

The Hollow Hero

Series: E-100—Judges 13:1-16:31

June 7, 2015

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The last judge in the book of Judges is Samson. His story is the longest in the book and, in some ways, the most difficult. His life was characterized by lust, anger, and revenge.

Samson's story begins:

Judges 13:1-7 (NLT) ¹ Again the Israelites did what was evil in the Lord's sight, so the Lord handed them over to the Philistines, who kept them in subjection for forty years.

² In those days, a man named Manoah from the tribe of Dan lived in the town of Zorah. His wife was unable to become pregnant, and they had no children. ³ The angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah's wife and said, "Even though you have been unable to have children, you will soon become pregnant and give birth to a son. ⁴ You must not drink wine or any other alcoholic drink or eat any forbidden food. ⁵ You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and his hair must never be cut. For he will be dedicated to God as a Nazirite from birth. He will rescue Israel from the Philistines."

⁶ The woman ran and told her husband, "A man of God appeared to me! He was like one of God's angels, terrifying to look at. I didn't ask where he was from, and he didn't tell me his name. ⁷ But he told me, 'You will become pregnant and give birth to a son. You must not drink wine or any other alcoholic drink or eat any forbidden food. For your son will be dedicated to God as a Nazirite from the moment of his birth until the day of his death.'"

In Numbers 6, God provided a special opportunity for individuals who wanted to dedicate a period of time in their life to focus on God. The Nazirite vow was meant to be temporary. There were three main provisions: (1) they were not to touch a dead body or any unclean thing; (2) they were not to drink any alcoholic beverage; and (3) they were not to cut their hair.

But, Samson turned out to be a threatening, out-of-control, and self-centered man. He can be an object lesson for all of us about what happens when spiritual insensitivity dominates a life.

Examples of Samson's spiritual insensitivity:

Judges 14:1-3 (NLT) ¹ One day when Samson was in Timnah, he noticed a certain Philistine woman. ² When he returned home, he told his father and mother, "I want to marry a young Philistine woman I saw in Timnah."

³ His father and mother objected strenuously, "Isn't there one woman in our tribe or among all the Israelites you could marry? Why must you go to the pagan Philistines to find a wife?"

But Samson told his father, "Get her for me. She is the one I want."

Throughout his life, Samson exhibited a love for all things Philistine. It seemed he preferred them to the people he was supposed to deliver.

Judges 14:5-9 (NLT) ⁵ As Samson and his parents were going down to Timnah, a young lion attacked

Samson near the vineyards of Timnah. ⁶ At that moment the Spirit of the Lord powerfully took control of him, and he ripped the lion's jaws apart with his bare hands. He did it as easily as if it were a young goat. But he didn't tell his father or mother about it. ⁷ When Samson arrived in Timnah, he talked with the woman and was very pleased with her.

⁸ Later, when he returned to Timnah for the wedding, he turned off the path to look at the carcass of the lion. And he found that a swarm of bees had made some honey in the carcass. ⁹ He scooped some of the honey into his hands and ate it along the way. He also gave some to his father and mother, and they ate it. But he didn't tell them he had taken the honey from the carcass of the lion.

Having begun his rebellion against God, Samson then appeared to treat his Nazirite vows very lightly.

Judges 14 and 15 contain stories of Samson's interactions with the Philistines that show continued degeneration of his life as his lust, anger, and revenge control his life.

In Judges 16, we find that, even after God had miraculously delivered him and empowered him, Samson allowed his weaknesses to again turn him away from God.

Judges 16:4-20 (NLT) ⁴ Later Samson fell in love with a woman named Delilah, who lived in the valley of Sorek. ⁵ The leaders of the Philistines went to her and said, "Find out from Samson what makes him so strong and how he can be overpowered and tied up securely. Then each of us will give you eleven hundred pieces of silver."

⁶ So Delilah said to Samson, "Please tell me what makes you so strong and what it would take to tie you up securely."

⁷ Samson replied, "If I am tied up with seven new bowstrings that have not yet been dried, I will be as weak as anyone else."

⁸ So the Philistine leaders brought Delilah seven new bowstrings, and she tied Samson up with them. ⁹ She had hidden some men in one of the rooms of her house, and she cried out, "Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!" But Samson snapped the bowstrings as if they were string that had been burned in a fire. So the secret of his strength was not discovered.

¹⁰ Afterward Delilah said to him, "You made fun of me and told a lie! Now please tell me how you can be tied up securely."

¹¹ Samson replied, "If I am tied up with brand-new ropes that have never been used, I will be as weak as anyone else."

¹² So Delilah took new ropes and tied him up with them. The men were hiding in the room as before, and again Delilah cried out, "Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!" But Samson snapped the ropes from his arms as if they were thread.

¹³ Then Delilah said, "You have been making fun of me and telling me lies! Won't you please tell me how you can be tied up securely?"

Samson replied, "If you weave the seven braids of my hair into the fabric on your loom and tighten it with the loom shuttle, I will be as weak as anyone else."

So while he slept, Delilah wove the seven braids of his hair into the fabric ¹⁴ and tightened it with the loom shuttle. Again she cried out, "Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!" But Samson woke up, pulled back the loom shuttle, and yanked his hair away from the loom and the fabric.

¹⁵ Then Delilah pouted, "How can you say you love me when you don't confide in me? You've made fun

of me three times now, and you still haven't told me what makes you so strong!"¹⁶ So day after day she nagged him until he couldn't stand it any longer.

¹⁷ Finally, Samson told her his secret. "My hair has never been cut," he confessed, "for I was dedicated to God as a Nazirite from birth. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as anyone else."

¹⁸ Delilah realized he had finally told her the truth, so she sent for the Philistine leaders. "Come back one more time," she said, "for he has told me everything." So the Philistine leaders returned and brought the money with them. ¹⁹ Delilah lulled Samson to sleep with his head in her lap, and she called in a man to shave off his hair, making his capture certain. And his strength left him. ²⁰ Then she cried out, "Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!"

When he woke up, he thought, "I will do as before and shake myself free." But he didn't realize the Lord had left him.

We see the results of rebellion in our life when we insist on disobeying God and going our own way in life.

Samson's restoration:

Judges 16:21-30 (NLT) ²¹ So the Philistines captured him and gouged out his eyes. They took him to Gaza, where he was bound with bronze chains and made to grind grain in the prison. ²² But before long his hair began to grow back.

²³ The Philistine leaders held a great festival, offering sacrifices and praising their god, Dagon. They said, "Our god has given us victory over our enemy Samson!"

²⁴ When the people saw him, they praised their god, saying, "Our god has delivered our enemy to us! The one who killed so many of us is now in our power!"

²⁵ Half drunk by now, the people demanded, "Bring out Samson so he can perform for us!" So he was brought from the prison and made to stand at the center of the temple, between the two pillars supporting the roof.

²⁶ Samson said to the servant who was leading him by the hand, "Place my hands against the two pillars. I want to rest against them." ²⁷ The temple was completely filled with people. All the Philistine leaders were there, and there were about three thousand on the roof who were watching Samson and making fun of him.

²⁸ Then Samson prayed to the Lord, "Sovereign Lord, remember me again. O God, please strengthen me one more time so that I may pay back the Philistines for the loss of my eyes." ²⁹ Then Samson put his hands on the center pillars of the temple and pushed against them with all his might. ³⁰ "Let me die with the Philistines," he prayed. And the temple crashed down on the Philistine leaders and all the people. So he killed more people when he died than he had during his entire lifetime.

Samson realized what had happened to him. He realized that his strength was found in God, and he called upon God to set him free.

Conclusion

Application: If we are willing to go back to any place of disobedience and face it, call it what God calls it

- sin - and confess it, it will be forgiven and the result will be victory and freedom.

Samson's story is a story of redemption and restoration. The same redemption and restoration are available to us when we turn to God, who is the source of our strength.