

Judges 14:1-20 – “Samson: Who is This Guy?”

(Pew Bible Page: 901)

Intro: It is sometimes the case that in our children’s Sunday school classes the old song, “*Dare to be a Daniel*” is sung. That’s probably ok, but here is my question: How come we never sing, “*Dare to be a Samson*”? Samson was used by God as surely as Daniel was, but be honest: Do you really want to be a Samson? Do you want your kids to be a Samson? I suspect the answer is “No way!” Yet, as we saw last week Samson began life with every advantage a servant of God could wish for. But somewhere along the line, something went wrong. Who did he turn out to be? Who was Samson, really? Tonight’s passage gives us insight.

Proposition: Samson was used by God, but do you want to be a Samson?

Who Was the Guy?	(vv.1-4)	A Man Whose Lusts Overruled God’s Laws
	(vv.5-6)	A Man Whose Strength Came from the Spirit
	(vv.7-9)	A Man Who Wouldn’t Keep His Vows
	(vv.10-18)	A Man Who was Naïve and Easily Taken Advantage Of
	(vv.19-20)	A Man Used by God for God’s Purposes

(vv.1-4) A Man Whose Lusts Overruled God’s Laws – God forbade His people to marry outside the nation of Israel, but Samson chose to let his lust overrule God’s law. **Judges 14:1–4 - 1** *Samson went down to Timnah, and at Timnah he saw one of the daughters of the Philistines. 2 Then he came up and told his father and mother, “I saw one of the daughters of the Philistines at Timnah. Now get her for me as my wife.” 3 But his father and mother said to him, “Is there not a woman among the daughters of your relatives, or among all our people, that you must go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?” But Samson said to his father, “Get her for me, for she is right in my eyes.” 4 His father and mother did not know that it was from the LORD, for he was seeking an opportunity against the Philistines. At that time the Philistines ruled over Israel.* God prohibited His people from marrying outside the nation because God understood the outcome of a believer marrying a pagan – idolatry would creep into Israel’s national life through such unions. God’s instruction was plain about this: **Deuteronomy 7:1–4 - 1** *“When the LORD your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations more numerous and mightier than you, 2 and when the LORD your God gives them over to you, and you defeat them, then you must devote them to complete destruction. You shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them. 3 You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, 4 for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the LORD would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly.* Samson blew past God’s stop sign to satisfy His own lustful desires.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] To this day, the struggle for God’s people is between the lusts of “*this body of death*,” and God’s commandments (cf. Romans 7:24).

[ILLUSTRATION] Sam was a free-thinking 19th Century young man who grew up in Missouri just before the outbreak of the Civil War. Sam lived an adventurous life, joining a local militia for a while before deserting. He tried working on a steamboat on the Mississippi as well before heading West to California as a newspaper correspondent. Sam was more or less “wide open” without any serious thought of God

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until he met Olivia Langdon, a deeply religious young woman living in Elmira, New York. Sam was smitten and so was Olivia. They wanted to marry, but Olivia’s faith didn’t permit marriage to an unbeliever. That was no problem for Sam. He “converted” to Christianity, just so he could marry “Libby.” The outcome was predictable. When the trials of life came to the couple, and they were significant trials, Sam went back to his old, unbelieving ways. Libby later confessed that her own faith had grown cold and completely dead. Sam felt bad about this, but not bad enough to change. Later in life Samuel Clemens wrote one of the most blasphemous books I have ever read, “*The Mysterious Stranger*,” – Samuel Clemens was Mark Twain. What Moses told the Children of Israel still applies today: When we let our desires overrule God’s instructions, we are headed for disaster.

[APPLICATION] Our call as New Testament believers is to live in our bodies what God, by grace, has made us in our spirits. Not by keeping Law – but by walking in faith with the Spirit’s help. Colossians 3 gives us a clarion call: **Colossians 3:1–4** - **1** *If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.* We must be on our guard: the old sinful nature with all its lusts wars against our souls. Only by overcoming those lust through God’s Word and Spirit can we hope to escape the trap Samson fell into.

(vv.5-6) A Man Whose Strength Came from the Spirit – Samson had the strength of the Spirit, but it was only outward strength, not inward. **Judges 14:6** - **6** *Then the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him, and although he had nothing in his hand, he tore the lion in pieces as one tears a young goat. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done.* Do not think of Samson as physically powerful in appearance. He was not “The Incredible Hulk.” His appearance was probably very ordinary, for even his enemies realized that his strength came to him by supernatural means (cf.16:5). God gave Samson the outward strength that he needed to fulfill his mission, but of inward strengthening by the Spirit Samson seems to have received little. Two things come to mind concerning this. First, the Old Testament saints’ experience of the Holy Spirit is different from the experience you and I know as New Testament believers. All the help most Old Testament believers received came externally, whereas you and I have the privilege of the indwelling Spirit’s help. Second, though some Old Testament saints did experience the Spirit’s indwelling presence as you and I do (think David, Samuel, etc.) we can testify with certainty that unless a person *welcomed* the Spirit’s inner help, they probably would not have received it. Samson was perfectly willing to have the Spirit’s help externally, but it is far from certain that he felt a need for inner help from the Spirit, in my opinion. God gave Samson the strength he needed to fulfill his mission outwardly, but inwardly Samson seems to have been completely on his own.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] God gave Samson the strength he needed to fulfill his mission outwardly, but Samson seems not to have sought the Spirit’s help inwardly.

[ILLUSTRATION] “A vast knowledge of Scripture will never make up for a small knowledge of the Lord,” said Watchman Nee. Some men seem powerful giants in the pulpit who are pigmies in everyday life. Jesus spoke of this in **Matthew 7:21–23** - **21** *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ 23 And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’* It is an often-misunderstood principle: God’s Spirit will sometimes use instruments that are far from Holy to accomplish His good purposes for His people’s welfare. Unlike

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those Jesus spoke of in Matthew 7, Samson was a believer, but Samson’s inner spiritual weakness is unmistakable.

[APPLICATION] God will even work through the unfaithful to achieve His purposes. Outward power is no sign of inward holiness (cf. Matt.7:21-23). Be on your guard. Many false prophets are at work demonstrating false signs today and undiscerning Christians are being taken in by them. Don’t be naïve: outward power is not always a sign of inward godliness.

(vv.7-9) A Man Who Wouldn’t Keep His Vows – Samson, like Esau, “*despised his birthright.*” Verse 9 tells us how Samson broke His Nazirite Vow prohibiting contact with dead bodies: **Judges 14:9 - 9** *He scraped it [honey] out into his hands and went on, eating as he went. And he came to his father and mother and gave some to them, and they ate. But he did not tell them that he had scraped the honey from the carcass of the lion.* Samson was privileged to be separated for God’s special use from the womb to the tomb. What an honor! Yet, Samson was unimpressed. He broke his Nazirite vow that required him to refrain from contact with death, so he could satisfy his appetite for a handful of honey. He even gave some to his parents but didn’t tell them where the honey came from. Why not? *Because Samson knew he was doing wrong.* In this matter Samson was not a *wrong* doer, but an *evil* doer. There is an important distinction between these two things. To sin in ignorance is to do *wrong*; but to sin knowingly is to do *evil*. Samson knew that what he was doing was a sin but chose to do it anyway.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] Samson was not a *wrong* doer; he was an *evil* doer.

[ILLUSTRATION] When mother asks little Johnny if he has been in the cookie jar or not – a fact she has surmised from a) cookie crumbs around his mouth and b) peanut butter cookie aroma on his breath, what will little Johnny who has been forbidden to eat cookies before supper say? Unless his real name is George Washington, little Johnny will say, “No.” Why? Because he knows he has done something wrong and is trying to cover it up. Eating the cookies is wrong; telling a lie about eating the cookies is evil.

[APPLICATION] When men hide the truth, refusing to tell openly what they have done, they prove themselves to be “evil doers” rather than “wrong doers.” Beware of evil doers! Our world seems full of them today. Don’t become one of them and do your best not to be taken in by one of them.

(vv.10-18) A Man Who was Naïve and Easily Taken Advantage Of – This is shown to us through the outcome of Samson’s challenge to solve his riddle: **Judges 14:18 - 18** *And the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down, “What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?” And he said to them, “If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have found out my riddle.”* A “naïve” person “shows a lack of experience, wisdom, or judgment” says one dictionary. Samson was guilty on all three charges. He thought he was being clever, but the Philistines were more clever still and turned the tables on him. Their actions were entirely predictable by anyone with a modicum of experience in human nature. Wiersbe points out that Samson’s riddle itself was an embarrassment. Samson sinned by eating honey out of the lion’s carcass, then made a joke out his sin by turning it into a riddle. Samson had all the wisdom of a sixteen-year-old, and the Philistines who were full-grown men, had no trouble figuring out how to get the best of him. Samson’s adolescent arrogance and pride made him think he could profit from making a joke of his sin, but he forgot that...

[DOCTRINAL POINT] “Sin dumbs you down!”

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[ILLUSTRATION] That is a quotation from Pastor Eugene, and it never fails to get a laugh from a knowing congregation! We laugh because we’ve been there. We laugh because the truth of those words is intuitively understood. No one is quite so naïve as the one who is stuck on himself – the sin of pride. Pride dumbs us down just as it did Samson.

[APPLICATION] God’s people are the easiest people in the world to take advantage of when 1) we are convinced of our own righteousness and 2) when our eyes are on the world rather than on Jesus. We are no better than Samson when we are convinced of our own importance and when we fall in love with the things of this world. Keeping our eye fixed on Jesus will cure both problems. You cannot be consumed with self when Jesus is before you; you cannot be enticed by the world when Jesus is the true love of your life. Keep your eyes on Jesus.

(vv.19-20) A Man Used by God for God’s Purposes – Despite all his weaknesses, Samson was used by God to fulfill God’s purposes. In verse 19 we are told how God worked through Samson’s wrath to knock the Philistines “back on their heels.” **Judges 14:19 - 19** *And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon and struck down thirty men of the town and took their spoil and gave the garments to those who had told the riddle. In hot anger he went back to his father’s house.* Note it well – Samson wasn’t trying to do God’s will; he was trying to get even with the men who made a fool of him. God knew His man and worked His purposes through Samson’s foolish choices. “Don’t think that you can outthink God.”¹ God will accomplish His will through whatever instrument He has at hand.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] God’s Will certainly will be done, even when the instrument He has at hand is a poor one.

[ILLUSTRATION] The Bible tells us about all kinds of men that God used to accomplish His will. Think of Abraham, Moses, and Joshua. Think of King Saul, and King David, and King Solomon. Think of Isaiah, Hosea, and Samuel. Each one with his strengths and each with his weaknesses, but each an instrument in the hands of the Redeemer. And yes, Samson’s name is there too. But...

[APPLICATION] Wouldn’t you rather be a *Samuel* than a *Samson*? God’s Will, will be done on earth as it is in heaven. On that you can rely. The question for God’s people is never, “Will God’s Will be done?” but rather, “Am I playing my part in God’s Will with honor? Am I honoring Christ?” At the end of the day, this is the great question for each of us to answer.

Conclusion: Samson is in Hebrews 11’s “Hall of Fame,” but none of us really wants to be a Samson. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus and run *our* race with wisdom.

¹ Ursula K. La Guin