

## ***SAMSON (1/28/18).***

The 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of Hebrews discusses 16 individuals by name, the prophets and, by my count, at least 18 different events, all as examples of the faith described in the opening three verses: **Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.**

Near the end of the itemized samples of faith, we find at verse 32: **And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets.** The writer was short on time; so are we. But perhaps we can dwell a bit longer on one of these old-timers so worthy of mention, specifically: Samson.

When taking a closer look at this man (while remembering the “faith” theme), one is first struck by his enigmatic qualities. Consider, for example, these remarks from prominent commentators:

*[A]nd of Samson: who was a child of promise, and devoted to the Lord; he was famous for his great strength; he had his infirmities, but was, without doubt, a good man: the last act of his life seems to be a great instance of faith; he did it with calling upon the Lord; he was strengthened for it by the Lord; he acted, not as a private person, but as the judge of Israel; nor did he act from private revenge, but*

*from zeal for God, and love to his country; and his intention was not to destroy himself, but his enemies; in which he acted as a type of Christ. (Gill)*

*And of Samson[:] It is not by any means necessary to suppose that in making mention of Samson, the apostle approved of all that he did. All that he commands is his faith, and though he was a very imperfect man, and there were many things in his life which neither sound morality nor religion can approve, yet it was still true that he evinced, on some occasions, remarkable confidence in God, by relying on the strength which he gave him. This was particularly true in the instance where he made a great slaughter of the enemies of the Lord, and of his country. (Barnes)*

In looking close at Samson, the first order of business is to read the words – there’s no substitute for reading the words – which words we find at Judges Chapters 14 through 16. I hope today to cover chapters 14 and 15 and next week will look at chapter 16. As you will see, after the text of each chapter I offer observations:

**14 And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines.**

**<sup>2</sup> And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife.**

**<sup>3</sup> Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well.**

**<sup>4</sup> But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the LORD, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.**

**<sup>5</sup> Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and, behold, a young lion roared against him.**

**<sup>6</sup> And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done.**

**<sup>7</sup> And he went down, and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well.**

**<sup>8</sup> And after a time he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcase of the lion: and, behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcase of the lion.**

**<sup>9</sup> And he took thereof in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat: but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcase of the lion.**

**<sup>10</sup> So his father went down unto the woman: and Samson made there a feast; for so used the young men to do.**

**<sup>11</sup> And it came to pass, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him.**

**<sup>12</sup> And Samson said unto them, I will now put forth a riddle unto you: if ye can certainly declare it me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty sheets and thirty change of garments:**

**<sup>13</sup> But if ye cannot declare it me, then shall ye give me thirty sheets and thirty change of garments. And they said unto him, Put forth thy riddle, that we may hear it.**

**<sup>14</sup> And he said unto them, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. And they could not in three days expound the riddle.**

**<sup>15</sup> And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they said unto Samson's wife, Entice thy husband, that he may declare unto us the riddle, lest we burn thee and thy father's house with fire: have ye called us to take that we have? is it not so?**

**16 And Samson's wife wept before him, and said, Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not: thou hast put forth a riddle unto the children of my people, and hast not told it me. And he said unto her, Behold, I have not told it my father nor my mother, and shall I tell it thee?**

**17 And she wept before him the seven days, while their feast lasted: and it came to pass on the seventh day, that he told her, because she lay sore upon him: and she told the riddle to the children of her people.**

**18 And the men of the city said unto him on the seventh day before the sun went down, What is sweeter than honey? And what is stronger than a lion? and he said unto them, If ye had not plowed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle.**

**19 And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon, and slew thirty men of them, and took their spoil, and gave change of garments unto them which expounded the riddle. And his anger was kindled, and he went up to his father's house.**

**20 But Samson's wife was given to his companion, whom he had used as his friend.**

- It was a weak, foolish and destructive thing for Samson to set his sights on a daughter of the Philistines for a wife. Such a marriage was forbidden; see e.g. Exodus 34:12 (**Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee**) and Deuteronomy 7:3 (**Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son.**) Though apparently not limiting his concerns to marriage, Paul clearly was thinking of the endless sadness and misery such an unwise marriage can cause when he pronounced in 2 Corinthians 6:14: **Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers[.]**

- In all this marriage matter, though, it seems Samson knew God had an underlying purpose and in any event, God makes the weakness and the fierceness of man to redound to his praise. Another example of this is found in the story of Rehoboam's folly when we read **[w]herefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the Lord, that he might perform his saying.** (1 Kings 12:15).
- When we read the **spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him** (Judges 14:6) and such, the idea is that spirit pervaded; that is, it spread through all parts of Samson, physically, mentally and spiritually. It literally filled him. This spirit provoked great feats on Samson's part. The opposite occurs when an evil spirit comes upon a man, an example being 1 Samuel 18:10 when **the evil spirit from God came upon Saul** igniting Saul's effort to kill David with a javelin.
- As to the **swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion** (Judges 14:8), Gill helps: "This may be an emblem of those sweet blessings of grace, which come to the people of Christ through his having destroyed Satan the roaring lion, and all his works."
- The riddle is saying this (solved superficially at Judges 14:18): Out of that strong and devouring eater -- the lion -- came forth sweet meat, to wit, honey; implying that the Philistines, though now they had strength on their side, and dominion over Israel, ultimately they should become meat to the Israelites.
- Our first real hint of serious marital discord between Samson and his ill-gotten wife comes at Judges 14:18 when he calls his wife a "heifer"; it's hard to put a good gloss on that. The tawdry marriage story ends with Samson's wife being **given to his companion, whom he had used as his friend** (Judges 14:20), probably what was referred to as the friend of the bridegroom as we read of in John 3:29: **He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend**

of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. This whole transaction highlights loose notions of the sanctity of marriage among the Philistines and, sadly, Samson himself.

**15** But it came to pass within a while after, in the time of wheat harvest, that Samson visited his wife with a kid; and he said, I will go in to my wife into the chamber. But her father would not suffer him to go in.

**2** And her father said, I verily thought that thou hadst utterly hated her; therefore I gave her to thy companion: is not her younger sister fairer than she? take her, I pray thee, instead of her.

**3** And Samson said concerning them, Now shall I be more blameless than the Philistines, though I do them a displeasure.

**4** And Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took firebrands, and turned tail to tail, and put a firebrand in the midst between two tails.

**5** And when he had set the brands on fire, he let them go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and burnt up both the shocks, and also the standing corn, with the vineyards and olives.

**6** Then the Philistines said, Who hath done this? And they answered, Samson, the son in law of the Timnite, because he had taken his wife, and given her to his companion. And the Philistines came up, and burnt her and her father with fire.

**7** And Samson said unto them, Though ye have done this, yet will I be avenged of you, and after that I will cease.

**8** And he smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter: and he went down and dwelt in the top of the rock Etam.

**9** Then the Philistines went up, and pitched in Judah, and spread themselves in Lehi.

**10** And the men of Judah said, Why are ye come up against us? And they answered, To bind Samson are we come up, to do to him as he hath done to us.

**11** Then three thousand men of Judah went to the top of the rock Etam, and said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us? what is this that thou hast done unto us? And he said unto them, As they did unto me, so have I done unto them.

**12** And they said unto him, We are come down to bind thee, that we may deliver thee into the hand of the Philistines. And Samson said unto them, Swear unto me, that ye will not fall upon me yourselves.

**13** And they spake unto him, saying, No; but we will bind thee fast, and deliver thee into their hand: but surely we will not kill thee. And they bound him with two new cords, and brought him up from the rock.

**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 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.

- ✓ It was quite a feat catching 300 foxes, although there were lots of foxes in that area, so much so that some of the local towns were named thereafter. See, for example, Joshua 19:42 **Shaalabbin** which means “place of foxes or jackals.” Samson then tied their tails together, two-on-two, also no small accomplishment, designed likely to impede their motion a bit so they might not dart about violently, thus extinguishing the torch. The firebrands were oily pieces of resinous wood that quickly took fire and burned and were not easily extinguished, blazing fiercely when taken by the wind, like Gideon’s torches mentioned in Judges 7:20 (called **lamps**). The original word is *lappiyd* (pronounced lap-pee-eeed) meaning to shine; a flambeau, lamp or flame, burning, lightning, torch.
  
- ✓ The resulting conflagration was wide-spread and thoroughly destructive of the standing crop that was so vital to the Philistines and their economy. The fire burned **up both the shocks, and also the standing corn, with the vineyards and olives.** (Judges 15:5). This is no small occurrence. So we read in Exodus 22:6: **If fire break out, and catch in thorns, so that the stacks of corn, or the standing corn, or the field, be consumed therewith; he that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution.**
  
- ✓ In consequence, the Philistines burned Samson’s wife and her father that then provoked more payback from Samson – he **smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter.** (Judges 15:8). “Hip and thigh” is a proverbial expression for a merciless slaughter. In turn, that incident put the Philistines on the warpath against Judah, scaring the daylights out of **three thousand men of Judah** who then demanded an explanation from Samson. That explanation was simply this: **As they did unto me, so have I done unto them.** (Judges 15:11). But the men of Judah were ready to immediately cave and deliver Samson over. Benson: *This shows how dastardly the tribe of Judah was grown, and how much they stood in fear of the Philistines, that they should so readily give*

*up a person of such extraordinary strength and courage, and who was so capable of annoying their enemies. But they seem not to have considered him as a judge or deliverer appointed for them by God, but as a mere private man, who acted of his own will, and who had rashly stirred up the anger of the Philistines, with whom they were afraid to contend.*

- ✓ So, with his consent, Samson was bound by his countrymen and turned over to the Philistines. But straightaway **the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon** Samson (Judges 15:14) and the binding cords were no match for such strength. Samson then slew a thousand men with a **new jawbone of an ass** (Judges 15:15). The novelty of such a weapon, the boldness of Samson and the panic of the Philistines doubtless contributed to such an unprecedented slaughter, but the event was consistent with the dying Joshua's assurance: **One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the Lord your God, he it is that fighteth for you, and he hath promised you.** (Joshua 23:10). And one of David's mighty men had a similar experience, namely Adino the Eznite who lifted up **his spear against eight hundred, whom he slew at one time.** (2 Samuel 23:8).
  
- ✓ No sooner did Samson conclude his hymn of thanksgiving and naming the place of that slaughter did he become dangerously thirsty. Poole: *[S]o as he was ready to faint and die with thirst; which was partly natural, from his excessive toil and heat; partly sent by God, that by the experience of his own impotency he might be forced to ascribe the victory to God only, and not to himself.* God then miraculously and mercifully **clave an hollow place that was in the jaw** (Judges 15:19) – a most unlikely place to find water, but water there was. **When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.** (Isaiah 41:17-18). And there you have it.

- ✓ This all was followed by a 20-year period where Samson **judged Israel in the days of the Philistines** (Judges 15:20). Gill: *(Samson) was a check upon the Philistines, and protected the Israelites from heavier oppressions, which otherwise they would have come under; and no doubt administered justice and judgment among them, and was an instrument of their reformation, and of preserving them from idolatry[.]*

We see from the time spent today (and next time) that the Bible's story of Samson essentially covers his entire adult lifetime, spread out over several decades. So when Paul wrote that time failed him to tell of Samson, the scope and extent of Samson's story may have been one reason why. Hopefully, after today and the second installment of this presentation, each of you will have a better understanding of Samson and why the Holy Spirit (through Paul) included him in the "faith" giants listing.

I love you.

Amen!