

The GIFT of God - Part 6

Sunday, June 30, 2019
10:30 AM

I would like to revisit the life of Samson one more time as it relates to The Gift of God.

Key Texts:

Judges 13:24 New International Version (NIV)

24 The woman gave birth to a boy and named him Samson. He grew and the Lord blessed him,

25 and the Spirit of the Lord began to stir him while he was in Mahaneh Dan, **between Zorah and Eshtaol.**

Judges 16:21-31 New International Version (NIV)

21 Then the Philistines seized him, gouged out his eyes and took him down to Gaza. Binding him with bronze shackles, they set him to grinding grain in the prison. **22** But the hair on his head began to grow again after it had been shaved.

23 Now the rulers of the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to celebrate, saying, “Our god has delivered Samson, our enemy, into our hands.”

24 When the people saw him, they praised their god, saying,

“Our god has delivered our enemy
into our hands,
the one who laid waste our land
and multiplied our slain.”

25 While they were in high spirits, they shouted, “Bring out Samson to entertain us.” So they called Samson out of the prison, and he performed for them.

When they stood him among the pillars, **26** Samson said to the servant who held his hand, “Put me where I can feel the pillars that support the temple, so that I may lean against them.” **27** Now the temple was crowded with men and women; all the rulers of the Philistines were there, and on the roof were about three thousand men and women watching Samson perform. **28** Then Samson prayed to the Lord, “Sovereign Lord, remember me. Please, God, strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes.” **29** Then Samson reached toward the two central pillars on which the temple stood. Bracing himself against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other, **30** Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines!” Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus he killed many more when he died than while he lived.

31 Then his brothers and his father's whole family went down to get him. They brought him back and buried him **between Zorah and Eshtaol** in the tomb of Manoah his father. He had led Israel twenty years.

The same place that it is noted that the Lord blessed Samson and began to move upon his life, is the same place that is mentioned as his final resting place. Perhaps there is a message in that? A message that causes us to ponder what happened in between those two events? Someone has made note of the dates on grave stones and the dash that is in between - the date of birth and the date of death - stating that it is what happens in the dash that is most important

We were privileged to see the Sight and Sound production of Samson in Branson while on Vacation. One of the things they rightfully point out at the beginning of this story is the fact that Samson is listed in the book of Hebrews Chapter 11 as one of the Heroes of the Faith.

Hebrews 11:32-34 New International Version (NIV)

32 And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, **33** who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, **34** quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies.

They acknowledge too, what we have already said; that Samson's life doesn't seem to be one that would warrant inclusion in Hebrews Chapter 11, but it is. They proceed to tell the story of Samson's life as they interpret how it may have been. Of course, we cannot know for sure what Samson's childhood may have been like or what factors may have motivated the decisions he made, but it got me to thinking about Samson as a person.

When I look at Samson's life I feel a sense of loneliness and loss, Sadness and struggle. It is not one of those stories that makes you feel good at the end. And so I began to ask. How did Samson end up where he did? What was missing from his life?

I pictured him blind, defeated by his own sinful choices, bound by shackles and chained to that large mill stone as he was forced to push it round and round grinding thee grain in prison. As I considered what may have been going through Samson's mind, I felt like The Holy Spirit dropped a word into my heart - **BURDENED**. If felt like that picture not only represented this point in his life but the entirety of it. And then this scripture...

Matthew 11:28-30 New International Version (NIV)

28 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. **29** Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **30** For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

I continued to consider what may have burdened Samson's life and our lives today that keeps us from realizing the fullness of God's Gift for us.

1. Burdened by Position

Perhaps Samson felt the burden of the position into which he had been born. An Israelite, A Nazarite, different than other people with a different set of rules. An Israelite in a world controlled by Philistines. Maybe he felt his position isolated him from others. Maybe he felt his position would not afford him the same choices that others have.

Maybe you feel burdened by the position you are in today.

- a. A Christian in world that is increasingly hostile to Christians
- b. Single
- c. Divorced
- d. Widowed
- e. Unhappily Married
- f. Financially poor
- g. Young but want to be older
- h. Old but want to be young

2. Burdened by Responsibilities

- a. So much to do
- b. Everything falls on our shoulders
- c. What would happen to those we love if we don't continue

3. Burdened by Wants & Desires

- a. We often make the mistake of thinking that if we get what we want we will no longer feel burdened. Yet it is often the obtaining of our wants and desires that causes us to feel burdened.
- b. We calling them addictions
- c. They control us, direct us, consume us

4. Burdened by What Has Been and What Could Be

- a. Sometimes the remembrances of what we have had Burdens our thoughts and lives
 - i. Children hat have grown up
 - ii. A spouse or loved one that has passed away.
 - iii. Our health and youth

5. Burdened by Failure

How is it that having been given the gift of God, Samson missed the point of the gift for his own life?

Matthew 11:28-30 New International Version (NIV)

28 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. **29** Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **30** For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

1. His Yoke offers Companionship

We are not in it alone. We have one who walks alongside us and shares the burden

Psalms 55:22 New International Version (NIV)

22 Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous be shaken.

1 Peter 5:7 Amplified Bible (AMP)

7 casting all your cares [all your anxieties, all your worries, and all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares about you [with deepest affection, and watches over you very carefully].

2. His Yoke offers Strength

3. His Yoke Offers a Framework

a. Of Perspective

Many of us are more active on vacation than at work; what changes is our reason for activity. We feel energized on vacation because we want to do certain things. - John Maxwell

b. Of Boundaries

c. Of Direction (Guidance and Purpose)

Alone, rest