

SUNNY-BOY, THE STRONGEST MAN IN THE BIBLE: HIS TRAGEDY, HIS TRIUMPH

Today we will discuss one of Israel's most famous heroes, Samson. In accordance with our theme, "Famous and Infamous Stories of the Bible," we see the protagonist is Samson and the antagonists are the Philistines and Delilah. Yet in truth, we must say Samson proved to be his own worst enemy. His uncontrolled lusts proved to be even stronger than the miraculous physical strength God gave him. I cannot begin to explain how the heroes of the Old Testament were such mixtures of runaway fleshly appetite one day and holy men of God the next day. However, there are a couple of verses in the life of Samson that may help to explain. Judges 14:19 says, "And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon, and slew thirty men of them, and took their spoil, and gave change of garments unto them which expounded the riddle. And his anger was kindled, and he went up to his father's house." Judges 15:14 goes on to say, "And when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him: and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands." Please see the difference of wording: in reference to the Day of Pentecost, the Bible records in Acts 2:4a, "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost...." This is the prophesy of Jesus who said in John 14:17, "Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." David, another enigma who slayed a giant, yet had no control over the giant of lust that warred within him. In the repentant prayer of David after his moral downfall, he prayed in Psalm 51:11, "Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me." In the moment of Samson's downfall, the Bible sadly records, "...And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him" (Judges 16:20c). In the New Testament dispensation we need never fear the departure of the Holy Spirit, because the Bible says in Hebrews 13:5b, "...For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." It is remarkable to note that after the coming of the Holy Spirit within the believer, we never see on record any major Bible character who had experienced a personal relationship with God and having received the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit go into deep immoral behavior. I am not saying this is not a possibility, but what I am saying is that it is more difficult and if one does fall into immoral behavior, as a rule they do not stay there. Jesus said in John 16:7, 8: "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." To

the glory of God, it is much more difficult to go into perpetual sin when the Holy Spirit of God is within you. This is why John said in I John 3:6, "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him." And again in I John 5:18, "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." What a comparison to a statement Peter said of the unbeliever who does not have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit: "Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin..." (II Peter 2:14a).

The Bible says of those things written in the Old Testament, "...and they are written for our admonition..." (I Corinthians 10:11b). Let's learn from the life of Samson. The name "Samson" in Hebrew means, "Like the Sun" or "Sun-hero." We might call him "Sunny-Boy." Dean Stanley says that Samson was "the most frolicsome, irregular, uncultivated creature that nature ever produced." We would only add, he is not the product of mere happenstance; He is the very creation of God. I would like to take an overview of Sunny-Boy's life from Sun-up to High Noon and finally to Sun-down.

I. SUN-UP

A. Consider the gift of a child. Judges 13:2-3, 24-25

The Bible says in Psalm 113:9, "He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the LORD." Psalm 127:3 reminds us, "Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward."

B. Consecrated prayers of the parent make a difference. Judges 13:8, 12.

Samson's father prayed for wisdom to know how to rear this special child. Samson's mother was told in Judges 13:7, "But he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean thing: for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death." Even though people like John the Baptist and Samson were perpetual Nazarites as examples of the Old Testament prophets, God's will for His New Testament children is found in II Corinthians 6:17, 18: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

II. HIGH NOON

A. Confidence in the mysteries of God keeps us sane. Judges 14:4

When I examine our text, William Cowper's song comes to mind, "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform; He plants His footsteps in the sea. And

rides upon the storm. Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust Him for His grace; Behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face. The last two lines of this great old song are, "God is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain." There are parts of this story we cannot explain; we can only tell it as we see it and above all, how God reveals it. God can use a Pharaoh, even when Pharaoh hardens his heart against a Holy God. Proverbs 16:4 tells us, "The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." God does not ordain evil, but He has no problem circumnavigating the errors of man and bringing all things together for our good and His glory.

B. Casualties abound when God's people are attacked or under siege. Judges 15:11, 15-19

Throughout history we see God coming to the aid of Israel, the wife of Jehovah, or we see the gates of Hell do not prevail against the Jewish/Gentile Bride of Christ. Samson's wrath against the Philistines (the name "Philistine" means "strangers or immigrants") reminds us of the prophecy found in Zechariah 2:8: "For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye."

C. Capitulation takes place in enemy territory. Judges 16:1-20

The interaction between Samson and Delilah is a commentary on Proverbs 31:3: "Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings."

III. SUN-DOWN

A. Contemplation of sin's triumvirate. Judges 16:21

Sin blinds, "But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes..."

Sin binds, "...and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass..."

Sin grinds, "...and he did grind in the prison house."

B. Conclusion: the tragedy and triumph of Sunny-Boy. Judges 16:23-31

God will not allow sin to triumph. In speaking of sin's course, the Bible says in James 1:15, "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Proverbs 5:11: "And thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed." Proverbs 23:32: "At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." "The last" is coming for those who live wickedly. The Philistines were having a party like Belshazzar of Daniel 5, who saw the handwriting on the wall on the night of his demise. In the midst of the Philistine's

merriment their “season of sin” (Hebrews 11:25) came to a close. God knows how to crash a party. He always gets the last word!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.