

Place: Lurgan Baptist 4:2:2003

Reading: Judges 14:1-20

HEARTS OF IRON, FEET OF CLAY

11. SQUANDERING RESOURCES

An old woman known to all her neighbours as “*Garbage Mary*,” lived in a small town in Florida. Every day she would be seen dressed in rags, walking the streets scavenging through garbage cans for food, which she hoarded in her car or in her tiny two-room apartment. She was a recluse with no friends, and, as she scrounged cigarettes and ice cubes from anyone who was available, it was reasonable to believe that she was an old woman who was rapidly losing her mind and living on the verge of destitution. Finally, Garbage Mary was picked up by police and confined to a psychiatric institution. But, when some court officials went to her apartment to collect her personal effects, they were amazed to discover that there was money everywhere.

Scattered through her apartment and her car were bank books, stock securities, oil-drilling rights, property documents, and cash which indicated that Garbage Mary was worth more than a million dollars.

These documents also indicated that she was not a old woman but a forty eight year old college graduate, who had inherited a great deal of money when her father

died in 1974. Further investigation revealed that she had experienced two unhappy marriages, and her brother felt the resulting trauma may have caused her mental problems. Her psychiatrist conjectured that, living alone, she had fallen into a mental rut because she had nothing to excite her. Whatever the reason, the tragedy remains. Here was a woman, abounding in the physical resources she needed to meet her physical needs, foraging through garbage living in rags, while her resources went her unused and neglected. *While her money collected interest, she collected garbage.*

My the tragedy of Garbage Mary is neglected resources. There are others who live as derelicts because they have squandered their resources. Money has gone through their hands like water, and because they could not control their appetites and impulses, they feed their bodies from garbage cans, when once they had lived in mansions. *Now Samson was a kind of spiritual Garbage Mary.* He did not end his life as a hopeless derelict. He was the leader of his countrymen, a famous hero. But Samson squandered and ignored the resources that God had given him. He was a man of great potential and even greater tragedy, because his life was a story of waste. My is this not a vital lesson for us ? We who are in Christ have enormous resources, far beyond anything that Samson knew. In the Lord Jesus, we have been given all things that relate to life and godliness.

(2 Pet 1:3) But we can dissipate those resources and live far below them, if we do not learn the lesson that Samson never learned the lesson of self-discipline and whole-hearted commitment to the Lord Jesus. Now

in seeking to look at “*Squandering Resources*,” I want you to notice:

(1) THE INITIAL OUTLINE OF SAMSON’S LIFE

Let me try and sketch for you the main features in Samson’s life up until now. In (Ch 13) we had a description of the great events that accompanied the birth of Samson and his early life. Now here in (Ch 14) we have the first record of Samson’s life as a man, and in, in this very first episode, we have the three themes which will run all through his story, his enormous potential under God, his fatal flaw which dissipates that potential, and the providences of God in his life. Now if I were to ask you for a brief outline or sketch of Samson’s life up until now, how would you respond ? What could we say ?

(a) “*Around him*,” were **GODLESS PEOPLE:**

Almost in passing the Holy Spirit indicates to us the exact situation of Israel at this point of history. Look at (14:4) Now keep in mind with the advent of Samson the period of the Judges was drawing to a close. Samson judged Israel for twenty years (15:20) and according to Old Testament scholarship these coincided with the second half of the Philistine forty year oppression. (13:1) This means that Samson probably ruled when the Ark of the Covenant was captured, and Israelite pride was shattered. (1 Sam 4:11) You see, not only was Israel controlled, it was compromised. Rather, than marching as an obvious enemy over the

land the Philistines were using their two main weapons of trade and intermarriage. (1 Sam 13:19 Jud 10:6) In these ways, they were gaining a stranglehold on the Israelites and choking them to death by compromise and assimilation.

At the same time the priests were giving no spiritual leadership. For the priesthood was under the control of Eli’s two sons, Hophni, and Phinehas who were utterly corrupt. (1 Sam 2:12-25) It was a time of great spiritual darkness, and none were in greater darkness than the two leading priests. The strategy of the Philistines was clear, the apathy of Israel was evident and the verdict of Scripture was “*And the Word of the Lord was rare in those days.*” (1 Sam 3:1) Yet into those days strides Samson, God’s man for the hour, a man who under God had a greater potential, than almost any other man in the Old Testament. (a)

(b) “*Behind him*,” were **GOOD PARENTS:**

You see, God had built some great resources into Samson’s life among which were his godly parents. Do you recall the home in which he was reared ? It was a home where the Son of God was Welcomed: (13:3) a home where the Word of God was Respected: (13:8) a home where the Throne of God was Touched. (13:8) Josephus recounts the Jewish tradition about Samson’s parents:

“ There was one Manoah, a person of such great virtue that he had few men his equals, and without dispute, the principal person of his country. He had a wife celebrated for her beauty and excelling her

contemporaries.”

Since those statements are traditional and not biblical, we cannot be certain of each one. But without doubt, Samson knew a godly home life. He was reared in a home where the parents looked up ! (13:20) They had seen the “ *Angel of the Lord,*” ascending going up in the flame of the sacrifice their eyes were up, up, up, Why were their eyes up ? Their eyes were heavenward because their affections had been attracted to the man who did wondrously at a sacrifice now He had gone up and their hearts were entwined around Him. Who ? The Lord Jesus ! Young people, if you are being reared in a home like that, what a tragedy it would be if your life were a repetition of Samson’s. (a) (b)

(c) “ *Upon him,*” was *GREAT POWER:*

For you see Samson not only had a unique birth (13:4-5) and a unique lifestyle he was a Nazarite unto God from his mother’s womb. But Samson was also a man blessed with a special ministry of the Holy Spirit. (13:25 14:6 14:19 15:4) The Lord had given His Spirit to Samson in an unparallel way, so that whenever Samson stood in need of physical strength, it was unreservedly given to him. Now this unique divine enablement is graphically revealed in two episodes in (Ch 14) The first concerns;

1. *Samson and the Lion:*

Look at (14:6) Samson tears a lion in pieces with his bare hands, as if it were only a baby goat.

2. *Samson and the Men:*

Look at (14:19) Here he kills thirty men single-handedly. Do you see the way God had equipped him for the task He had assigned him ? My in terms of available resources Samson lacked nothing. Are we not exactly in the same position ? God has given to us the resources of His person, for it is God the Holy Spirit who lives within us to meet the deepest needs of our lives. (1 Cor 6:19) Do you recall Paul’s words ? “ *For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and ye are complete in Him.*” (Col 2:9-10) We are eternally united to the Lord Jesus. A Christian is someone who is in Christ ! Suppose I take a piece of paper and place it in my Bible. To see that paper, I must first look at my Bible. To deal with it, I must first touch my Bible. In Biblical terms that paper is “ *in Bible.*” So it is with my position in the Lord Jesus. The Father never sees me without first seeing the Son He loves. He never deals with me without first dealing with the Lord Jesus. My life has been hidden with Christ in God, (Col 3:3) and God the Father always deals with me on the basis of my relation to the Lord Jesus. But there is one great weakness with the illustration. That piece of paper can fall out of my Bible. It can be separated from it, but I cannot fall out of Christ.

I am “ *in Christ,*” eternally. Is that not wonderful ? But the Bible goes further, for it tells me that “ *Christ is in me.*” (Col 1:27) And He is in me to be my Resource for life. Do you recall how Peter puts it ? (2 Pet 1:3) My if only we realised and claimed a small

fragment of our God given riches. Samson had tremendous resources, he could have accomplished so much for the Lord, but he didn't, and the reason for his failure is evident in (Ch 14) (1)

(2) THE PERSONAL INCLINE OF SAMSON'S LIFE

According to (Heb 11:32) Samson was a man of faith, but he certainly wasn't a faithful man. He was not faithful to his parent's teaching, his Nazirite vow, or the laws of the Lord. It didn't take long for Samson to lose almost everything the Lord had given him, except his great strength, and he finally lost that as well. You see, just as Superman was vulnerable to kryptonite so Samson had a chink in his armour through which his greatness was sapped. When it came to women Samson melted before his passions. His activities revolved around three women, his bride, a harlot, and Delilah. You see, one day Samson went down to a Philistine town not from far from his home. There he saw a beautiful Philistine girl and it was lust at first sight. Now in that society you didn't try to chat her up, or get a date, or follow her home. No ! What you did was this ? You turned the whole project over to your parents.

So Samson headed home and broke the news to his Dad and Mum. " *Well, Mum and Dad I have seen the girl of my dreams, she looks terrific, that's the girl I want to marry, so you get her for me and make all the arrangements.*" Can you imagine the response of his parents ? " *Samson, we're glad that you've found the*

girl the Lord has for you, who is she ?" " She's a Philistine girl from Timnath." And with that statement his parent's world fell apart. To think that their son, whom God had called to live a life of separation, now wanted to marry one of the enemy. Samson failed, and he failed on three counts. He failed to:

(a) INSPECT THE BIBLICAL RECORD:

I suppose that lots of us parents face the situation that Samson's parents faced. Its one thing to see our children saved, its another thing to see them going on with the Lord, but the next problem is this, " *who are they going to marry ?*" For the object that attracts their attention will be the object that shapes their live for good or bad.

My Samson could not have had a better background, he could not have had a better start in life, everything was going well until there passed by a daughter of the Philistines " *get her for me to wife.*" (14:2) Now this of course was contrary to the Law of God, for God had told his people not to inter-marry with the pagan people who lived in the land. (Deut 7:1-6 Exod 34:12-16)

Archdeacon T.C. Hammond one of the great Protestant protagonists of this country used to say to the young people, " *Marry your own, marry your own.*"

My we would need to re-echo those words today, for no good comes out of mixed marriages. Do you recall Paul's words, " *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.*" (2 Cor 6:14) A person who does not believe whether he be an atheist,

moralist, or religionist can have no part with the child of God. Such a person is governed by different principles, passions, prospects. The Christian therefore must never select his partner in life from those with whom he has no common feelings or hopes. This rules out for ever the unequal yoke in marriage (1 Cor 7:39) in business (2 Chron 20:35) And in any other life binding contract. (a)

(b) RESPECT THE PARENTAL REQUEST:

Look at (14:3) My what a scene. Father and mother were shattered. They had lived in the hope of his birth and now this. Can you imagine it ? “ *But she’s a Philistine,*” Manoah half-pleaded, half-roared. Surely the Angel of the Lord hadn’t this in mind. (13:5) “ *Get her as my wife,*” Samson persisted. Father and mother explode, “ *Isn’t there any girl in all Israel who could please you, that you have to go off to Philistia to find a wife ? Samson, that girl’s a pagan.*” Samson looks Manoah in the eye his words come out deliberately through clenched teeth, “ *Get her for me.*” His reason ? “ *She pleaseth me well,*” or “ *she is right in my eyes.*” Grief and misery in one home in Zorah that evening. My has this scene not been repeated so often in Christian homes ?

Its interesting that in (14:2) he told his parents about this girl as though they would be pleased. But in (14:6) we read “ *he told not his father or his mother.*” Is that not so true to life ? When your Christian son or daughter takes the first step to having an unsaved

partner at first they may feel free to discuss it with you, but when you don’t agree, the issue becomes sensitive, and your children don’t tell you anymore. But do you know the next step ? Well, look at (14:17) “ *He told her.*” He told his parents, then he did not tell his parents, then he told her. So the relationship he had with his parents is now severed. Now tell me, how many times has that story been repeated in so many Christian homes ? (a) (b)

(c) CORRECT THE NATURAL PASSION:

Now by the time the curtain rises in (Ch 14) Samson is now a virile young man whose hormones boil within him like pent up steam in a pressure cooker. As far as Samson was concerned she looked great, she attracted him sexually, and he wanted her. He was far more concerned with her external looks than her internal qualities. (1 Pet 3:3-4) My Samson was lawless when it came to the opposite sex. As such his action:

1. REFLECTED THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE:

Do you recall the key phrase in the Book of Judges ? “ *In those days there was no King in Israel every man did that which was right in his own eyes.*” (21:25) Is this not what Samson did ? “ *Get her for me, for she pleaseth me well.*” (14:3) He conformed to the social values around him. What about us ? You see, if ever there was a verse that had the ring of the 21st century about it, its this one. “ *Everyone is doing what is right in his own eyes.*” “ *If it feels good, do it.*” My we are living in a period of moral, spiritual, and ethical

lawlessness. The great question for us as believers is this, are we imbibing the spirit of the age ? Have we adopted the world's view as our viewpoint ? Samson's action (1) but that's not all. His action:

2. REJECTED THE SPIRIT OF HIS VOW:

Do you recall what Nazirite vow was ? He was a person who was separated from, and separated unto ! He vowed not to take wine, nor to cut his hair, nor to go near the dead. Now he kept his Nazirite vow, at least in part, but he missed the moral implications of that vow.

If the vow did not forbid something, Samson indulged himself freely. He would not dream of cutting his hair, but he did not mind allowing his lust to flow freely. *Samson knew the code of separation, but he failed to understand the concept of holiness.* He had the external sign, but he did not have the internal reality. My are we not like him ? Believers baptism is the external sign !
Walking in newness of life is the internal reality.

Head covering for ladies is the external sign. Submission to headship in the home and the church is the internal reality. You see, ladies if you wear a head covering in the church and the trousers at home, you're contradicting the covered head. Aren't we so like Samson ? We are so religious about some things, but there are other areas in our lives where our principles are "*whatever is pleasing in our eyes.*"
Samson's problem was self-discipline ! Donald Barnhouse had a friend who once sent him a shipment

of a thousand strawberry plants. Barnhouse gave them to a farmer, to look develop them for him. About the beginning of June, Barnhouse was delighted to look at the plants and see thousands of blossoms, his mouth watered in anticipation. The next day, around noon, he asked the farmer what he had been doing that morning. The farmer replied, "*I have been picking the blossoms off the strawberry plants.*" Barnhouse nearly had a heart attack. Then the farmer said, "*If you have strawberries the first year, the strength goes into the berries and the plants become weak, and they will never produce much in the future. But if you let the strength go into the plants the first year, you will have magnificent berries.*"

My is that not true spiritually ? God takes nothing from my life that He will not give back either in a more perfect form, or for which He will provide a greater substitute. There is nothing wrong with strawberries, but for the sake of something better, there is a time to do without them. Self discipline is not denying our drives or desires, its submitting them to the will of God and the timing of God. Samson's mistake was not being attracted to that woman, but in failing to submit his physical drives to the Lord. You see, God's purpose is to produce rich fruit in my life and that comes as I refuse to walk in the flesh, and instead put myself under the control of His Spirit ! (1 Cor 9:25 Gal 5:16)
(1) (2)

(3) THE SPIRITUAL DECLINE OF SAMSON'S LIFE

Did you notice that (Ch 14) is all about “ *going down.*” Look at (14:1, 5, 7, 10,) It is both perilous and ominous when a Christian starts going down. I want to notice the steps in Samson’s spiritual decline. There was

(a) *THE PLACE HE VISITED:*

“ *Timnath,*” means “ *portion assigned,*” and in going down to Timnath Samson was leaving his God given task to seek a portion with the Philistines and from that moment onwards his problems began. It was just 4 miles westward down the valley of Sorek to the village of Timnath, but it was a downward journey spiritually, for Timnath was borderland between the Israelites and the Philistines ! Is that where you are spiritually ? Are you just on the borderland between the Lord and the world ? You see, being on the borderland the smell of the sacrifice is not so strong (13:20) You are getting away from Calvary, from the debt you owe to the Lord. In the borderland Samson was away from his parents who had the vision of the Man, the Lord Jesus, who had gone up from the altar ? Is that where you are ? Calvary is not as precious to you as it is to your parents ! It is not precious to you as once it was. Cooler to the Saviour, nearer to the world ! (a)

(b) *THE PARTY HE HOSTED:*

Look at (14:10) The Hebrew word here for “ *feast,*” indicates a drinking bout. Samson was to avoid the fruit of the vine but there is no suggestion here that he was drinking cokes while the others imbibed. So he

broke that part of his vow which repudiated strong drink. Incidentally, did you notice the heart-rending situation that Samson put his father into ? (14:10) Y. folk, do you ever think of the pain of your parents, when you suggest marrying outside of the will of God ? Do you ever think of the dilemma you put them in ? Its getting worse is it not ? (a) (b)

(c) *THE PROPOSAL HE WAGERED:*

(14:12) Do you see what he’s doing ? He constructed the riddle out of the experience of his sin. He didn’t take seriously the fact that he had violated his Nazirite vows. My its bad enough to obey God, but when you make a joke out of it, you’ve sunk to new depths of spiritual insensitivity ! Look at the final step:

(d) *THE PAIN HE SUFFERED:*

The Philistines were bad losers. They intimidated Samson’s wife into betraying him and as a result Samson learned two bitter lessons. He learned that when you marry a woman, you marry her relatives, and also that it is hard to resist a woman’s tears. (14:17) The result, Samson lost his bet, his honour, his wife. Just a few years after Samson died another man became the judge of Israel. In many ways Samuel was like Samson. His hair was also uncut, he also was born under a vow, he too was born to godly parents, he also was the leader of Israel at a time when the Philistines totally dominated Israel. But there the likeness ends. Why ? What made the difference ? The difference is

found in Samuels words to Saul, a man who like Samson had a great potential but never realised it. “ *Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.* ” (1 Sam 15:22-23)

Samuel was self-disciplined and submissive to God’s Word, but in his life Samson never learned that lesson, as s result he squandered his God-given resources. *Do you remember Garbage Mary ? Are you living that type of Christian life ?* God has provided every resource you need to live an abundant Spirit-filled life, but you’ll never know that life apart from submission to God’s Word and a self-discipline that brings all of my life under the Lordship of Christ !