁸ And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty) Israel brought much trouble upon themselves by disobeying God's command against marriage to unbelievers.

Redeeming Grace.

Samson's long hair was typical of his vows to God. His strength left him when he broke his vow to God, and he became powerless in the hands of his enemies. Great remorse must have filled Samson's heart because of the disgrace he brought upon himself, upon his people, and, worst of all, upon

²⁵ And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison house; and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars.

²⁶ And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them.

²⁷ Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines *were* there; and *there were* upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport.

²⁸ And Samson called unto the LORD, and said, O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.

²⁹ And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left.

³⁰ And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with *all his* might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that *were* therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than *they* which he slew in his life.

³¹ Then his brethren and all the house of his father came down, and took him, and brought *him* up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the buryingplace of Manoah his father. And he judged Israel twenty years.

the God he served. However, the prison house of the enemy was a good place for him to begin to think of lost opportunities for serving God. Samson eventually did repent of the reproach he had brought upon God's name, and God gave him his marvelous strength back again for one more chance to destroy the enemies of Israel.

Samson killed more Philistines at his death than he did in all his life. As the Philistines were making merry at a great feast in honor of their god, the only true God gave Samson his strength back, and he used it to pull down the temple upon the Philistines, killing them all. Thereby God avenged Samson for the loss of his two eyes, for his captivity, and for the shame the Philistines had caused him.

The fact that Samson could humble himself enough to repent of the foolishness which had brought him to such humiliation is to be commended. The man who waits until his deathbed to repent of a lifetime of sin is surely trusting in a very slim hope, at best. If while he is enduring the pain and struggles of death he is able to consider intelligently the terribleness of meeting God with a lifetime of sin, unrepented of and for which he can make no restitution or amends, it will take some real faith in God to believe that God will forgive him and will save his soul before death takes place.

Samson manifested in his death as clear an example of true faith in God as the Bible affords. Samson was inexcusable for getting into a sad predicament. He had sinned, and he was paying the penalty of that sin. Nevertheless, he prayed again, to God for mercy. Mercy was received, and Samson again, for the last time, proved God's power: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Perhaps Samson looked to God in faith according to the promise of God: "The LORD lifteth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground. . . . The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy" (Psalm 147:6, 11).

QUESTIONS

- 1 What was the source of Samson's great strength?
- 2 What lesson is to be learned from the fact that Samson slew a thousand Philistines with but the jawbone of an ass?
- 3 What was the greatest virtue Samson had?
- 4 Why is Samson's name listed in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews?
- 5 Is it a good thing to wait until the time of death to repent of sin, and hope that God will forgive us all our iniquities?
- 6 Why was Samson greater in his death than he was in his life?