

Israel is caught in a cycle of sin. Only this time, they don't cry out to God for help. They had accepted their slavery. 'Don't you realize that the Philistines rule over us.' (15:11) **Israel was in denial, having settled for defeat. They let sin reign – Romans 6:12-13!** Samson is called to lead Israel against the Philistines. Despite his tawdry, tragic life, God is leading us to the True Judge and Deliverer, Jesus. *Hear an echo of his coming!*

CHAPTER 13

A Nativity story: A childless couple (13:5) will have a son born who will deliver Israel. **A Nazirite Vow** (Num 6). Samson's whole life was to be dedicated to God. **No wine – dead bodies or haircuts** (13:7). 'Blessed and stirred by the Spirit.' (Judges 13:24-25)

CHAPTERS 14-15

Pictures of strength: **14:6** Tore a Lion apart. **14:19** Struck down 30 men.
15:4 Caught 300 foxes and tied them tail to tail in pairs.
15:14 Tore apart ropes and shackles that bound him.
15:16 Killed 1000 men. Samson is God's agent of justice.

Pictures of weakness:

The Philistines sought to know the secret of his strength. His strength wasn't obvious. He was human with thirsts and appetites.

WATER: "Must I die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?" 15:1

WOMEN: "Samson went to Timnah...saw a young Philistine woman. He returned, saying to his father and mother, *'I have seen a Philistine woman...; now get her for me as my wife.'* 14:1-2

Broken Vow: On the way to his wedding in Timnah, he broke his Nazarite vow.

'Samson went to Timnah with his father and mother... they approached the vineyards of Timnah. He turned to look at the lion's carcass... in it he saw a swarm of bees and some honey. He scooped out the honey with his hands and ate as he went along...he rejoined his parents...gave them some and they ate it. But he did not tell them he had taken honey from the lion's carcass.' (14:8-9)

Boastful Verse: Thinking himself clever, he composed a riddle, telling the guests:

"If you can give me the answer within the seven days of the feast, I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty sets of clothes. If you can't tell me the answer, you must give me thirty linen garments and thirty sets of clothes." "Tell us your riddle...Let's hear it." He replied, "Out of the eater, something to eat; out of the strong, something sweet." (14:12-14)'

WEDDING: Ancient Near East weddings were seven-day feasts and consummated on the last day. Samson's bride used emotional blackmail to get him to answer his riddle. *His wife threw herself on him, sobbing, "You hate me! You don't really love me. You've given my people a riddle but haven't told me the answer."* She cried seven days. **On the seventh day he finally told her for she continued to press him. She explained the riddle to her people.** (14:16-17) Realizing the men of Ashkelon knew the riddle's meaning. he killed thirty men and left 'Samson's wife was given to his best man.' (14:20) "I was so sure you hated her," he said, "that I gave her to your companion. Isn't her younger sister more attractive? Take her instead." (15:2)

JUDGES 16

TEMPTED

One day Samson went to Gaza, where he saw a prostitute...Sometime later, he fell in love With a woman whose name was Delilah. The Philistines went to her and said, “See if you can lure him into showing you the secret of his great strength and how we can overpower him....”

‘Tell me the secret of your great strength and how you can be tied up and subdued.’

“tie me with seven bowstrings...new ropes... seven braids...I’ll become as weak as any other man ‘How can you say, ‘I love you’ when you won’t confide in me?... made a fool of me...have not told me the secret of your great strength.” Nagging...day after day...sick to death...he told her:‘**No razor has been used on my head...I have been a Nazirite dedicated to God from my mother’s womb. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me I would become as weak as any other man.’**

DEFEATED

The Philistines return – Delilah puts him to sleep - his hair is shaved – he is subdued. His strength left him. 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. The Philistines seized him, gouged out his eyes... took him to Gaza. Binding him with bronze shackles, they set him to grinding grain in the prison.

Eyeless in Gaza, at the mill with slaves.

(Samson Agoniste – John Milton)

Samson was “stupidly secure”– thinking he could handle the consequences of his sin.

Touching a dead lion. Hanging around vineyards. A seven-day party with pagans.

A. SEX: Three women – Timnah Bride. A Prostitute. Delilah.

He follows God only when it suits him – preferring self-gratification to obeying God.

B. SELF: The world says: Follow your Heart. Be True to Yourself. Live your truth.

Jesus says:

Follow Me.

Deny Yourself.

I am the truth.

(Matthew 4:19)

(Matthew 16:24-26)

(John 14:6)

C. SIN: “When Samson was not saving Israel, he was being Israel.” (M. Willcox)

Forfeiting God’s power, with no spiritual influence, he became a circus clown. 16:25

OUR FAILURES ARE NOT GOD’S FAILURES

The pagan marriage: *‘His parents did not this was from the Lord who was seeking an occasion to confront the Philistines.’* Judges 14:4

God uses the foolishness of his people to display the true wisdom of his salvation.

GOD’S VICTORY IS OUR VICTORY

The pagan temple: *‘pushed with all his might...down came the temple on the rulers people...he killed many more when he died than while he lived.’*

Samson’s final act was to pull down the pagan system of evil.

The Lord Jesus stretched out his arms on the cross to defeat evil.

“having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, **triumphing over them by the cross.**” Colossians 2:13-15

There is no need for us to live one more day in defeat, shame or despair.

Our story does not end in rubble, but with resurrection.