

September 12

Scriptures: Read Judges 14 & 15

Key Verse: “But his father and mother did not know that it was of the Lord—that He was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines...” (Judges 14:4)

Overview

Several incidents recorded in these chapters prove that Samson did not follow the strict regulation of a Nazirite as his parents had raised him. He was not only strong in body but had a strong will as well. Sadly, his will was often contrary to the will of God. An evident weakness of Samson was his desire for Philistine women; this led him into many problems. God, however, used Samson’s mistakes and the mighty deeds, which followed, as a source of judgment upon the Philistines who were oppressing and ruling over the Israelites; it would also prove that He, the God of Israel, was still capable of delivering His people.

Usually, the first step that leads a believer down the wrong path is compromise. Samson went where he should not have been, down to Timanath, a Philistine town in the valley about seven kilometers west of his home in Zorah. He saw a girl he desired, but such desire was contrary to the Law of God; Israelites, not to mention Nazirites, were forbidden in God’s Law to marry any heathen from the land (Deut.7:3-4).

His parents tried to stop him, but Samson had stubbornly made up his mind and could not be dissuaded. Though his action was sinful and rebellious, the biblical writer notes that God would use this as an occasion for Samson to move against the Philistine (v.4). Possibly were really his enemies; he was to wage war rather than love and feast with them. However, through all the incidents that resulted from his wedding plans, God caused Samson to finally see them as the enemy he was to destroy, for their presence in the land was against His will.

Samson was not continually Spirit-filled. Rather, the Spirit of the Lord would come upon him only at times of crisis, when he needed supernatural strength (14:6, 19; 15:14). Each of those instances, however, led to Samson’s defilement. The honey he took from the lion was unclean because it came from a carcass. The garments he stole also came from dead men, and the jawbone he used was from an unclean dead animal. Even though he was not walking in the ways of the Lord nor adhering to the Nazirite vow, the Lord was still faithful in helping Samson so that glory might come to His Name and that His purpose against the Philistines would be fulfilled. It makes one wonder how much more effective Samson could have been in fulfilling God’s plan and purpose if he had been fully obedient to God.

Samson was greatly angered by the events at the weddings feast, yet when his anger subsided, he returned to his bride’s house to consummate the marriage (15:1). Upon discovering she had been given to another, he became more angry and retaliated against the Philistines in general by burning their crops. Now this was very serious and meant war! When the Philistines came with an army to the men of Judah, they thought they had no choice but to hand Samson over to them. These cowardly men of Judah were content to remain under Philistine control and not help Samson. What a tragic condition! They had once been commissioned by God to drive out and

destroy the heathen in the land (1:2), yet here we see they no longer had faith in fight. God's Spirit came upon him and by himself, with God's help, won the victory for the Lord. Did the people of Israel still not understand that their God was able?

It appears that the Lord used all these experiences to teach Samson. It seems he finally began to understand that he was used by God to fight for Him and that it was not his own strength, but the Lord had given him the victory: This is evident when he was exhausted and called upon the Lord for water: "You have given this great deliverance by the hand of Your servant" (15:18). Samson, however, still had much to learn.

Prayer

Lord, keep us from even a small compromise with the enemy, because it will lead to outright disobedience. We yield ourselves to a constant filling with Your Spirit so that we'll be true always.