

Hebrews 11:32 “Samson’s “However” faith”

I. Introduction

II. Vs. 32c Faith’s strength in weakness

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Samson is NOT mostly remembered for his faith but rather for his physical strength and moral weakness. Yet with that said the author of Hebrews places his name among those heroes’ in the Hall of Faith. His story is found in chapters 13-16 of Judges and contain one on the best known stories in all the Bible. Before we begin this study we need to clear up a few things generally misunderstood about him.

1. **Great Strength:** The first has to do with his perceived strength and the belief that he had rippling muscles. When most folks think of Samson they think of a guy that looked like a body builder but the reality, according to the text, is that Samson didn’t draw any attention to his physical strength by the way he looked. There is quite a bit of circumstantial evidence that indicate this. **First** and foremost, we are told over and over is that his super natural strength came as the result of the fact that the “*Spirit of the Lord that came upon him*” not his time in the Gym. **Second**, this is proved by the fact that neither Delilah, the Philistines nor the Israelites seemed to know what the source of his great strength was. I venture to say that if it was his bulging biceps and rippling muscles everyone would have known.
2. **Great weakness:** The 2nd misconception centers on his failures. The first verse of chapter 13 speaks of the oft repeated cycle of sin with Israel that “*they again did evil in the sight of the Lord.*” When Samson’s time as judge is compare with Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon and Jephthah; you will find that in their case the nation of Israel “*cried out to the Lord*” for deliverance. But during Samson’s time as Judge; at no point during the 40 years of the nation be under occupation did they ever “cry out” for deliverance. Neither is there any mention of the people of God forming an army to help Samson in his battle against the Philistines. What we realize based upon this is that: **This was one man’s war against oppression that the nation didn’t want to fight against!** Though the Philistine’s were among the earliest to learn how to smelt Iron they didn’t use their technology to militarily over run Israel instead they used two palatable weapons that were very effective in destroying the people; “*trade and intermarriage*”. **Israel was being enslaved by spiritual and cultural seduction.** It was **Philistine ASSIMULATION combined with Hebrew APATHY** that led to God using Samson. **Israel hadn’t repented and didn’t want a liberator, so God sent to an unrepentant nation a rugged individualist who instead of fighting national battle was fighting personal ones that had national implications.** Samson always fought alone, was never joined by even one person in battle. Without minimizing our disgust at his personal moral failure we must understand that that Samson alone resisted the dangers of Philistine occupation.

II. Vs. 32c Faith’s strength in weakness

In Judges 13:1-25 we learn that what preceded Samson’s birth was another downward cycle of sin for the nation and the forty years of oppression was the longest period God sent Israel and Samson was Judge for 20 years of it. According to 1 Sam. 13 the Philistines had disarmed the Jews and Judges 15 tells us that the Israelites were content to allow them to rule over them and even bound Samson up to deliver him into their hands

Samson's life would be influenced by four women and **only his mother's relationship will be positive**. The Lord announced that his mother was to engage in a preemptive Nazirite vow. The word Nazirite comes from the Hebrew word "*Nazar*" which means "*separate*". This was meant to be a living demonstration for the nation of a lifelong separation of the nation to God. The problem was that **Samson lived his life separate from things but never separate too God! Samson was dedicated to the will of God but never dedicated to the God whose will it was**. Judges 13:24-25 reveals the source of Samson's strength in that "*the Spirit of the LORD began to move upon Him*". Samson is what Churchill described the Russians as "*A riddle wrapped up in a mystery inside and enigma*":

- **Bold before men but weak before women!**
- **Empowered by the Spirit yet yielding to fleshly appetites!**
- **Declared war on the Philistines, but hung around them and even tried to marry one!**
- **Fought the Lord's battles by day, and disobeyed the Lord's commandments by night!**
- **Name "Sunny" he ended up blinded by his own darkness! For 20 years he played like a champion but for 20 years he failed to act like a leader!**

In Judges 14:1 we read **a phrase that is repeated for us five times**: "*went down*". Though this is a geographical phrase in the case of Samson it has **spiritual implications**. He was called to be a deliverer while he was still in the womb but these chapters reveal a man who is **always "going down" the wrong path in life**. Samson is lived in a time described in Judges 17:6 "*when ..everyone did what was right in his own eyes*." The first recorded words of Samson in Judges 14:2 indicate this as they are "**I have seen a woman!**" Apart from the Spirit of the Lord coming upon him Samson never makes a right decision, he sees a woman and knows nothing about her and tells his parents "**Get her...she pleases me!**" To Samson she is only an object whose sole purpose is to please him. Samson's problem was NOT that he was attracted to beautiful women it was that he didn't take that attraction to the Lord's control. Samson is literally "*going down*" the wrong road to Timnah and somewhere along the way he finds himself in a vineyard and with being a Nazirite you would have thought that this might have been a sign to him but it wasn't. He is a man that was struggling being separate from the world because he had not ever been separate to the Lord. Samson is in a place where he shouldn't be heading to be near a gal he shouldn't be around and a lion comes out to devour him when the Spirit of the Lord enabled him to kill the Lion. Samson's problem was he went back through that same vineyard! **Friends never forget that God sends His Holy Spirit upon our lives for far more than ripping apart lions, He sends His Spirit so that we can live powerfully for the LION of the Tribe of Judah!** This will be a parable of Samson's life as **he will continually reach into that which is forbidden for whatever temporary sweetness he can gain**. Next we see Samson toying with the vows he made to God at his wedding party as he throws a 7-day drinking vest. He **lost control of his tongue and created a riddle out of the breaking of his vow**. With only six cryptic words Samson was convinced that there was no way he could lose. His bride first **enticed him** then she **controlled him** finally she **betrayed him**. Samson could kill a young lion with his bare hands but was overcome by the manipulative tears of a woman he lusted after.

No one could call Samson a coward as he was never reluctant to engage his enemies despite the odds against his success. The problem was not cowardice but rather **self centeredness** as every battle was always about him. In Judges 13:5 we were told that Samson's calling and purpose was to "*begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines*." And although this was accomplished through Samson I'm convinced that it **was never his intent to do so. Samson does not put God's calling first nor does he put**

his countries honor first, what should have been a God-given mission was reduced only to personal vendetta's. We never see Samson rallying the troops to march against the enemy for God and country. Instead he is a one-man army, fighting only for his own perceived rights. Yet with that said he was the only one of his kind: *“A man with fighting passionately for personal freedom in the midst of a society committed to compromise”*. It is in these two truths about Samson that we understand how he could be so morally compromised and yet be so powerfully used. *Samson simply did the right things for all the wrong reasons! He teaches us that it is far more important for Christians to be wise in their calling and purpose than just powerful in their gifting!* In spite of his personal failure Samson continued to enjoy success as seen in Judges 15 where in a moment of desperate need that the “*Spirit of the Lord*” rushed upon Samson and he snapped the new ropes like burnt threads and picked up the new jawbone and in the hand of Samson that jawbone “*did all the talking*” in the end 1,000 Philistines found themselves on the wrong end of an ass. The weapon used would have been under the ban of the Nazirite vow. And again we see that Israel enjoyed *A great victory through a compromised instrument!* Finally, in Judges 16 we see Samson travels 45 miles south to Gaza the southernmost city of Philistia all for the sole purpose of self indulgence. Saint’s pay attention here, *Samson didn’t fail because the temptation was too strong or inescapable, he failed because he toyed with it, seeking it out until he paid the price. He burst the fetters of his foes but not the cords of his lusts, burned the crops of his enemies but failed to extinguish the flames kindled by his own lust.* Samson had to know that going to Gaza (*one of the 5 major cities in Philistia*) would put him into a very dangerous situation as he was feared and hated, a wanted man. What this tells us is that *Samson deliberately exposed himself to the enemy and that his self-confidence was the spiritual weakness to go along with his moral weakness.* The sad reality is that Samson’s confidence was without any regard to the empowerment that he had received from the Lord. *He simply acquainted his invincibility to his ability instead of the Lord’s.* In verse 2-4 the Philistines quickly learn of Samson’s whereabouts and post guards outside the brothel and at the city gates. The city gates would have been massive studded with iron and covered in metal to make them fireproof and once locked there would have been no way out of the city. But Samson carried those enormous gates miles up hill and the Philistines must have been terrified upon awakening and finding the gates moved 4 ½ miles. *But beneath this amazing feat of strength and courage is a man who had power without purity, strength without self-control. Samson believed that God was not concerned with broken promises moral failings and the proof was he was still being used!* Samson sees a lady and we are told her name was Delilah and that should have been a clue to him as her name means “*to weaken or impoverish*”. Each of the 5 major city’s had a lord over it and it seems as though they all band together to make Delilah an offer that was *equivalent to 550 years of wages for the average worker.* Despite all the evidence of her betrayal he not only refuses to leave but tells her the secret. *This tells us that his problem was not ignorance, in fact for 40 years he had broken every part of that vow except one, “the cutting of his hair”.* His life had been hanging by a thread of that hair for a long time. There was no magic in his hair it was a symbol of his supposed separation to God but with it shaved his weak relationship would crumble. One of the most tragic verses in the Bible is here in verse 20 where we read “*But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him.*” How could he be so dumb not to see that Delilah was setting him up after three attempts? Vs. 21 This verse is a *great illustration of what sin does in our lives:*

1. “*Put out his eyes*”: First sin “*BLINDS*” us to the fact *there are consequences for the sinful choices we make. It was Samson’s eyes that had gotten him in trouble to begin with and now he finally had the physical blindness to go with his morally and spiritual blindness.*
2. “*They bound him with bronze fetters*”: Second we see that sin “*BINDS*” us, holding us captive, no longer able to move around as we once did. Sin offers its self as “*freedom*” but it is those very “*freedoms*” that eventually hold us captive.
3. “*He became a grinder in the prison*”: Finally, we see that sin “*GRINDS*” us around and around! Sin grinds our lives away all to which at first presented its self as freedom. *Samson, became a circus attraction chained doing the work of a slave women because he*

was a slave to women.

But Judges 16:22 is what I believe the author of Hebrews was thinking about with regards to Samson as the verse starts off with the biggest little word: “**However**”! Oh how thankful I am for the “**Howevers**” in the bible! Even in this failed state God had not abandoned him as his hair begins to grow back **an indication of God’s abounding grace and Samson’s willing repentance!** **Saint’s we all should have been shaved because of our shame and failure but God is not the God of just the 2nd chance but the 2 billionth chances.** In Judges 16:23-31 we see that though Samson had lived never learning from his repeated mistakes, so preoccupied with himself that he never saw himself as failing. He had broken his vows, sinned against the word of God and never lived up to his God-given potential. “**However**”; **God can take the most humbling experiences and use them for the syringe to distribute His grace.** God had to strip him from his flesh before He could cloth him in His righteousness. Samson is a man who:

- ***Had dedication without devotion***
- ***Has authority without accountability***
- ***Had power without purity***

This leads to what Hebrews 11 refers to his moment of faith in Judges 16:28 and only the 2nd time we hear Samson pray. We can see **three things in his prayer that reveal his heart of faith:**

1. Vs. 28 “*O Lord God, remember me, I pray!*” **Samson prayed as a man who had accepted God’s forgiveness, he wasn’t just remorseful, the past was the past and he WASN’T asking God to strengthen him for the past but rather for the present.**
2. Vs 28b “*Strengthen me, I pray, just this once*”: Samson **trust was totally in God** as he didn’t say, “*If I try real hard I know I can do this now that my hair is growing*”. **He uses three different names for God in verse 28 which emphasize this Yeh-ho-vaw, Ad-o-noy and El-o-heem.** That’s a new man talking, a man who is relying upon the Lord and not himself. Yet even in this there is a bit of self-centeredness in his request as it’s about his eyes not God’s honor.
3. Vs. 28c “*O God that I may with one blow take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!*” Samson’s request was **not done in private but in front of a blood thirsty mob and instead of being paralyzed by regret he saw his situation as an opportunity.**

Samson was being led about by a boy and asks if he can be put next to the pillars that held up the stadium which the boy thought nothing of. Folks, the reality is if Samson still had his sight he would have never been allowed anywhere near those pillars. **God was better able to use Samson in his weakness than he was in his strength.** The grace of God took the results of Samson’s failure and turned them into a great victory! Dear ones listen up, “***restoration is not based upon performance!***” When Samson had the physical capacity he was a miserable failure but now that “*his*” powers were gone God could use him. The truth is God uses, blinded, broken, forgiven sinners even when the above is a result of our own down fall. **Samson’s death was not a defeat it was a victory and the only thing that died that day was his failure as he died a hero!** A closer look at Hebrews 11 and the list of names that appear there suggests that perhaps it should be call “**The Hall of Reclaimed Failures**”. Even though we struggle with mediocrity, are prone to big blunders God can still use us!

