

## God Uses Samson Despite his Shortcomings

### Judges 14

Judges 14 - *"Now Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines. <sup>2</sup> So he went up and told his father and mother, saying, "I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife."*

*<sup>3</sup> Then his father and mother said to him, "Is there no woman among the daughters of your brethren, or among all my people, that you must go and get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?" And Samson said to his father, "Get her for me, for she pleases me well." <sup>4</sup> But his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD—that He was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines. For at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.*

*<sup>5</sup> So Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother, and came to the vineyards of Timnah.*

*Now to his surprise, a young lion came roaring against him. <sup>6</sup> And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat, though he had nothing in his hand. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done.*

*<sup>7</sup> Then he went down and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well. <sup>8</sup> After some time, when he returned to get her, he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion. And behold, a swarm of bees and honey were in the carcass of the lion. <sup>9</sup> He took some of it in his hands and went along, eating. When he came to his father and mother, he gave some to them, and they also ate. But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion.*

*<sup>10</sup> So his father went down to the woman. And Samson gave a feast there, for young men used to do so. <sup>11</sup> And it happened, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him.*

*<sup>12</sup> Then Samson said to them, "Let me pose a riddle to you. If you can correctly solve and explain it to me within the seven days of the feast, then I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing. <sup>13</sup> But if you cannot explain it to me, then you shall give me thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing."*

*And they said to him, "Pose your riddle, that we may hear it."*

*<sup>14</sup> So he said to them: "Out of the eater came something to eat, and out of the strong came something sweet." Now for three days they could not explain the riddle. <sup>15</sup> But it came to pass on the seventh day that they said to Samson's wife, "Entice your husband, that he may explain the riddle to us, or else we will burn you and your father's house with fire. Have you invited us in order to take what is ours? Is that not so?"*

*<sup>16</sup> Then Samson's wife wept, and said, "You only hate me! You do not love me! You have posed a riddle to the sons of my people, but you have not explained it to me." And he said to her, "Look, I have not explained it to my father or my mother; so should I explain it to you?" <sup>17</sup> Now she had wept on him the seven days while their feast lasted. And on the seventh day that he told her, because she pressed him so much. Then she explained the riddle to the sons of her people. <sup>18</sup> So the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down: "What is sweeter than honey? And what is stronger than a lion?"*

*And he said to them: "If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have solved my riddle!"*

*<sup>19</sup> Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily, and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of their men, took*

*their apparel, and gave the changes of clothing to those who had explained the riddle. So his anger was aroused, and he went back up to his father's house. <sup>20</sup> And Samson's wife was given to his companion, who had been his best man."*

## Background Notes

When we think of Samson, we generally think of his great physical strength. In this chapter he killed a lion with his bare hands – no rifle, no knife, not even a club. *"And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat, though he had nothing in his hand. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done."* Wow, what strength! But for Samson, killing a lion was "just another day at the office"!

Samson had great strength, but for all his physical strength, he was morally weak. Samson couldn't control his passions, his selfish desires, or his lust. Because Samson had no self-control, he broke his Nazirite vow more than once. And so Samson never reached his full potential as a servant of God.

But in spite of his glaring moral weaknesses and lack of self-discipline, God used Samson to start overthrowing the power of the Philistines (who dominated Israel at this time). And even though Samson was morally weak, we know he was a man of faith, because Samson listed with the Old Testament believers of great faith in Hebrews 11. So Samson was a man of faith, and God used him. *"...the Spirit of the Lord began to move upon him..."* (Judges 13:25).

Notice that it was **the Lord** who empowered Samson to kill the lion (v6): *"The Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion apart..."* And notice it was **the Lord** who enabled Samson to kill the thirty Philistines (v19): *"Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily, and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of their men, took their apparel, and gave the changes of clothing to those who had explained the riddle."*

So even though Samson was involved in all kinds of wrongdoing, and even though he fell far short of his full potential, he was a man of faith, and God used him to fight the Philistines, the enemies of God's people.

In verse 18, Samson said to the Philistines who had solved his riddle, *"If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have solved my riddle!"* What's that all about? Samson was comparing his wife to heifer, an untamed and wayward animal, because she had betrayed him. Because she had betrayed him, Samson went home, leaving his wife behind in her father's home. So then her father then married her to Samson's friend – the man who was Samson's best man at the wedding! *"And Samson's wife was given to his companion, who had been his best man."* What a fine friend that best man turned out to be! By the way - here's something for your Bible trivia files: There's an old saying: "The bride never marries the best man!" Well, there's an exception to that old joke - in Judges 14!

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. **Compromise can ruin a life of great potential.**

If we didn't know the rest of the story, we would probably vote for Samson as the "most likely to succeed." Right from the start Samson had everything going for him. He had godly parents who loved and worshiped the Lord, and who gave Samson good and godly counsel. Samson was handpicked by God to deliver Israel from the Philistines (Judges 13:5). Samson was blessed with great physical strength, and the Spirit of the Lord was at work in his life. What a tremendous foundation on which to build! What great potential! What went wrong?

**Samson compromised**, because he had no self-control and no self-discipline.

**Samson compromised in keeping God's Law.** The Law clearly said that God's people were not to intermarry with the Philistines - or, in fact, with **any** pagan people (Exodus 34; Deuteronomy 7). But Samson operated on the principle, "Not Thy will, Lord, but mine be done." He ignored the counsel of his godly parents and married a Philistine woman. Samson had no self-control! What he wanted, he wanted now – even if it meant compromising the law of God. How sad!

**Samson also compromised in keeping his Nazirite vow.** No doubt there was a lot of drinking at the seven-day Philistine wedding - and I'm sure Samson wasn't drinking Diet Coke! Nazirites were to have nothing to do with wine and strong drink. He also broke the Nazirite vow by touching the dead lion, and making a riddle of it, of all things! Nazirites were not to touch anything unclean, including anything dead. That, by the way, is why Samson didn't tell his parents about killing the lion. And we know that it wasn't long before Samson broke his Nazirite vow by giving away the secret of his strength, thus enabling his hair to be cut.

Samson was weak-willed, and he had no self-control. He compromised in keeping his Nazirite vow and in keeping God's Law, and as a result his life of great potential was ruined. He ended up in a Philistine prison, with his eyes gouged out, grinding grain - the job of a donkey. Samson's life of great potential was cut short.

Compromise can ruin a life of great potential. What was true for Samson is true for us. I have seen young people ruin their lives because of compromise. These young people have been raised in godly homes, and God has blessed them with good minds, great talent and great potential. But - they have compromised with the world.

Maybe the compromise has been in the area of self-indulgence and sex, like Samson. Maybe it has been in the area of drifting into unsound theology. Maybe it has occurred in the area of commitment to the Lord. Great potential lost! Young people - don't let it happen! Don't compromise. Compromise can ruin a life of great potential!

### 2. **Compromise cannot ruin the law of God's providence.**

*“But his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD—that He was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines. For at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel”(v4).* Does that verse bother you? Samson was involved in breaking God’s Law and breaking his Nazirite vow - and yet God was planning to use his sinful situation to make a move against the Philistines!

What is the Bible teaching us here? Is it teaching that it’s OK to disobey the Lord and go against God’s Word as long as “good” comes out of it? No way! That’s **not** what the Bible is teaching! The Bible is teaching us that **God is sovereign**, and **nothing** - even sin - **can thwart God’s plans and purposes**. Ephesians 1:11 says that God *“works all things according to the counsel of His will...”*

The fact that God would use Samson’s sin for His own purposes certainly does not condone Samson’s wrongdoing and compromise. However, God works out His plans and purposes in spite of sin in this world. Psalm 76:10 says, *“Surely the wrath of man shall praise You....”* The fact that God works out His plans and purposes in no way condones man’s sin on the one hand -- or pins the blame for sin on God on the other hand. Compromise cannot ruin the law of God’s providence.

## **Practical Application**

### **Don't use the “Samson Method” for finding a spouse.**

What was Samson’s method for finding a spouse? You could call it the “Double-L” method – Looks and Lust! Samson certainly didn’t take the time to build a relationship. All he could think about was: “She looks good to me - she pleases me - I want her - I’m going to marry her!” No wonder the marriage didn’t work out!

This is not the way to go about finding a spouse, and yet “Looks and Lust” is the way many people come at marriage today - even some Christians! All too often Christians rush into marriage without taking the time to build a Christ-centered, Christ-honoring relationship. They never pray about their future spouse. Although most Christians are determined to marry in the faith, they’re more concerned about physical attraction than spiritual qualities. And because of that, some Christians are willing to marry an unbeliever. No wonder many marriages today are ending up in divorce - even many Christian marriages.

So do you want a Samson-type marriage, or do you want a Scripture-type marriage? It’s far better never to be married at all than to end up in a Samson-type marriage! Don’t use the “Samson Method” for finding a spouse!