

HEROES OF FAITH - SAMSON

"Samson - Strong and Weak"

Judges 14:6a ["The Spirit of the LORD came upon him (Samson) with power ..."]

INTRODUCTION ... When we read the story of SAMSON (Judges 13-16), we may wonder why Hebrews 11 shows him as a HERO OF FAITH!

... This is a story about a man that God chose before his birth "to begin the work of rescuing Israel from the Philistines" - a man to whom God gave great strength - but a sad story of a man who lets his own lusts for pleasure, his anger and revenge, his disobedience make him very weak and helpless ... we could call him A WEAK STRONG MAN, or A STRONG WEAK MAN.

I. "Hello! I am SAMSON ...

"You may imagine me to be a giant of a man - not really! ... I didn't go to the gym everyday to work-out. The secret of my strength goes back before I was born servant of the LORD - that I would be called a NAZIRITE - that I would have great strength as long as I did not drink wine or cut my hair - that I would begin to rescue Israel from the enemy. No, NAZIRITE does not mean 'a person from Nazareth' - but hold on to that idea for moment. A wonderful beginning, right? ... certainly filled my parents with hope, right? ... I'm sorry to say, they became very disappointed in me.

"When I was a young man, I saw a girl in town ... I wanted her - lust! ... my parents warned me about marrying an un-believing Philistine girl, but I refused to listen ... but really before the wedding celebration was finished, this girl nagged me to tell the secret to a riddle ... I should have learned my lesson, but I didn't ... later I had a prostitute, and I let her trick me, and then a woman named DELILAH - also Philistines ... the Philistine kings paid Delilah to try to find out the secret to my strength

... I told her stories - she tied me with new ropes, new bow-strings - but the LORD gave me strength to break that as easily as weak thread! Finally, after much nagging, I told her about my hair - never yet cut! Philistines came in to capture me - I was weak and couldn't protect myself! The LORD's strength had left me!

"First, they cruelly made me blind ... and then made me a slave, or worse, to turn the mill-stone like a dumb ox! ... well, I guess that is what I was! One day they brought me to the temple of one of their false gods to mock me ... I asked the LORD to

give me strength one more time ... He gave it to me, and I was able to push down two middle columns supporting the whole building ... and the whole building fell down, killing the Philistine kings and many people and me."

II. An imperfect picture of the perfect Rescue-er

When we look at Samson, we feel disappointed ... God chose him for special service - to begin the rescue of Israel from the enemy ... but he seemed more interested in himself than in serving the Lord. We can think about other people that were chosen to serve, but they also served themselves more than they served God or other people: national leaders (president, congressmen, judges) ... TV preachers ... sometimes pastors of churches become trapped by temptation/sin ... and we feel disappointed. Then we think about ourselves: God chose us to serve Him and to serve our neighbors ... we have often failed pleasures than in serving God or neighbor. Again, disappointment!

But remember the One God chose to rescue all His people from sin/death - Jesus Christ ... He was not a NAZIRITE, but a NAZARENE (a man from Nazareth) ... He was a special servant - one that did not fail ... no-matter many people were disappointed about Jesus, God was not disappointed ... when Jesus was baptized, the Spirit of the Lord came to Him and gave Him great power ... but Jesus used that power to help/save other people... and, like Samson, He Himself died to save His people - and His death was filled with power to defeat the enemy (sin/death/devil). By trusting Christ, we are saved!

But why do we call Samson "a hero of faith"? ... not because his life was a good example for God's people ... but because, in his weakness, he asked the Lord in repentance & faith to give him strength one more time to destroy the enemy, as the Lord had chosen him to do. So also, in our weakness - especially the weakness of knowing that we have failed to do what God wants! - we ask the Lord in repentance & faith in Christ to give us strength so that we can be the servants that God has called us to be ... always "keeping our eyes on Jesus on whom our faith depends from beginning to end"... (Hebrew 12.1-13) ... trusting that He will strengthen our weak knees to walk on the straight path.

CONCLUSION So Samson, a WEAK (spiritually) STRONG (physically) MAN became a STRONG (spiritually) WEAK (physically) MAN by faith/trust in the LORD.