



Samson's Character and Works

Lesson Aim: To note that, through a Nazarite from birth, Samson had to pay dearly for his acts of selfwill.

L11: Text: Judges 13:24-25; 14:1-4; 16:18-22. **Date:** June 1959.

Topic: Samson

The period of Israel's history during the rule of the judges is one of revival and backsliding. Into this situation a baby son was born to Manoah and his wife. The child was called Samson (probably meaning, "the sunny one") and from birth was dedicated as a Nazarite.

A Nazarite was one who was especially separated unto God. He was forbidden to drink wine, cut his hair, or touch a corpse. He was to be holy unto the Lord. However, even a Nazarite was subject to sin, and when he sinned God made him pay for it. No one has special privileges with God when he has committed sin against Him. Even the minister or teacher of God's Word, who has the responsibility of leading other in spiritual things, has to take care to keep clear of sin.

As we study this lesson let us keep our own home and children in mind. A challenge is surely here to have a religious home in which to rear children. We are likewise challenged to watch for pitfalls lest like Samson, we be caught in the snare of the devil and led into sin. Let us learn well that acts of selfwill will lead into increasing trouble. A man is safe only when his conduct is in line with the will of God. Very seldom does selfwill lead us in that direction. Every man is personally responsible to God for what he does with the opportunities he has, Romans 14:12.

EXPOSITION

I. The Children God Gives Should Be Dedicated to His Service, 13:2-25.

1. God sometimes promises children before they are born, verses 2-5. The Hebrews thought the purpose of marriage as the procreation of children. To be barren was a shame to a woman in Israel. What joy must have filled the heart of the wife of Manoah as an angel appeared to tell her of the son who would be born to her. The coming birth of that son must be marked by a unique purity in her own life in which she would drink no wine (a common drink among the Hebrews) nor eat any food which was ceremonially unclean. Moreover, the child was to be dedicated as a Nazarite to special service for God.

There is a surprising resemblance between the announcement of the birth of Samson and that of Isaac (Genesis 17:15-19), John the Baptist (Luke 1:5-25), and Jesus (Luke 1:26-56). In each case the birth was (1) divinely announced, (2) was unexpected due to barrenness, age, or marital status, (3) was accompanied by a promise of the future of the child, and (4) led to a special dedication of the child to God. (One might also view the birth of Samuel which is somewhat similar to this, I Samuel 1:10-28). However, whether children are promised of God before conception or not, they are still a gift from Him and a divine trust put into the care of the parents. There is something truly sacred about rearing children.

2. God's greatest workers are born to righteous parents, verses 6:23. Imagine the surprise of Manoah when his wife came with the message which the messenger of God had given her. They would at last have a child! Immediately Manoah prayed and asked the Lord to send the messenger back that they might have further information. It was not an idle curiosity which prompted this prayer, but a sincere desire to know how to rear that child in the manner which would please God, verse 8. In response to the prayer, God sent the messenger back again. Manoah gets further information from him, offers a sacrifice, and worships God. As the flame leaps up from the altar the angel steps into the flame and ascends to God. Manoah and his wife fall upon their faces in reverence before God. The righteousness of this man and wife and the religious atmosphere of their home is noted in this event. (1) Manoah was a man of prayer. (2) He was a man of faith, believing the angel's message. (3) He was a man of reverence, offering the sacrifice and falling upon his face before God. (4) He was a man of obedience.

Observe that in the case of Moses, Samuel, Isaac, John the Baptist, and many other great men of God, the Lord selects a humble home with devout religious instruction for the child. There is something about the very atmosphere of a religious home which affects the child and makes much difference in his character. Isn't it very likely that one reason Abimelech, (Judges 3) was so reckless was because he was not reared in Gideon's home

and under this religious training? What do those who live with you think of your religious faith?

3. God expects all children to be dedicated to him, verses 5, 24-25. Let us not suppose that only those children that are specially announced are to be dedicated to God. Every child born is a gift of God in that it comes from God's own hand. It bears His image and likeness and is capable of knowing Him, having fellowship with Him, and serving Him. How graciously does any parent sin who fails to dedicate the child to God. By dedication to God is not meant a formal service at a church. It is simply an agreement and a common resolve between a father and a mother that they will be truly Christian, keeping the spirit of the loving Christ in their heart and home, thus rearing the child in the "*nurture and admonition of the Lord,*" Ephesians 6:4. Think how terrible it would be for a child to make havoc of his life and lose his soul, then turn to truthfully say, "I have made a wreck of myself because I have never had the advantage of religious faith or training in a home where God was truly revered." It may be entirely possible in our homes unless we are careful to meet our spiritual obligations to our children. Actually the dedication of a child to God is likewise the dedication of the parent to rear the child for God. Father and mother have not learned the joy of a Christian home until they have knelt by their baby's crib and committed it to God.

II. God Condemns Sin, Even in the Life of His Chosen Ones, 14:1-20.

1. Even dedicated men are subject to failing, 14:1-4. Samson's life shows him to be greatly attracted to a beautiful woman. While on a journey to Timnath (near the modern village of Tibneh, three and one-half miles southwest of Zorah) he saw a woman and decided to seek her as his wife. Since marriage was negotiated by the parents, Samson asked his father to arrange the wedding. His parents were distressed because he designed to marry a pagan Philistine woman and not a woman of Israel. Let us remember that Samson was specially dedicated to the Lord. However, upon his insistence, the marriage was arranged. During the seven-day feast which was given in connection with a marriage ceremony, Samson proposed a riddle to the guests, verses 5-18. Samson's anger at their finding out the riddle led him to kill thirty Philistines at Ashkelon and return home in anger. During the time he was gone (for it was not the custom for the groom to leave) his wife-to-be was given to the "best man" as wife. It appears the whole marriage was entered into without consulting the Lord and led from one problem to the other.

2. Evil desires, when fulfilled, only breed more trouble, verses 5-18. What a lot of trouble would have been bypassed if Samson had listened to the advice of his parents. The desired marriage, based upon mere physical attraction, had a very poor basis. Even though the matter was “of the Lord” (verse 4), it was simply the Lord using Samson’s weakness to accomplish His purposes. The agreement to the wedding led on to the marriage feast, which led to the riddle, to the death of thirty Philistines, the burning of the Philistines’ grain fields, and the death of Samson’s wife-to-be and all her family. All this evil came about because of Samson’s insistence upon an improper marriage.

It never pays to submit to the inclination of evil. Let one satisfy an unlawful desire once and it will arise stronger the next time. Let one submit to the demands of one sin and two will present their demands next. One never satisfies the demands of sin. *“But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death,”* James 1:14-15.

3. Only loss comes from an uncontrolled life, verses 19-20. Samson’s anger at his riddle being found out resulted in his leaving Timnath and going to Ashkelon, about two days journey from Timnath. His anger at his wife for telling the answer to the riddle and at his having to pay for thirty changes of garments resulted in his loss of a wife. For while he was gone she was given to another. Upon return and finding her married to another, he burns the Philistine grain field. Such is the loss of an uncontrolled life.

Those who live according to the flesh will always suffer loss. Though prosperity may attend for a while, the eventual end is loss. The loss of health, friends, influence, self-respect, etc., is the inevitable result of sin. No one has ever really profited through sin.

III. God Delivers No One From The Consequences of Sin, 16:4-31.

1. The practice of sin will lead to a disregard of sacred things, verses 4:20. In this chapter Samson appears again involved with a woman who is unfaithful and disloyal to his love. She was willing to sell the secret of his strength for money (about \$2,000 in our money). Samson’s great strength had come because of the Lord’s blessing upon him. Surely his suspicions must have been aroused because of her insistence. One of Samson’s great weaknesses is his self-assurance. Thus he felt he could tease Delilah about the source of his strength so long as he desired and not reveal the truth. It is always dangerous to trifle with things as important as the Lord’s gifts. How

unwise Samson was to play with this gift of strength for which he was so famous. Yet, his love for Delilah blinded his eyes to her evil nature and base designs and to his own weakness and inability to resist her constant urging for the truth. Three times he tricked her by telling her false things. Finally she questioned the reality of his love for her and Samson fell. He told her the truth and she delivered him into the hands of the Philistines by the deceitful act of cutting his hair while he slept with his head upon her knees. The cutting of Samson's hair caused God to desert him because it meant he was no longer separated unto the Lord. He was more dedicated to Delilah than to Jehovah.

2. Sin will bring suffering upon the guilty, verse 21. Poor Samson now is blinded and reduced to slavery. He who had been so famous for his strength and had personally killed over one thousand Philistines is now their slave. His eyes are put out by barbarous methods—either a dagger point or a hot iron. His hands are bound with metal fetters. His little strength is now exhausted in grinding corn for the Philistines. (Grinding corn for meal was usually the work of the women, the most degraded and oppressed condition.) The champion and avenger of Israel is now become the drudge and the sport of the Philistines. How pitifully we look upon Samson.

Let us not forget that the modern sinner is heading for the same fate. It may not be prison nor blindness, but suffering will surely come as a result of sin. What a warning this should be to those who would yield their God-given mind, strength, and possessions as instruments of iniquity. They will find their bondage bitter and unbearable when they are finally bound with the chains that their sins have forged for them. The Jewish Rabbis have observed that there is a point of significance in Samson's blindness. As his eyes had lusted after Philistine women (thus bringing his fall), that part of the body should suffer punishment. Perhaps God sometimes uses the natural result of sin in order to bring punishment upon it.

3. Sin will ultimately produce death, verses 22-31. (See James 1:13-15.) As time past, Samson must have repented of his past misconduct. With the growth of the hair of his head and his identification as a Nazarite again, he started to grow in strength likewise. Bishop Hall has suggested, "His hair grew together with his repentance, and his strength with his hair." Meanwhile the Philistines gathered before their god Dagon (represented as half man and half fish) to celebrate the deliverance of Samson into their hands. As the drunken feast progressed, they had Samson brought into their banquet hall. The banquet hall was full and about 3,000 people were on the flat roof over the hall. After Samson had been mocked by the crowd, he asked to be allowed to rest against the pillars of the hall. He now admits his

strength is from the Lord and prays that it may be given him once again. The Lord grants him the strength and he twists two center pillars from under the roof of the building. It falls in upon him, and the people gathered there. Thus in his death he killed more of the enemies than during his life.

The result and wages of sin do not change. To Samson, the result of sin was suffering and death. To us, *“the wages of sin is death,”* Romans 6:23. Physical and spiritual death is bound up in the penalty of sin. One escapes from spiritual death only through faith in Jesus Christ. However, being a believer in Jesus does not deliver one from the responsibility before God and men of accounting for his actions. Though the salvation of the soul is not at stake, we will be called into account for our deeds and judged accordingly. We need to be continually watchful against failure. *“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall,”* I Corinthians 10:12.

QUESTIONS

1. Define “Nazarite.”
2. Give some resemblances in the birth of Isaac, Samson, John the Baptist, and Jesus.
3. What type of man was Manoah?
4. How should we look upon the birth of a child?
5. What was the basic failure in Samson’s life?
6. Describe Samson’s two love affairs.
7. What was the real source of Samson’s supernatural strength?
8. What were the circumstances of Samson’s death?
9. What spiritual benefit has this lesson been to you?

