

September 13

Scriptures: Read Judges 16

Key Verse: "... O Lord God, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may... rake vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!" (Judges 16:18)

Overview

Samson may have been doing quite well in obeying the Lord and in leading Israel as their judge for a period of twenty years (15:20), but once again he fell prey to temptation by Philistine women, which led to his downfall and total ruin. He was strong enough to kill a lion and one thousand men single-handedly, yet he lacked the strength to overcome his lust for women. It seems he always acted out of selfishness rather than on behalf of his people Israel. His victories were always personal, yet whatever he did affected the whole of Israel, as well as the Name of the God of Israel.

For some unknown reason, Samson went to Gaza, an important southern Philistine city on the Mediterranean coast. While there, his eyes lusted after a prostitute, and he fell into her trap. The Scriptures admonish believers, "let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall", but in temptation, our faithful God will always "make the way of escape" (1 Cor. 10:12-13). Samson chose not to escape, but to sin. The Lord was merciful and still willing to help him by giving him the strength to carry away to locked city gate.

Samson should have learned from his mistake and repented, but he continued in sin and decline. Disregarding his Nazirite vow, he regularly went to another immoral woman—the infamous Delilah—who truly became a snare to Him. "She has cast down many wounded, and all who were slain by her were strong me" (Prov. 7:26, see also vv. 10, 21-27; Prov. 5:3-4, 8-9). The Lord will not allow His children to continue in sin without eventually exposing it and letting them feel its sting.

Delilah's motivation to betray Samson was her greed. If successful in discovering the secret of his strength, and thereby letting him be captured, the five Philistine leaders (from each of the five major Philistine cities) would each give her a very large sum of money. They thought Samson had some magical charm, as they commonly used, but such was not the case. Samson's strength came from God's Spirit empowering him, based upon his vow as a Nazirite.

Delilah and Samson played a lovers' game, but that game was deadly. Finally, after three unsuccessful attempts, she nagged him beyond bearing (v. 16). Samson foolishly opened his heart to her, and she knew he told her the truth (v. 18). By revealing his secret, Samson lost the only remaining external sign of his consecration to God, his uncut hair. When he tried to free himself, he could not do it on his own strength. This was not just because the long hair was gone, but because "the Lord had departed from him" (v. 20) and Samson knew it. He had forfeited his relationship with God and his future potential by playing with sin. God could no longer be patient with Samson's life, and it is equally tragic today when God's chosen leaders fall into sin.

and, having lost the anointing power to God upon their lives, still try to mister on their own strength. This is not only futile but impossible.

His eyes, which had lusted and caused his downfall, were put out by the enemy. He was humiliated and made to perform the lowest form of slave labor. The Philistines publicly mocked him and the God of Israel and praised their god Dagon as the victor. Surely, Samson repented with all his heart. In great despair and sincerity, he cried out to the Lord in whom alone he could put his trust. The Lord was merciful to answer so that, before Samson's death, the only true God would once again be glorified through him and bring judgment on the wicked Philistine.

We read in Hebrews 11:32 that Samson was a man of faith, for even though he had many faults, he was still the only Israelite in his day whom God raised up to fulfill His purpose. In order that we might learn not to make similar mistakes, the Bible does not attempt to cover up the sins of Samson (nor of any other hero). We must not compromise with sin nor yield to temptation, but if we do yield and fall, we must pluck out that sin before it takes root (Matt.5:29), because sin will ultimately lead to destruction and death (Rom.6:23; 7:13).

Prayer

We praise You, O Lord, that even though we may fall, we are not without access to You. We call upon You today for ourselves and others, that You might restore and bless Your people once again. Keep us from sin, and help us to wholly follow You.