

## SAMSON

### Judges 13-16

In the world of fantasy heroes there seem to be two types. The real big heroes like Captain America, Superman, and Spiderman who not only have special powers, but are also smart and handsome. Then you have those who are more “specialists” like “Flash” or “The Human Torch,” who focus on a specific power. One example of that is the “Hulk,” who is very powerful, but of limited intellect. When Captain America gives instruction to the Avengers, he gives them specific, detailed statements. But to Hulk he just says, “Smash.”

Samson seems like a Hulk character. He rips off the ropes the Philistines use to bind him and kills 1,000 of them with the jawbone of a donkey. But he lets himself get into trouble time and again because of his weakness for women, not the loving relationship of marriage, but the erotic attraction that is so pushed into our faces today. In that way he was like Hercules who let himself be deceived by his wife Megara. But Samson is no simpleton. He is the one who tells riddles like this one in Judges:

Out of the eater, something to eat;  
out of the strong, something sweet.

Samson’s riddle is about how he found honey in the carcass of a lion he killed. But his enemies were only able to interpret it because his wife forced it out of him. How could someone strong and clever like Samson be so stupid? Why would God use such a flawed hero?

Samson’s foolishness reflects on our own. The average American spends 7 hours and 4 minutes staring at a screen per day. Globally, the average screen time per day is 6 hours 58 minutes. Now, you could say that a lot of that is time at work. Yet, Americans spend an average of 3 hours and 43 minutes on their phone per day. Most of that is not talking but keeping track of social media and flipping through the internet.

Though God has given us the most precious blessing on His Son Christ Jesus, what does that mean in our daily lives? Do we make time to let God talk us daily in Scripture? Do we take time in our stressful lives to pray? How much do we live out the eternal life God has given to us compared to things that consume our lives in this world?

Samson is one of the “Judges.” He hardly seems like the type of person you’d choose to run a courtroom. But “judge” is an awful translation. A much better word would be “Savior” or “hero.” The “Judges” were people who the Holy Spirit empowered to rescue God’s people from their enemies. Some, like Gideon and Samuel, were moral people. Jephthah, made a rash oath that ended up leading to the death of his daughter. Abimelech murdered his brothers. Samson falls into that camp of one who could rescue people with his strength, but not be a good leader for the people. So why did God call Samson, knowing his weaknesses?

We can see an answer in how the story of Samson ended. His weakness leads to him having his hair cut off and losing his power. He is blinded by the Philistines and dragged around in chains to provide “entertainment.” But in this, His weakest moment, he puts his trust in God. He asks God to give him the power to push over the pillars holding up the temple where the Philistines were worshiping their gods, even though Samson realizes this will kill him, too. The result as the book of Judges tells us is “Samson killed more in death than all in life.” God used Samson in his weakness to rescue His people.

Someone else experienced strength in weakness. St. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians:

Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

“For when I am weak, then I am strong,” How can that be? We see how in Christ Jesus who is almighty God, yet allowed Himself to become the weakest and experience death on the cross for us. Jesus turned the weakness of His death on the cross into the greatest victory of all, not killing thousands of Philistines, but taking away the sins of the world.

That speaks profoundly to us. God calls us, not because we are strong or rich or mighty or brilliant, but as we are. God works through even the weakest to bring His work into this world. Why? Because if God works through the weak, then it is seen as coming from God, not us. God doesn’t do that because He has such a great ego, but because he loves us and knows that our lives are only fulfilled as we trust in Him. Otherwise we would get proud like Samson or how Paul was tempted to be and forget that our real strength lies in God, not us. It is like being rescued when drowning. The great desire is to struggle, to try to rescue ourselves by our actions. But that only makes things worse. The best thing to do is nothing but place our trust in the lifeguard who is trying to rescue us. Then our weakness leads to strength, to being rescued.

Often lost in the story of Samson is how he came to be. God’s angel came upon his mother who was childless and told her she would give birth. She told her husband, Minoah, who believed what she said. They were simple people, but God used them to bring about Samson, who rescued God’s people from the Philistines. Without them, there would have been no Samson. Of course God could have simply snapped His fingers and defeated the Philistines, but instead He chose to work through people as He does today.

God chose to save the world through a human, His Son, Christ Jesus. And He did it not with a conquering army, but by His humbling death on a cross. In the greatest weakness God brought the greatest strength. And He continues to work in our world today through human beings like you and me, not with the strength of might, but by His great love in Christ Jesus.