

## Judges Ch 15

In Prov 16:32 Solomon made this statement, *“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that rules his spirit than he that takes a city.”* And as we study Samson’s life I can’t help but wonder if he wasn’t thinking of Samson when he made that statement. Because Samson could take a city with no problem, but he couldn’t rule his own spirit, and ultimately that led to his ruin and what he had the potential to accomplish to the glory of God was cut radically short by his lack of self-control. And in Prov 25:28 we read, *“Whoever has no rule over his own spirit Is like a city broken down, without walls.”* Now the walls of a city was it’s stronghold, if you penetrated the walls of a city, or there were no walls then the obvious implication is that it has no real defense system, it can be easily over ran and brought into bondage by an enemy. Because it has no real way to defend itself, it’s open to attack from any angle at anytime, and so a city with out walls would really be just open prey to the enemy. And whenever the enemy would want that city, it would just wait until that city was unexpected and take it by surprise and bring it into subjection and servitude. And that’s exactly what happened with Samson, he was like a city with out walls, a force to be reckoned with but when caught off guard, being blinded and deceived by sin, he was easily taken and brought into subjection and servitude. Well you recall that last week we were observing his wedding ceremony to this Philistine woman and he gave 30 Philistine men who were there to sort of make up the wedding party a riddle. Because he had killed this lion in a vineyard and then sometime later upon checking the thing out he’d found that some bee’s had made a hive in it’s dried out carcass and there was honey that he had extracted from lion. And he told these guys that if they could answer his riddle with in 7 days, then he’d give them all a change of clothes, but if they couldn’t then they’d all have to give him a change of clothes. And so they said, go for it what’s the riddle? And in vs 14 we read, (read) and they didn’t have a clue. And so they began to harass his wife to be saying, here you are marrying this Israelite, and he’s making a fool out of your own people, if you don’t find out the answer to this riddle we’re going to burn you and your fathers house with fire. And so instead of confiding in Samson of their plan, she turned on the tears and began to press him and press him and press him and so finally he told her what had happened, and in turn she told the men. And on the 7<sup>th</sup> day before the sun went down they said to him, *“what is sweeter than honey, and what is stronger than a lion?”* And man he got mad, and he said, *“If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have solved my riddle!”* And don’t get me wrong he was mad at his wife for betraying him that’s why he scorned her like that, but there’s a lesson that’s tucked away in there for us. The point was, that they used her, to get to him. And it was wrong, and there are times when people want to say something to me, or get a message to me, or see something changed and instead of coming straight to me, they’ll go to my wife. And they’ll engage her in conversation knowing that through her it will get to me, and so they seek to manipulate a circumstance or situation through means of my wife speaking to me their perspective. And let me tell you, that’s wrong, and not just in my circumstance in any circumstance, we’re not to be plowing with other men’s heifers. (Pardon the phrase) If you want to say something to me, say it to me, if you want me to get a message, then deliver it personally or don’t deliver it at all.

Now you understand what I'm saying, I'm not saying you can't have conversation with my wife, but if you're seeking to somehow manipulate a circumstance, or approach her with a "hey, you know I was wondering why doesn't Jeff do this", or "maybe you could encourage him to try that."

Then you're plowing with my heifer, and you're out of line, you're using her to try to work me over on a certain issue, you see you're seeking to plow me over with her. And if I discern that then we'll have an issue, most of the time you'll probably get no response and I'll completely ignore your request just due to the way you went about suggesting it, but if it keeps up I'll have to approach you about it. But that's what these men did and it brought some serious ramifications, because Samson got mad and he went down to Ashkelon, killed 30 philistines and made good on his debt. But he was so mad that he never even consummated the marriage, he just went back to his dad's house to cool off, now meanwhile rather than allowing his little girl to be disgraced like that, this philistine father gave his daughter to Samson's best man. Now that's where ch 15 picks up and since it's the time of the wheat harvest it was probably around June, hot and dry.

#### Vs1-2

So Samson thinking that they're still married, after he cools off, takes his box of chocolates, (that being a young goat) down to his wife, he's going to make up with her. But when he gets there he can't even see her because the dad says, hey, you took off. I thought you hated her after that deal, so I gave her to the best man. (Oh boy) we have a problem, Samson has already paid the dowry, but now he doesn't have a wife, and the woman that he was so in lust with has been given away. Now the dad tries to make it all better by saying, "I know, why don't you take her younger sister, she's better looking anyway?" But if Samson was hot before, he's on fire now, and we see how even though he's really waging war from what he would be considering personal issues, (if Samson's life were a movie, it would somewhere in the advertising aspect of it say, "this time it's personal") yet God is still using it to keep the philistines in check. Remember in vs 4 of ch 14 we read where God would use this as an occasion against the Philistines. Because if Samson were to really deal with this as it should have been done, speaking from a logical point of view from the human perspective, this issue would have never left the circle of this family. Because it's nobody else's fault that her dad gave her to another man. But God is turning Samson against the Philistines, he's causing him to see them for the enemy that they are, and in his mind if those 30 guys would have never violated his wife with their threats then he'd be a happily married man. So he doesn't see this as a family issue, he sees it as a Philistine issue. Of course ultimately it was an issue with his own heart because he should have never been there in the 1<sup>st</sup> place, and he never should have given into the passions of his flesh. But now he's got all these issues to deal with and you can see why the scriptures exhort us to keep our hearts with all diligence, literally to guard or protect our hearts, it speaks of a military post, keeping guard to protect or secure. Why, because out of it, (that is the heart) spring the issues of life (Prov 4:23).

#### Vs3

So I may've been a little over anxious regarding those 30, but this time you've brought it on yourself. And he's going to hit them where it hurts, right in the stomach.

#### Vs4-5

Now it says foxes, this same word could have been translated "jackals" and that's what most people believe since foxes kind of travel alone but jackals travel in packs, in the upwards of even a couple of hundred in a pack. And so Samson (and we're not told how long he trapped these things but I believe we can safely assume he didn't trap them all in one night.) But when he has 300 of these jackals he grabs 2 at a time and ties a piece of rope or something to each of their tails and saturates a torch and ties 2 of them together with the torch in the center.

Now I'm sure that that fact alone sent these wild jackals into a frenzy, add to that the fact that there was fire between them and burning them in time and these things went nuts, heading in every which direction and when it was all said and done there were massive prairie fires and vineyard fires, olive orchard fires. And you know how hard of a time those 22,000 fire fighters are having or were having I'm not sure where they are with it now, but there was 22,000 of them out west trying to contain this out of control fire. And they have the help of helicopters, modern technology, chemicals, probably hundreds of thousands of gallons of water, and so you can just imagine this frenzy of jackals heading every which way in the dry times of the year, running as hard as they can setting everything on fire as they go, the kind of destruction that was procured. And so you can see how Samson kept the Philistines in check, he would weaken their military, their economy through massive destruction of their crops and they were always busy just cleaning up the mess that he would leave behind. But when it was all over the Philistines begin to investigate how all this happened, and low and behold they discovered it was the menace of Israel whom they just couldn't control or capture, Samson. And we see here just how heartless the enemy is, this Philistine woman's worry about being burned, literally backfired. She had deceived her husband to try and save her life, but they burned her anyway, you've heard the phrase, "if you play with fire you're going to get burned." And it's just like the enemy, Satan is a liar, the bible says that he's the father of lies and that in him there is no truth. And you've seen the movies where the bad guy has someone held hostage and their threatening kill them if you don't give them what they want, then they get what they want and kill the hostage anyway. That's kind of what we have happening here, her deception affected a lot of people in a horrific way. But that's the way sin is, you think that maybe it's wrong but in the end good will come of it, but ultimately it never works out that way. She was saving her house from being burned she thought, and in that one act she set forth a domino effect that cause massive fires to ignite everywhere and ultimately in the end she was burned herself, what a lesson for you and me.

#### Vs6-8

So Samson sees their retaliation as a blow life, if they wanted him they should have come to him, but they went to those whom he seemed to care about and killed them instead and so basically was infuriated and said, that's it I'm not going to stop until I feel I have my revenge. That's another way to understand vs 7; he's saying since you've killed an innocent family (so to speak) in that they weren't the one's who set those fires.

He says, I'm just going to start killing you guys until I feel gratification in my revenge, so you better run. And this phrase in vs 8 "he attacked them hip and thigh with a great slaughter" basically means he unmercifully annihilated these Philistines until he felt like stopping. There was just a total destruction of any and all that he got a hold of, and so he single-handedly brutalized some Philistine army or something. But you know if we were to look back just a little bit farther than his wife, where does the blame for all of this destruction and no doubt heartache for hundreds if not thousands of people, including Samson, lie? It lies with Samson, in that he never should have given his heart to this Philistine girl to be unequally yoked in the 1<sup>st</sup> place, he sown the seeds and now it's harvest time and what a radical payment it's been. It's been said that we can choose the sin, but we can't choose the consequences. And when we sow to disobedience, the harvest is inevitable, many times we make these great sacrifices in our own eyes to the Lord, or when we mess up we try to make it right by making some sort of sacrifice. But the bible says that to obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams. Why, because had we obeyed in the 1<sup>st</sup> place we wouldn't be in the mess that we are. And what's happening here is the whirlwind of retaliation, someone does something, the other strikes back, and then in response to that the other group hits again only this time a little harder. Well, I'm not going to be humiliated like that, I'm going to have the upper hand in this deal, and so we hit again in a more devastating way than before, and the vicious cycle is started that never seems to end. And that's what Samson is in the middle of, you see he knows that they aren't going to stand by and let him walk all over them like that and so after he slaughters these guys he retreats up to a Mt cleft in a place called Etam.

#### Vs9-11

So the Philistines understanding that they have a massive force to be reckoned with realize that the only way that this is going to come to an end is to search out, seek, and destroy Samson, and so they deploy a massive army (we're not told how many but due to the fact that Israel sends 3000 men to Samson and they are his own people, you can rest assured that the Philistines outnumbered them.) But the thing that's amazing in this passage is the revelation of the spiritual condition of Israel at this time. When the Philistine army came up and encamped in Judah, they didn't meet even a single ounce of resistance, but instead they sought to accommodate the enemy. They said why are you here? And they said, we want Samson, now their talking about their hero here, Israel's deliverer, now did Judah say, hey, wait a minute, we're not giving that guy to you if you want him you're going to have to go through us? No, they said, oh yeah, he's that trouble maker from the tribe of Dan, so not only did they not try to protect him, but they sent a force of 3000 of their own men to bring him back to the Philistines so that they could kill him. They told Judah straight out that they planned to kill him, but it tells you what kind of respect he demanded when even his own countrymen sent out 3000 men to seek to bring him to the Philistines. But I'll bet Samson's jaw almost dropped open when these men approached him, maybe at 1<sup>st</sup> he thought alright an army at last. I mean can you imagine what Samson could accomplish for Israel with the foundation and backbone of 3000 men? It would be absolutely staggering, but instead as they approach he's all, "what's up" and they say what are you doing stirring things up around here, don't you know that these guys rule over us, we've got to hand you over lest they kill us all.

And Samson's heart hits the floor, here it was, the moment Israel had been waiting for, shot down due to the compromised condition of Israel, and there are a few lessons in here for us. #1 The people had become thoroughly accommodated to the spiritual status quo, they could imagine why the pagans would have an issue with them, and on top of that they were all mad because Samson was rocking the boat. Let me just say that if you find yourself amazed that people in the world have issue with you, then you're caution lights should be flashing. You see by the very fact that they ask these questions of him, what are you doing, why are you rocking the boat, that illustrates to us that they are preferring slavery as opposed to freedom. It's possible as believers to come to the place where we actually consider the comfort of compromise preferable over the commitment to the calling of God on our lives. And I see it quite often, people just decide that it's better to live in compromise because they don't like dealing with the attack and oppression of the enemy, they'd rather succumb to servitude, then stand their ground and fight, it's easier that way. Here they had a leader of amazing strength, no one could touch him, God had promised to give them victory over their enemies, they had an army of 3000 to rally behind him, they could have went to war, thrown off the enemy and been free. But they had become so degraded and tainted by compromise that instead of supporting him they stood against him, hindered what God could've accomplished.

Listen, In Christ you have a leader of amazing strength, no one can touch Him, God has promised to give you victory, and if you'll only recognize Him as your leader and rally behind him you can throw the enemy off and be free. But instead we can get to that place where we've so accommodated and saturated ourselves with the world's lifestyle, and the presence of sin in our lives that we just accept it and give up the fight and in reality become a hindrance as opposed to a help. We limit what God wants to do in our lives because we'd quite frankly rather just live in bondage, it's easier that way. And something to go along with that; we see here that the compromised have no time for the committed; Samson was an embarrassment to them. They'd have rather seen him dead at the enemy's hands, then change themselves. You know it's a sad fact of Christian experience that if you are a committed individual, with a heart to grow and mature in Jesus Christ that most of the time you will be hindered the most by compromised Christians who are satisfied having a carnal life if not returning to the world all together. I can't tell you how many times I've seen it and 9 times out of 10 when 2 friends come to Christ together and one of them you can tell has a genuine hunger for Christ and they want to know the Lord, but their friend even though they started that way begins to kind of wax and wane a bit and rather than consider Christ as their priority. Instead of counting the cost and severing that relationship to pursue the one they've began with Christ, they choose their buddy or their girlfriend over Christ and down the road they go, it happens with marriages that way to (many times) and it's sad but in generally happens that way, not always, rarely one *will* pull out of that trap and pursue Christ regardless, but most of the time it goes the other way. Bad company corrupting good morals and godly convictions.

Something else we see here or #2 is that the enemy ignored the “believers” they had no quarrel with them because they represented no threat, they weren’t in opposition to the enemy, if you’re facing opposition, then thank God because you’re causing the enemy to stand up and take notice. But if you never face opposition it could be because you don’t need it, you’re going the same way, when you go the same way as someone you’ll never face them. You have to turn and go the opposite direction to do that, and 3rdly the compromised people were doing the enemies work for them. So if you’re not actively involved in the battle for Jesus Christ then you can positively become a hindrance to the cause of Jesus Christ even as they were hindering the cause of Samson. This is the only time in Samson’s Judgeship that Israel ever formed an army, and it was to capture one of their own men.

### Vs12-13

Now Samson has had some bad moments but this is a pinnacle type moment for him, at least 3 ways that his faith is demonstrated here. #1 In his treatment of the Israelites, he had every right to be furious with these compromisers, these traitors. But instead he did everything that he could so as not to attack his own people. That’s why he made them promise not to kill him, because then he’d have had to defend himself, which would have wound up shedding the blood of his own people. But instead he let them tie him up, and deliver him right into the enemy’s hands, only a deep seated trust in the Lord and God’s purposes in his life could have caused him to deal so kindly with a people who were mistreating him so badly. So this is a great moment in his life, also #2 his faith is demonstrated in his approach to the enemy, think about it, here he is, bound up, surrounded by 3000 traitors being fed right into the teeth of thousands of bloodthirsty vengeful minded men that (as we’ll see) erupt with a shout of victory as soon as they see Samson being brought to them.

Only faith in God can produce such calm courage in the face of such overwhelming opposition. And you begin to see why he was included in the Heb 11 hall of faith, he knew in Whom he trusted, and though you could say a lot of negative things about him, you can’t call him a coward, it’s apparent that he trusted the Lord here. And 3rdly his faith in God gave him great victory.

### Vs14-17

So as he’s being brought to them he’s surveying his surroundings sees this fresh jawbone of a donkey there and as the Spirit of the Lord comes upon him he snaps those ropes picks up that jaw bone and rushes the enemy. And there’s just a panicked frenzy I have no doubt and before they no what’s happening they’re just seeing blood and bodies fly everywhere and before they can all escape he’s killed a thousand of them. And you know what’s amazing, 3000 men of the tribe of Judah just stood there watching, not so much as one of them picking up a Philistine sword or shield to help. So he’s just swinging this jawbone and sinking it into skulls and when it’s all over he says (read vs 16) and then throws it aside and called the place “Jawbone heights” or “the hill of the Jawbone” in regards to the heaps of bodies that were a result of that jawbone.

But then as the adrenaline kind of subsided he realized how thirsty he was, you know killing a 1,000 men in the heat of the summer causes a man to work up a pretty good thirst, and so we read in vs 18.

Vs18

You know what just happened, Samson just became profoundly aware of his own human frailty, he was humbled and reminded of his need for God. I'm sure that killing 1,000 men single handedly could give one an ego complex, but notice how something as simple as water brings him to his knees. In vs 16 it's the victory cry of pride, "I" have slain 1,000 men. But notice in his frailty how his focus is re-centered, in vs 18 he says, "You" in regards to the Lord, "have given this great deliverance by the hand of *Your* servant", that's it Samson, now you're getting it, now you're giving glory where glory is due, it's the Lord who has done the work. And in our pride God will often remind us of our frailty, so that we're reminded of our need for Him and that He's the One doing the work. But Samson realizes that his physical condition can play a real part in his spiritual condition, God made us spirit, mind, and body. And when we're ill, or lacking in sleep, or physically drained, or just in poor health, all of those things can affect us spiritually. So recognize that a physical draining can upset you spiritually, and make you more susceptible to the enemy. But once Samson got his focus right, God refreshed him.

Vs19

The spring of the caller.

Vs 20

So even though none of them would help, at least now the Jews in watching God move in Samson's life have gone from being willing to betray him, to following him, and so for the next 20 yrs after this event, Samson Judged Israel.