

Monday - Week Sixteen

Lesson forty-five: Samson, the Solitary Champion

Read: Judges 13 - 16

Summary: Samson was God's personal agent to beat back the Philistines; God even used elements in Samson's personal life to further these purposes.

Background and Comments

- We need to remember that Samson was God's chosen instrument to defeat the Philistines. Any attack against him was an attack against God. Samson's personal life and his work as a judge were intimately intertwined.
- God pre-announced the birth of several people who would do spectacular things in His kingdom: Samson, Samuel, John the Baptist, and Jesus.
- Judges 15:15 says that Samson killed a thousand (!) men with a jawbone. These were not a thousand weaklings - these were soldiers. Samson's strength must have been incredible.

Lessons for Today

- Samson sinned when he married a Philistine woman; God had forbidden such marriages in Deuteronomy 7:3. Yet Judges 14:4 says that this marriage was "from the Lord". In other words, God used Samson's sin to further His kingdom. This does not excuse the sin but rather shows God's great power and wisdom. Can you look back in your life and see a time when God used a sin you committed for good?
- Samson is a very "human" hero because we get to see all his flaws and shortcomings. He seems to have been a very cocky person (as is evidenced by the whole riddle incident) - we have to admit that we would be cocky if we were that strong! Samson also had a weakness for beautiful women. What are your sinful flaws that ensnare you in your walk with the Lord?
- Obviously Samson had a gift from God; he used his God-given strength (pardon the pun) well. What gifts has God given to you - how are you using them?

Read: Psalm 76; 2 Corinthians 1.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, I am a bundle of strengths and weaknesses. Give me the self-discipline needed to master my weaknesses and make the most of the strengths You have given me. I pray that You would bless the members in my congregation in this same way. I pray in Jesus' name; Amen.

Tuesday - Week Sixteen

Lesson Forty-six: Samson's sad fall ... And repentance

Read: Judges 16

Summary: The title of this lesson is very significant. We will note the tremendous events that happened ... in Samson's heart.

Background and Comments

- Samson's problem with a lust for sex brought him to a critical point in his life. After he slept with a prostitute in Gaza he was trapped in the city. We smile at the fact that he picked up the city gates and carried them away but miss what was really happening. Samson was not using his great strength to serve God; instead He used this God-given gift to rescue himself from the consequences of his sin.
- Samson's hair was not the source of his strength. His hair was the symbol of the covenant that he had with God. Samson's sinfulness broke that covenant (as was evidenced by the cutting of his hair - cf. Judges 16:19-20).
- Was Samson's death a suicide ("Lord, let me die with the Philistines")? No, he knew that he was God's representative to fight against the Philistines - by pulling the pillars down he was fulfilling God's will for his life.

Lessons for Today

- Mighty Samson was no match for the wily Delilah. Each one of us encounter situations (or people, or things) for which we are no match. Perhaps it's a bar and the temptations to drink too much, perhaps it's a video store with the temptation to rent movies that are not God-pleasing, perhaps it's a catalogue with the temptation to purchase more than we can afford, etc. What are these things in your life? How can you stay away from these tough temptations?
- After they had subdued Samson, the Philistines did not notice two things that began happening: 1) his hair started growing again and more importantly 2) his heart turned back to the Lord. His prayer (v 28) shows us that Samson had become a humble man at the end of his life. What is going on in your heart these days?

Read: Psalm 77; 2 Corinthians 2.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, guard my heart. Don't let evil take root in my heart. I ask this in the name of my Savior; Amen.

Wednesday - Week Sixteen

Catechism Review

Read Questions 108-116 on pages 108-113

1. When is it wrong to say something true about a person?

2. What would you say if someone came up to you and asked, "Do you promise not to tell anyone this secret?"

3. In the eighth commandment God tells us to build up peoples' reputations. Pick one person you know; how could you help that person's reputation? (Be specific and practical)

4. The traditional "what does this mean" to this commandment said that we should put the best construction on everything. What does that mean?

5. What should you do when someone starts gossiping to you about someone else? Make your answer a complete one!

Read: Psalm 78; 2 Corinthians 2.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, so often I speak before I think. Forgive me for the times that I've said things that I shouldn't have. Make me disciplined with what I say. In Jesus' name I pray; Amen.

Thursday - Week Sixteen

Lesson Forty-seven: Ruth

Read: The book of Ruth

Summary: This short book of the Bible has become a powerful lesson in true love and faithfulness. Indeed this charming true story has much to teach us.

Background and Comments

- Naomi suffered a triple bereavement when her husband and two sons died. Not only did she face these three deaths she was in a foreign country! God did not forsake her though.
- The word “redeemer” comes up in the story of Ruth. A kinsman redeemer had the responsibility to buy back the land of a relative and if necessary marry that relative’s widow to keep the family line going. Boaz was that “kinsman redeemer”. Obviously Jesus redeemed us; He bought us back by giving His life on the cross.

Lessons for Today

- Both Orpah and Ruth were excellent daughters-in-law. Both cried at the thought of leaving Naomi and even refused to stay in Moab when Naomi prepared to leave. We notice a difference at this point. Orpah returned to her people and her gods (1:15). Why did Ruth remain with Naomi? Certainly it was because of her love for Naomi ... but it was also because of her love for the true God. Ruth had become a believer. Does your faith have this kind of impact in your life? Does it impact your marriage, your parenting, your work, your recreation, etc.?
- Chapter 2 is full of things that seem like chance happenings (the fact that Ruth went to Boaz’s field and that Boaz even asked about her). God uses even the “little” events in our lives. Listen to the stories that other people tell about how they met their spouse, how their family ended up where they did, etc. God arranges millions of details so that things work out according to His will. Amazing!
- Ruth became the great-grandmother of King David and an ancestor of Jesus. This was a hint that God would bring the Gentiles (non-Israelites) into His Kingdom.

Read: Psalm 79; 2 Corinthians 4.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, I put myself into Your hands. In Jesus’ name; Amen.

Friday - Week Sixteen

Life Questions

Topic/Question: Does God care about what kind of clothes I wear?

Bible References and Considerations

- Peter wrote: *Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful (1 Peter 3:3-5).* Notice that Peter did not forbid women from wearing gold jewelry and fine clothes; he simply said that our beauty dare not come from what we wear. In other words, two people could wear the exact same outfit ...one for good reasons and the other bad ones. Motivation is the real key. When sinful pride causes us to dress up (or down for that matter) then we need to examine our heart. Certainly there is nothing wrong with wanting to look nice for a job interview or a first date - at the same time we need to remember that our real beauty (value) is on the inside. We are redeemed children of God with special talents and abilities.

Practically Speaking

- Certainly a Christian will not want to wear clothes that are revealing (which can tempt others to lust), that promote sin (sayings on T-shirts, etc.) or compromise our Christian witness.
- Have you ever heard someone say, "Those kids never dress up for church. It's shameful!" A few observations: 1) The reason that we dress up for church is to show respect for God. As long as our attitude is correct God cares very little if we wear a tie or not ... if we wear a dress or slacks. 2) What a 50 year old, a 16 year old and a 75 year old consider dressing up might be completely different things. A nice pair of jeans and sweatshirt are considered nice clothes by a 15 year old (and thus they are showing respect to the Lord). 3) Young people and more mature people need to be sensitive to each other in this area. Certainly our common faith is stronger than any of our ideas of fashion.

Read: Psalm 80; 2 Corinthians 5.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, remind us that clothes and fashions are not that important in the eternal scheme of things. Let us enjoy the clothes that we have ... but keep a good perspective too. Amen.