

Learning from Failure

Judges 13:24-14:20

September 13, 2009

Intro

We come now to the famous story of Samson in Judges chapter 13. Samson is famously known for two things; first, he is known for his incredible strength and secondly, is known for his incredible weakness. Both of these become an opportunity for us to gain great insight.

Back in chapter 10, we discovered that Israel had once again turned their heart away from God and so God had given them over to the Philistines and the Midianites. The Midianites were oppressing Israel from the eastern side of the Jordan River and we saw how God brought deliverance through a man by the name of Jephthah.

So here now in chapter 13 we see how God begins to bring help for Israel from the oppression of the Philistines. Samson will be the beginning of that help, but they will not truly be free from the Philistine oppression until David, the king, comes onto the scene.

We have been studying how God seems to delight in using men who are broken, weak, and who have no advantage in life. These men become men of great renown and are examples of faith and victory.

But God also allows us to learn from other men as well. Samson is a man who is born with every advantage. His mother was barren, but the angel of the Lord appeared to her and told her that she would have a son who would begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines and that he would be a Nazirite and so she should keep the Nazirite vow while she carried him in the womb.

When he was born, the Lord blessed him and gave him extraordinary strength and courage. So why then, did he fail? The lessons of Samson's failure are for all of us today.

I. We All Need Accountability

- 1 Samson was called by God with an extraordinary calling, that he would be a judge for the nation of Israel.
- 2 Samson is one of the most unique men of the Bible. He's also an example of a man who has everything going for him, but fails to become what he should become.
- 3 One of the things we see in Samson's life immediately is that he does not have any accountability in his life.

A. Authority comes from being under authority

- 4 In verses one and two, we see that trouble came into Samson's life very quickly. Samson went down to Timnah and saw a Philistine woman there that was very attractive.
- 5 So he came back and told his father and mother, "I saw a woman, one of the daughters of the Philistines, now therefore get her for me as a wife."

- 6 It was a common custom in that time for a father to arrange a marriage for his son, which, by the way, isn't such a bad idea.

Illus - Though we don't have that custom today, I always appreciate it when my children ask us if we approve of who they are seeing.

- 7 The problem was that Samson's father and mother did not approve, but Samson refused to listen. That would prove fatal, literally.
- 8 Samson clearly was not ready for marriage.
- 9 There is a spiritual principle that we see in scripture that we have authority spiritually, because we are under authority.
- 10 There is an amazing example of this in the New Testament when a Roman Centurion came to Jesus asking that his servant be healed. Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him."

Matthew 8:8-10 The faith of the Roman Centurion...

- 1 The point was that the Roman Centurion knew that Jesus was under God's authority and therefore he had the authority to simply speak the word and his servant would be healed.
- 2 The application for each one of us is the importance of being under authority. That is part of spiritual accountability.

App – One of the great things about the Promise Keepers men's movement was their emphasis on men having accountability. Men need other men in their lives with whom they can be accountable and share the deepest part of their hearts.

- 1 Paul spoke of even keeping his own body in subjection to his spirit.

1 Corinthians 9:27, But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

B. With accountability comes protection

- 1 We study through Samson's life and we see all the troubles and difficulties that came into his life because he refused to be accountable to God, his parents, or even leaders of the nation of Israel.
- 2 We will see that God will use Samson's self-centeredness for his own glory, but wouldn't it be better if God would use our heart and character for his glory?

Illus - I knew a man once who straightforwardly said that he was going to be sandpaper in my life. Isn't it better to be something better than sandpaper?

- 3 Samson's refusal to be accountable to anyone and his refusal to be under the authority of anyone is a classic example of what not to do.
- 4 For what we see in scripture is that when we have accountability and are willing to be under authority, there comes with it God's hand of protection on our lives.

Illus - When God places his hand of authority on our lives, that hand also becomes an umbrella of protection.

Ezra 7:6, Ezra went up from Babylon, and he was a scribe skilled in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given; and the king granted him all he requested because the hand of the Lord his God was upon him.

Illus – In the desert, God gave protection and direction to the nation of Israel through a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

Illus - Jesus gave us a picture of this when he spoke of God's desire to gather Israel as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings.

Matthew 23:37-38, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!"

II. We Need Devotion and Dedication

- 1 Even before Samson was born he was given an extraordinary calling; that he would begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines.
- 2 But he seems to almost fall into this calling by accident. Rather than be dedicated to God's purpose in his life, he is driven by his lust, by power, and by his anger.
- 3 Clearly, God would prefer that we be dedicated, but we also need devotion to God with it.

A. God sets you apart for a purpose

- 1 One of the themes that comes out in Samson's life is that he is not like other men, at least in the sense that he has been given extraordinary strength for which he should overcome the enemy.
- 2 In other words, he has been set apart for purpose. The same would be true of us, that God has set us apart for purpose.

Ephesians 2:10, For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

- 3 But we need to be dedicated to the purpose with which God called us or it will never be accomplished. In other words, keep your life focused and dedicated and you will see that God will accomplish what He calls.

Illus – There was a young man in the church who dressed counter culture, but had in his heart a calling of God. My challenge to him was to stay dedicated to that calling.

- 4 The Nazirite vow was a symbol of a man's dedication to God and all of the requirements of that vow were symbolic of that dedication as well.

Numbers 6:1 -8 Nazirite dedication – separation (being different) for God's purpose:

- 1 **No wine or strong drink, and even grapes in whatever form. No reason is given for this, but many believe that grapes represent the best that the earth has to offer.**

Ephesians 5:18, And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,

- 2 **No cutting of the hair. It is assumed that this symbolized physical strength and youthful manhood, and thus the man's whole power was to be dedicated to the service of God. This was to be an outward symbol of what was to be happening in the heart.**

Illus – Our faith should be seen by others. Jordi was raised in a home where they didn't believe in God, but her sister came to faith in Christ and kept insisting that Jordi come to church with her. Finally she went to church and was touched by seeing genuine faith.

- 3 **No contact with a dead corpse, even a nearest relative. This seems to represent the giving of one's life unto God, and to stay away from things that are dead.**

- 1 If a Nazirite did touch a dead corpse, he was to shave his head and begin his vow all over again. God made an allowance for a new start.

- 2 Samson seems to have kept the vow in regards to his uncut hair, but that seemed to be where dedication ended.

- 3 In verse five, Samson was on his way down to Timnah with his father and mother and came upon the vineyards. From the context, we can understand that Samson separated from his parents and was walking through the vineyards. This was in

direct violation of the vow to which he was to be dedicated.

- 4 He killed a lion that attacked him and later came back to check on the carcass. Honey bees had set up a nest in the carcass and so he took some of the honey, also in violation of the Nazirite vow.
- 5 Later, the lion and the honey become part of a riddle that he poses to the Philistine men. It's there, we see another of Samson's weaknesses; he can't stand a nagging wife. That too, will bring about his downfall..

B. A man of God also has devotion

- 5 One of the things that is missing from Samson's life is devotion. Though he is used of the Lord, and the Spirit of the Lord even comes upon him, he lacks devotion to God and it is his undoing
- 6 The only thing that Samson was devoted to was his own lust.

2 Timothy 3:1-5 The condition of the last days are upon us.

- 7 But a man who wants to have spiritual increase in his life, who wants to become a man of spiritual strength must have devotion to God.

Psalm 62:8, Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us.

- 8 In Samson, we saw no sacrifice for worship, no praise, no prayer to speak of, and no love in his heart for God.
- 9 **What we see then is the importance of having these things in our lives. Many people are dedicated to go to church, but God wants more than that. God wants your heart of devotion.**