

A CHARACTER STUDY ON

SAMSON

Lesson 5

O LORD GOD, REMEMBER ME

Judges 16:28

Study 5
Adult Sunday School
Gethsemane Baptist Church
H. David Nichols

SAMSON

V. O LORD GOD, REMEMBER ME

Samson was dedicated to the service of Jehovah from the time before his birth. However, "Samson's physical strength had as its counterpart his moral weakness. At Gaza, in the Philistine country, two miles from the Mediterranean coast, Samson fell under the control of another evil woman." (Wycliffe p. 258) When the average person hears the name "Samson" they immediately think of the story of Samson and Delilah. As we begin to study this final episode in the life of this man it will be helpful to review the story of Judges 16 and then look at the character of the principle players.

This incident in the life in Samson begins simply in Chapter 16 verse 4. There it says, "*And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman.*" Samson's demise began with him loving something that he had no business loving. In this case it was a Philistine woman named Delilah. He set his affections on someone who was not meant for him. Earlier, in chapter 14 we find him doing the same thing. At that time his parents ask him the very sensible question "*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?" The question suggests that this might not have been the first time he had been enamored with a Philistine woman. We can see here a very clear spiritual lesson. What do you love? Scripture tells us to *"Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth."* (Colossians 3:2) When we "love", or set our affections, on the things of this earth below we will, without fail drift away from the Lord. What we love will dominate our minds and lives. Many people spend all of their lives chasing money, popularity, power to the hurt of their relationship with the Lord. What is important to you? Do you love the Lord? Do you really love His Word? Do you love His house? Do you love the souls of men? Let us love that which God loves. We should not set our affections on the things of the world. *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. The love of the Father is not in him."* (1 John 2:15)

As the story develops, we find that Samson's enemies discover that he is in their town. They approach Delilah and offer to pay her a great deal of money to find out the secret of Samson's strength. Whatever love she had for Samson was immediately eclipsed by her greed. She begins to tease and wheedle the truth from him. First, he teases her by telling her that if he is bound with "green withes" he would lose his strength. "Green withes" were the material that

bow strings were made of for their arrows. Her question should have alerted Samson to her true intent. She asked what she had to do to be able to “afflict” him. Her intent was not to do him good but to harm him. We are reminded that Satan is constantly trying to bind us in our effectiveness for God. He seeks to afflict us. She allows him to sleep and then binds him with seven withes. He awakes and breaks them off easily. It never occurs to him to ask her where she happened to get 7 bow strings. He is blind already. His desires were the only things that were important to him. They blinded him to the obvious danger. Next, she asks him again and he tells her that if he is bound by new ropes, he will be weak. The result is the same. He breaks the ropes and drives the Philistines away. She chides him more and he tells her that if his hair is woven into a loom, he will be weak. She does so and he destroys the loom as he jumps up to fight the Philistines. Now she begins in earnest to get the secret from him. *“And she said unto him, How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me? thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength lieth. And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death.”* (Vs. 15 - 16) She wore him down and “so that his soul was vexed unto death.” (Vs. 16) Finally, he tells her all of his heart. (Vs 17) Delilah calls for a man to come in and while Samson is sleeping, the man shaves

his hair. When Samson woke up, *“He wist not that the LORD was departed from him.”* The Philistines bind him, blind him and take him captive to Gaza. Gaza is an important Philistine city and it was also where Samson humiliated the Philistines when he removed the gate of the city (16:1-4) He is put to humble manual labor in their prison until his hair has grown back. He then is taken to a big worship service for the god Dagon. He is placed by the pillars that are holding the roof up and with one last example of God’s strength he pushes the load bearing pillar apart destroying the building and killing over 3000 Philistines in the process.

The story of Samson and Delilah is a very sad story. It speaks of the down fall of a servant of God. As we study this story it is profitable to look more closely at the principle characters. First, we see Samson himself. He is the champion of Israel. He has led Israel for 20 years and been the enemy of the Philistine most of that time. He is a man who did not recognize that his only ability was the ability God gave him. It seems that he grew proud and self-confident. He was a man that was controlled by his passions. He had no ability to deny his desires. He was a man who was blind to the danger his arrogance placed him in. He had a particular weakness where women were concerned. One of the saddest statements in Scripture is what was said of him after his hair was cut. *“He wist not that the LORD was departed from him.”* (vs. 20)

Delilah was a woman of the Philistines that entertained the champion of the Israelites. Her vanity found this relationship flattering. One of the first characteristics that we see in this woman is her simple greed. The leaders of the Philistines offered her a great deal of money to betray Samson. She jumped at it immediately. There is no hint of hesitation in her actions. Greed is a hardening vice. It hardens our affection to all but gain and avarice. Her love for him was soon turned to a desire to learn of the best way to “afflict him.” (Vs 6) She knew this information would lead to his ruin but she vexed him daily until she worked out the information from him.

The last player in this story is the Philistines. From verses 23 through 27 we learn that they sought an occasion to praise their god Dagon. When they called for Samson to come out to entertain them, they came to, *“rejoice: for they said, our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand.”* Their plan to capture Samson found a willing accomplice in Delilah. As soon as he is captured the Philistines blind him. This was done to make him more manageable. This is a tactic of our enemy the devil. We are tempted to sin and he blinds our eyes to spiritual danger. They bound Samson so that he could not fight back. Satan binds his captives as well. They see no reason to try to escape the temptation he is offering. Then they lead him captive to their strong hold. Samson’s only hope is in the Lord’s

deliverance. The Philistines take him to grind in a prison house. Satan always leaves his captives in his prison of sin and despair. The Philistines meet to worship their God, Dagon. Over three thousand meet in their temple which is a large stone structure. The roof is designed so that people can sit on it and view the activities on the floor below. The massive roof is supported in the middle by two large columns. All of the Philistines elite people are in attendance. They drank and when *“when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport.”* (Vs. 25) The crowd was looking to take revenge on, *“our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us.”* (Vs. 24b) The revenge, however, will belong to Samson. In one last blow to the Philistine people, Samson asks God to give him strength one last time. He then finds the two pillars of the temple, places his hands on both and pushes them apart causing the roof to cave in. Over three thousand Philistines die that day.

God saw fit to use Samson to judge his people for 20 years. He struck blow after blow against the Philistine nation. They would not be conquered until the reign of King David but their hold over Israel was never the same. *“Thus, the Israelitish hero rendered by his strength and courage signal services to his country, and was always regarded as the greatest of its champions. But his slavish subjection to the domination of his passions was unworthy of so great a man, and lessens our*

respect for his character. Yet, he is ranked among the ancient worthies who maintained a firm faith in God (Heb. xi.32)" (JFB p. 115)

Ideas to consider:

1) Do you "love" anything that could cause you to drift away from the Lord?

2) What are the things that God loves?

3) How can Satan "afflict" us today?

4) Why is Greed a hardening sin?

References:

Wycliffe = The Wycliffe Bible Commentary. Moody Press. 1962.

JFB = Jamieson, Fauset and Brown A Commentary, Vol.1. 1946.

MHenry = Matthew Henry. Vol 2. Fleming H. Revell Co.

Notes

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