

## **Lessons From the Flannelgraph**

### **Three Questions For Samson**

This morning we are looking at another of the Judges of Israel: Samson. His story is found in **Judges 13-16**. Warren Weirsbe gives us a great synopsis of Samson's life. He writes, "Samson had a wonderful beginning, but a good beginning isn't a guarantee of a happy ending. He had godly parents and the angel of the Lord announced his birth to them. Samson was especially called by God and given the opportunity of judging Israel (Judges 16:31) and beginning the conquest of the Philistines (Judges 13:5). Samuel and David eventually completed this task. Samson was a Nazirite, especially dedicated to the Lord (Numbers 6) and "the Lord blessed him" (Judges 13:24). Hebrews 11:32 honors him for his faith but not for his faithfulness, because he wasn't a faithful servant. He was endued with divine power and fought entire armies, yet when enticed by women, he was as weak and unstable as water. Granted, we must be cautious because we don't have the whole story of his twenty years of judgeship, but Samson vividly illustrates how we may forget our choices, but our choices won't forget us."

Most of you remember the story, but just in case. Samson's parents were unable to have children but the angel of the Lord appeared to them and told them they would have a son who was to be set apart and consecrated to the Lord from his birth. As evidence of that, he was never to cut his hair, never drink wine or grape juice or even eat grapes or raisins, never touch a dead body. He was to be consecrated to the Lord for his purposes and he would begin the deliverance of Israel from the Philistines.

As he grew the Spirit of the Lord came upon him at times and he was given extraordinary strength and ability to fight the enemy. He caught three hundred foxes or jackals and tied torches to their tails and sent them through the fields of the Philistines to destroy their crops and vineyards. He picked up the jawbone of a donkey and killed a thousand men in battle. He carried the gates of the city of Gaza to the top of a hill. At the end of his life he pulled down the supporting pillars of a Philistine temple, killing more at one time than he had killed through twenty years of fighting. Unfortunately, Samson never really understood what this calling from the Lord was all about. He fought the Philistines, but it was always about Samson and his revenge and never about delivering Israel or pleasing the Lord.

Samson had a weakness for women – Philistine women. In chapter 14 he sees a young

Philistine woman and takes her as his wife. In chapter 16 he sees a prostitute in Gaza and sleeps with her and finally falls in love with a Philistine woman named Delilah. She would be the last of his poor choices in women.

The Philistine leaders came to her when they found out Samson was in love with her and offered her 1,100 shekels of silver per man - millions of dollars by today's economy - to find out the secret of his amazing strength. They thought he had some magical power which is why the things Samson said would make him weak were believable to them (Like a silver bullet to kill the wolfman or a stake through the heart of a vampire).

Three times he lies to Delilah - tie me with fresh thongs, tie me with new ropes, weave the braids of my hair into the fabric on the loom - and three times she does that and cries, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you." Three times he frees himself. You would think he would have caught on, don't you? This woman can't be trusted. Love is blind they say, and so it would prove to be - literally - for Samson.

Finally he tells her the whole story. "Shave my head and I will be like any other man." She told the Philistine leaders, "This time he told me everything. Bring my money and come over." While he was asleep they shaved his head and Samson didn't realize the Spirit of the Lord had left him. He was weak and helpless now. They gouged out his eyes and put him in prison.

Some time later the Philistines assembled at the temple of their god, Dagon to celebrate the capture of their great enemy Samson. They brought him out to make fun of him and mock him. They chained him to the two pillars that held up the temple and God strengthened Samson one more time and he pulled the building down, killing himself and all that were gathered there. With the death of so many, including the leaders of the Philistines, Samson crippled the Philistines.

Samson's story is a tragic one. His was a life full of possibility but he chose to live on the edge spiritually, constantly flirting with sin and compromise. He battled the enemy when it was convenient for him, but he never seemed to battle the enemies in his own heart and life. Samson lived by the flesh, not the Spirit. He lived to please himself rather than pleasing God and as a result he never accomplished all he could have for the Lord and for himself.

I wonder if we can find ourselves in Samson's story. We were born again by God's grace and given his blessing. He called us to a consecrated and surrendered walk with him. He didn't

tell us not to cut our hair or not eat grapes, but he called us to walk by the Spirit and to turn away from sin and compromise. But how are we living? Are we living a life that is pleasing to God, or like Samson, are we more interested in pleasing ourselves? We can see how the choices Samson made led to a tragic end but can we see where the choices we are making will lead us? Samson was pretty good at posing riddles for people and asking questions, so let me ask you three questions taken from this story of Samson to help us see where we are headed.

**Where are you looking?** If you want to know where you are likely to end up, start by looking at the road you are on. Profound, huh? We can tell where Samson was headed by where he was looking and he was always looking in the wrong places and at the wrong things. The easiest example? Consider where he went looking for friends, for fun, for female companionship! He went to the Philistines, the ones who were his enemies!

“Samson went down to Timnah and saw there a young Philistine woman. When he returned he said to his father and mother, ‘I have seen a Philistine woman in Timnah; now get her for me as my wife.’” Judges 14:1-2. When things went wrong the girl’s father gave her as a bride to Samson’s friend, a Philistine.

And again, “One day Samson went to Gaza where he saw a prostitute. He went in to spend the night with her.” Judges 16:1.

And again, “Some time later, he fell in love with a woman in the Valley of Sorek whose name was Delilah.” Judges 16:4

To paraphrase a song from the 70's, Samson was looking for love in all the wrong places! He was looking for answers in all the wrong places. The bible says “Don’t you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.” James 4:4. The bible is referring to the world’s system, its values and morals, its worldview. Samson was in love with the world. He was adopting the values of a sinful world, adopting the morals and traditions of a sinful culture.

Samson’s parents had asked the angel of the Lord, “What is to be the rule for the boy’s life and work?” Judges 13:12 They knew to look to God for wisdom about how to live, what values to embrace, what to do. But Samson chose to look to the world rather than look to God and his word. Never once do we hear Samson ask of the Lord, “what do you want me to do to deliver Israel?” Not once. He didn’t ask for God’s help in finding a wife. He went to the

Philistines, his enemies.

Chapter 14 mentions Samson and his parents going to Timnah. Verse 5 says “as they approached the vineyards of Timnah a lion came roaring toward them.” Samson shouldn’t have been anywhere near a vineyard. As a Nazarite, he wasn’t supposed to even eat grapes or raisins, let alone drink wine or grape juice and he wasn’t exactly known for his restraint and self-discipline. Approaching a vineyard was not a good plan for Samson. Maybe the lord sent a lion to keep him from the vineyard. He killed the lion and verse 8 tells us “some time later when he went back to marry this Philistine girl, he turned aside to look at the lion’s carcass.” As part of the Nazirite vow, he wasn’t supposed to touch a dead carcass, yet he went purposely to look at it. The bees had built a hive in the carcass and Samson reached in, touching the dead lion and scooped out some honey. He was looking for sweetness in the wrong places. Looking for life and love and adventure, but never looking God’s way, always looking the wrong direction and in the wrong places, looking towards the enemy. It would finally lead to his capture, his blindness, his death.

Where are you looking today? To find the rule for your life, the values by which you must live, are you looking to the Lord or to the world? Looking for answers, looking for a spouse, looking for direction? It matters where you look. Look God’s way.

**What are you settling for?** An interesting event happens in chapter 15. The woman Samson married had been given to his friend and in anger he burned the Philistine’s crops. The Philistines responded by killing this girl and her family. Samson responded by killing more Philistines and they responded by coming after him. Samson was hiding from the Philistines in a cave in the rock of Etam. Three thousand men of Judah came to him there and look what they asked, **“Don’t you realize that the Philistines are rulers over us? What have you done to us?” Judges 15:11**

His own people were ready to sell him out, to turn him over to the Philistines. They had gotten so used to being enslaved by the Philistines and ruled by them, they didn’t want Samson to upset things. They had settled for being dominated and controlled by their enemies. “What are you doing causing trouble, fighting the Philistines? This is how it is. Don’t rock the boat.”

What are you settling for? Have you decided that this is just how your life has to be? The sin, the addiction, the life controlling issues, the anger, the sickness, the defeat, the adultery,

the pornography, the failures, the homosexual affairs, the abuse, it's just how my life is. This is the way I am. Don't mess with my life by telling me it can be any other way.

You're settling for the wrong stuff! Listen, it's not the Lord that's causing you trouble or me and my sermons. Samson hadn't done anything to those men of Judah. They should have been coming to him saying, "Fight with us and let's conquer the Philistines." Samson wasn't their problem, they were their own worst enemy. They had settled for the enemy's control over their life. Listen saints, **It's time to stop settling for the devil's control in your life.** There is no such thing as a devil's benevolent dictatorship. He wants to defeat and destroy you. The devil has come to kill, steal and destroy. Look what those sinful choices are doing to you! Stop settling for less than God has for you! Jesus came that we might have abundant life!

Samson let them turn him over to the Philistines and then broke loose, picked up the jawbone of a donkey and killed a thousand men by himself that day. Imagine if he had said to those three thousand men of Judah, "Come fight with me. I'll take a thousand and you all take the rest and let's run the enemy out of our life and out of our territory. Let's take back what the enemy has stolen from us!" Samson could have lead them to victory, but instead they all settled for so much less.

What are you settling for in your spiritual life? Have you bought into the devil's lies, that this is just the way it has to be? God has more for you! Don't settle for less. Don't settle for compromise. Take a stand. Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Take the weapon of the Lord in your hand and fight the enemy. Stop settling for less than what God has for you. The last question is,

**Upon whose lap are you sleeping?** Look at Judges 16:18-19. **"When Delilah saw that he had told her everything, she sent word to the rulers of the Philistines. 'Come back once more; he has told me everything.' So the rulers of the Philistines returned with the silver in their hands. Having put him to sleep on her lap, she called a man to shave off the seven braids of his hair and so began to subdue him. And his strength left him." Judges 16:18-19**

Delilah seduced him and let him fall asleep with his head on her lap and Samson refused to recognize what a dangerous place that was. I've come to warn someone this morning, you are in a dangerous place. You've laid your head on the wrong lap. You've put your trust in the

wrong thing, the wrong people. You've gone after the wrong things, you've compromised and flirted with sin and now you've laid your head in the wrong place. You're trusting in things that will lead to your downfall.

Wake up! Get up! Stop running after the world. Stop looking to the world for advice and counsel and to determine your values and lifestyle and turn to the Lord and his word!

Samson was so blinded to it all, so comfortable with the world and with his life of sin, so comfortable in Delilah's lap that when the Spirit of the Lord left him, he wasn't even aware of it! Friends, **It is a dangerous thing to be lulled to sleep in the lap of the enemy. Wake up and recognize where you are!** Look where you are headed and turn around. Get back to God and to his purpose and his plan for your life. There is still time but we had better look and act now!

Delilah shouted, "Wake up Samson! The Philistines are upon you!" I'm talking to someone this morning – Wake up! The enemy is upon you. He is about to destroy you. He is about to steal your family. Your future. Your anointing. Your spiritual health and life. He is about to steal your destiny. Wake up while there is still time.

Where are you looking? What are you settling for? Upon whose lap are you sleeping? Three questions someone should have asked Samson. Three questions I'm asking you today. How will we answer?