

Place: Lurgan Baptist 28:1:2003

Reading: Judges chapter 13:1-25

## HEARTS OF IRON, FEET OF CLAY

### 10. A UNIQUE MAN FOR A UNIQUE TIME

From Greek mythology to Saturday morning cartoons, from Hercules to the He Man of the universe .... Hero's loom immortal in our imagination. And no hero casts such a long and impressive shadow as Samson. His incredible strength reads like Superman's. Samson killed a lion with his bare hands .... slaughtered thirty Philistines who had plotted against him .... defeated a thousand man band of enemies with the jawbone of an ass .... destroyed the city gates at Gaza. But just as Superman was vulnerable to kryptonite, so Samson had a chink in his armour through which his greatness was sapped, for when it came to women, he melted before his own passions. *He was a He-Man with a She Weakness. Bold before men, Samson was weak before women, and couldn't resist telling them his secrets. Empowered by the Spirit of God he yielded his body to the appetites of the flesh.*

Called to declare war on the Philistines, he fraternized with the enemy and even married a Philistine woman. He fought the Lord's battles by day, and disobeyed the Lord's commandments by night. Given the name "*Samson*," which means "*sunny*," he ended up in the darkness, blinded by the very enemy he was supposed

to conquer. Samson's last chapter was a sad story of binding, blinding and grinding. His mother may have been a strong centre of gravity in his childhood home, but once Samson launched from there, he took off on a misguided orbit that revolved around three women .... His bride, a harlot and Delilah. His desires for these women formed a magnetic field that pulled him off God's course and put him onto a collision course that led to his demise. Now the story of Samson has been approached in three ways. Some have approached it:

#### 1. IN A MYTHICAL WAY:

They have treated Samson's story as an excellent piece of Hebrew folk lore. They have taken out of all the ancient books of the world wonderful tales of giants, hero's etc; those with astonishing feats of strength and they have likened Samson to one of these.

#### 2. IN A MYSTICAL WAY:

They have presented Samson to us a type of the Lord Jesus. They speak about his miraculous birth, his Nazarite vow, his battling with the roaring lion. His permitting himself to be bound and delivered up by his own people, into the hand of the enemy as the price of their safety. They speak about his role as the Deliverer of Israel, his self-sacrifice in Dagon's Temple. All of these things they tell us establish Samson as a type of the Lord Jesus. To this approach I would simply say, pick a better type than Samson.

#### (3) IN A PRACTICAL WAY:

I am sure that this is the approach Paul takes not only with Samson but with others. Do you recall his words, “ For whatsoever things were written foretime were written for our learning.” ( Rom 15:4 ) So we are going to consider Samson not Mythically, or Mystically but Practically. Four chapters in the Book of Judges are devoted to the history of Samson, and for the next five studies we are going to look at him. In order that we might understand God’s man for the Times let’s begin by considering the times for the man. Notice:

### **(1) SAMSON’S PEOPLE WERE SENSUAL**

Apparently the apostasy mentioned here was part of the total abandonment of the worship of Jehovah recorded in ( 10:6 ) where we are told that Israelites gave themselves over to a seven fold idolatry including the worship of the gods of the Philistines. You get the impression in the book of Judges that the needle is stuck for her is the seventh cycle of Israel’s downward spiral into anarchy and apostasy. However ( 13:1 ) is not a simple repetition. For this statement tells us two things that are essential to a proper understanding of the life of Samson. Notice for egg:

#### ***(a) THE ADVERSARY THAT MASTERED THEM:***

The Philistines ! ( 13:1 ) It was during Samson’s life that they appeared as Israel’s major enemy. They had appeared briefly during the ministry of Shamgar ( 3:31 )  
But it was during Samson’s time that they appeared as

public enemy number one. Now who were these Philistines ? Well think about:

#### **1. Their HISTORY:**

They were a people who had been forced out of their homeland in the area of Greece and the Aegean Sea. They had set out by sea to look for a new home, and, around 1200 BC., a main force of “ *Sea People*,” had attacked Egypt. They were defeated so they moved up the coast to the southern coastal plain of Palestine, where some earlier refugees had settled, and by Samson’s time they had established themselves in five main cities .... Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, and Gath. 1.

#### **2. Their STRATEGY:**

You see, they had great military strength because they had learned how to smelt iron. And with these iron weapons, they could have overrun Israel by direct attack but they didn’t. Rather than marching as an obvious enemy, the two main weapons they used were trade and intermarriage. You see, if the Israelites wanted a plough they had to go to the Philistines to get one.

( 1 Sam 13:19 ) If they wanted to marry their sons or daughters the Philistines had no objection. ( Samson ) My .... do you see what the enemy was doing ? They were gaining a stranglehold on the Israelites choking them to death by compromise and assimilation. ( 10:6 ) Now those are the times into which Samson entered ! And are they not similar to ours ?

In a reaction to isolationism so many Christians have ended up assimilating the values and lifestyles of unbelievers. Too often associating with sinners has meant associating with sin, so they have lost their distinctiveness. Do you recall what John says ? “ *Love not the world neither the things that are in the world.*” ( 1 Jn 2:15 ) Paul says “ *Be not conformed to this world.*” ( Rom 12:2 ) A paraphrase puts it like this, “ *Do not let the world around squeeze you into its mould.*” This world, this system that is opposed to God wants to turn out carbon copies that think as it thinks, acts as it acts, do as it does, and go where it goes. My .... Is this not the strategy of the enemy ? That we be assimilated into this world !

### 3. Their VICTORY:

You see, Samson “ *judged Israel in the days of the Philistines,*” ( 15:20 ) that means that his twenty years in office were during the forty years of Philistine rule. Dr. Leon Wood dates the beginning of Philistine oppression about 1095 BC and the end in 1055 BC. About the middle of this period was the time when Israel was defeated by the Philistines and the ark was taken and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas were slain. ( 1 Sam 4:11 ) Dr. Wood suggests that this was the very time when Samson began to rule as a judge. (a)

### ***(b) THE APATHY THAT MARKED THEM:***

Do you recall how the cycle of sin went in the past ? There was Sin, followed by Suffering, then

Supplication and then Salvation. ( 3:5 ) You see, they always reached a point where they cried to God for deliverance but not here. Things were going too well for that. It was a time of affluence. The Jews were apparently content with their lot. ( 15:9-13 ) Because there was no national repentance, there was no national deliverer. The people of God were slowly but surely losing their personal identity, but they were so ignorant of what was going on that when God did send Samson they were ready to hand him over to death rather than upset the Philistines. ( 15:11 ) Now there is the times for the man, but look at the man for the times. (1)

### **(2) SAMSON’S PERSON WAS SPECIAL**

You see, this was a unique man for a unique time. Now Israel were facing a unique situation. They had not repented so the Lord did not send a national deliverer. Samson was an individualist fighting personal battles. Dr. Leon Wood suggests that his main job was “ *to harass the Philistines and keep them from successfully overrunning the land and menacing the people.*” Now Samson stands in contrast to all the other judges. The other judges led a repentant people against the enemy, but Samson fought alone and his battles were personal affairs. When we study his life and see his enormous failures we need to try and balance our disgust with the recognition that Samson single-handedly exposed the dangers of the Philistines and held back their control of Israel. This was certainly a unique time for this unique time there was this unique man.

You see, Samson was a Nazarite unto God from his mothers womb. Indeed his great strength was then outcome of his obedience to the Nazarite vow. In other words the blessing and strength of the Lord were conditioned by the vows of the Nazarite. Well, what were these vows ? ( Num 6:1-8 ) Now the word “ *Nazir,*” in Hebrew means “ *to set apart,*” or “ *to separate,*” and so a Nazirite was a person who had dedicated himself or separated himself to God. Look at ( Num 6:2,5,6,8 ) The purpose of the vow was for a man to cut himself off from other things, so that he could devote himself especially to the Lord. Now this vow was not a lifelong condition, it only lasted for a set period of time, but for Samson it was different. All his life he was to live under this vow. Now this Nazarite vow involved 3 important things. Samson had to:

**(a) Refrain from Worldly STIMULATION:**

Look at ( Num 6:3-4 ) There was to be entire abstinence not only from wine and strong drink but from all the produce of the vine. (a) As such Samson was to offer a Protest against the intemperance that had grown in Israel. ( 1 Sam 3:12 ) My .... Wine in Scripture is referred to as “ *mockers,*” ( Prov 20:1 ) “ *a trouble maker,*” ( Prov 23:20 ) and as “ *a serpent who bites at the last.*” ( Prov 23:32 ) In this context it’s the symbol of artificial stimulation and irresponsible living. No wonder Paul says, “ *Be not drunk with wine ....*” ( Eph 5:18 ) We’re living in a day when artificial stimulation is designed to lead astray the people of

God.

We cannot read the paper, listen to the radio, watch the T.V. without sensing the power of the enemy in this regard. ( Lev 10:8 Deut 29:6 Rom 14:9 Gal 5:21 )

**(b) Refrain from Worldly CONFORMATION:**

( Num 6:5 ) His separation to God could not be concealed. Samson was a marked man, distinguishable in any company. His unshorn head made a manifest difference in the sight of others, he was not to conform to the standards around him. The true servant of Christ neither acknowledging the principles nor guided by the maxims of this world must be content to be singular, wondered at, even regarded as extreme.

( Lk 7:33 2 Cor 11:1 ) Is it not this very element in consecration that keeps many back from full surrender ?

They are unwilling to give up conformity to the world, and to suffer the offence of the cross. Is this you ? Are you conforming to the customs, practices and fashions of society ? Allowing the world to squeeze you into its mould. ( Rom 12:2 ) The popular cry in most religious circles today is “ *Get with it.*” But God says, “ *Get out of it.*” Gullible Christians everywhere are unaware of Satan’s strategy to squeeze them into the world’s mould.

**(c) Refrain from Worldly PUTREFACTION:**

Look at ( Num 6:6-7 ) The Nazarite was not even to touch his dead relatives. Death is the fruit of sin and therefore its symbol. You see, in his devotion to God

even the claims of natural affection must take second place to higher claims. Is this not a striking reminder of the words of Christ ? “ *He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me.* ” ( Matt 10:37 ) The Lord should occupy first place in the affections of His people. He must come before father, mother etc; Is Christ first in your heart ? In your home ? Samson was to avoid all contact with the dead. The Scriptures warn us “ *Come out from them and be ye separate saith the Lord.* ” ( 2 Cor 6:7 ) You see, Samson was a unique man for a unique time. God specifically raised up Samson for a definite purpose. God intended Samson to be a lesson, carved in flesh to confront his people with some great truths about separation. You see, separation is a positive dedication to the Lord. ( Num 6:2,5,6,7,8 )

True, he was a man separated from certain things but above all he was a man separated unto God ! Are you a separated Christian ? “ *Oh, you say I don't go there, or do that, or own that.* ” Wonderful ? But what about your dedication to the Lord ? Are you not only separated from but unto ? (1) (2)

### **(3) HIS PARENTS WERE SPIRITUAL**

Being a parent is not easy is it ? John Wilmot, the Earl of Rochester said, “ *Before I was married I had three theories about raising children. Now I have three children and no theories.* ” The minister asked a group of children in a Sunday School class, “ *Why do you love the Lord ?* ” He got a variety of answers, but the one he liked best was from a boy who said, “ *I guess it just runs in our family.* ” Are you thankful for godly

parents ? Samson's mother was one of four women in the Bible who received a prebirth angelic promise. The three others were Sarah, ( Gen 18:10 ) Elisabeth ( Lk 1:13 ) and Mary ( Lk 1:30 ) You see, here was a man who was blessed with devout parents who were unwilling to take God's gift of a son apart from God's purpose. ( 13:8 ) Such parentage surely foreshadowed a future bright with promise. A deliverer was badly needed in this dark hour of Israel's history and Samson's parents doubtless cherished the hope that their son would fulfil this role. But then, not all godly parents are spared from sorrow in the life of their children and “ *the babe of his parents dreams became the man of their despair.* ” Do you know what Samson teaches us as parents ? It teaches that even children with a spiritual head start can plunge headlong into carnality.

His parents were spiritual for look at:

#### **(a) *THE HOME THEY HAD FOR HIM:***

It was a home for e.g.; where:

#### **1. The SON of GOD was WELCOMED:**

Did you notice that in ( 13:3 ) He is referred to as “ *the angel of the Lord,* ” in ( 13:6 ) “ *a man of God,* ” and in ( 13:22 ) as “ *God.* ” The “ *angel of the Lord,* ” is the Lord Jesus taking a temporary human form. Now notice that the angel did three things to indicate to Manoah who He was.

**\* He Declared His Name:**

Look at ( 13:18 ) Or “ *Seeing it is wonderful.* ” Who is wonderful ? The Lord Jesus ! “ *His name shall be called wonderful.* ” ( Is 9:6 ) Not only is His name Wonderful but He is wonderful.

\* He then worked wonders while Manoah and his wife looked on: Look at ( 13:19 ) The wonderful Christ does wonderful works. Is this not your testimony ? “ *He has done all things well.* ”

\* The Lord Jesus mysteriously disappeared in the flame of fire: ( 13:20 ) Here were a couple who realised that they were in the presence of God. Samson must have occupied a unique place in the purposes of God when He sent His own Son to announce his birth.

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### 2. The WORD of GOD was RESPECTED:

For there was to be no intoxication or defiling filth of the world in this home. ( 13:3-4 ) Unclean things never had a place in this household. My .... What about our homes ? Fathers, what about our homes ? Are we allowing the garbage of the world to infiltrate ? Is the Word of God being honoured in our homes ? It was honoured here, for did you notice that having the received the promise of God Manoah takes it for granted that what God had promised He was able to perform. What a home this was ! 1. 2.

### 3. The THRONE of GOD was TOUCHED:

For Samson’s father Manoah was a man of prayer. My

.... fellow parents have you ever asked yourself the question, “ *How will my kids remember me ?* ” Will they remember me as a man of God ? Will they recall their home as a place where the Son of God was welcomed, the Word of God was respected and the Throne of God was touched ? (a)

### **(b) THE HELP THEY SOUGHT FOR HIM:**

For here is a prayer that all expectant Christian parents should pray. ( 13:8, 12 ) Here was a man who was burdened. He had parental concern. How do we bring Samson up ? Of course, they had already received in a measure God’s instructions. They were to encircle that child with a deep spiritual as well as a deep natural interest. They were to preserve that child from every influence that would deflect him in any way from a path of dedication to God. “ *How shall we order the child ?* ” Is that your cry ? Are you burdened about your children ? We give plenty of time and thought as to what they are going to be or do in this life. What position they are going to fill in this world. But do we ever take time to think what they are going to be for God ? What they are going to do for Christ ! Sure, they have to get through. Its great to see them doing well ! But what is our priority number one ? Is it that they might make a mark for God in their generation ?

### **(4) SAMSON’S POWER WAS SUPERNATURAL**

Does God keep His promises ? Well, look at ( 13:24-25 ) Samson is derived from the Hebrew word

for “*sun*,” and his name means “*sunny*.” Here we are introduced to his supernatural power. Now the Old Testament has much to say about the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God is mentioned eighty eight times in the Old Testament. He is mentioned in twenty two of the thirty nine Old Testament books. Today, of course the Holy Spirit deals differently with Christian believers than in Old Testament times. You see, in the O.T. the Holy Spirit could come upon individuals but His presence could be withdrawn. ( 1 Sam 16:14 Ps 51:11 ) John Walvoord says, “ *The presence of the indwelling Spirit in the Old Testament, must therefore be regarded as sovereign, a rare rather than a usual gift, and often associated with some specific task for which enablement was necessary.* ” Its interesting to study the Spirit’s ministry in the life of Samson. ( 13:25 14:6 14:19 15:14 ) Confining ourselves to this passage we notice that:

**(a) *The PURPOSE of the Spirit’s Ministry is Specified:***

Look at ( 13:5 ) The key word in that statement is the word “*begin*.” You see, Samson’s lifework was not going to be completed. Because Israel had not repented the Lord was not ready to break the yoke of the Philistines, but neither would He abandon Israel so He raised up Samson to begin the process of liberation. The other judges had known military victory, Samson would not. He would prevent complete defeat, but he would accomplish only partial victory. “*He shall begin*,” and this was the purpose of the Spirit’s ministry. (a)

**(b) *The PLACE of the Spirit’s Ministry is Identified:***

( 13:25 ) I like that ! The Spirit of God began to stir him at home, on his own doorstep ! I wonder if that should be written on our hearts in these days ? Do you recall the words of the Saviour ? “ *Go home to thy friends and tell them what great things the Lord hath done for thee.* ” ( Mk 5:19 ) The responsibility first of taking the message to home ! Do you know something ? So many are happy to preach, witness, sing, so long as its not at home ! So many are happy to minister in another church, but in their own assembly, their voice is never heard in prayer or ministry ! My .... what about your responsibility at home with your natural family ? And here with your spiritual family ?

“ *And the Spirit of the Lord began to move him,* ” Move who ? Samson ! This Nazarite who was wholly separated unto the Lord. You see, God not only called Samson to live a separated life He equipped him to do so. My .... the God who equipped Samson is the God who equips you ! You see, the Lord does not throw us into the middle of society and say, “ *Now do the best you can, but don’t be conformed to this world.* ” No ! He gives us His Spirit not only to empower us but to permanently indwell us, ( Jn 14:16-17 ) so that we might live distinctively for Christ in the world ! Do you know anything of the Spirit’s ministry in your life ? Are you daily under His control ? Is your life telling for Christ ?

