

The Spirit and Samson

“And the Spirit began to move on him...”

Judges 13:25

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20/06/2010

Introduction:

Most of us are relatively familiar with the story of Samson. He was one of the early Judges over Israel before Israel had a King. It was a day when everyone *did what was right in his own eyes* **Judges 17:6**. Samson's parents were childless. One day the Angel of the Lord appeared to Samson's mother and told her that she would conceive a son and that the child would be a Nazirite from his birth therefore she was to drink no wine and eat nothing unclean (**Judges 13:3,4**). This son she was told would begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines. The term Nazirite from Heb "nazir" means consecrated or separated from birth. As a Nazirite there were certain things predicated as far as behaviour and lifestyle were concerned **Numbers 6:1-21**, so it is understandable that many who took the Nazirite vow took it only for a prescribed season.

She told her husband Manoah about this divine appointment where the Angel of the Lord had promised her a son and so Manoah prays for the Angel of the Lord to come and speak to them again about how they are to raise the child...*“what would be the boys rule of life and his work?”* **Judges 13:12** He further asks the Angel of the Lord what His name is and is told that it is wonderful **v18**. After making a burnt offering of a goat as well as a grain offering to the Lord and seeing the Angel of the Lord ascend in the flame of the fire Manoah rightfully concludes that he has seen God **v.22**.

As Samson grows it is said of him that God blessed him and then we are told that the Spirit of the Lord began to move upon him at Mahaneh Dan **Judges 13:24,25** literally 'the Camp of Dan.' Samson was a Danite. About a generation after the conquest of Palestine the Philistines settled the coastal region and from there began an expansion programme into the interior hill country. The expansion initially was more by settlement and infiltration than force. It brought with it obvious economic advantages. It was not long however before Israel began to see her independence wain and real pressure was felt by the people as the Philistines moved further inland to occupy Israel's hill country. It was the Judges of Israel that brought some leadership to the people as the Philistines and other groups of people tried to counter their settlement. God's call upon Samson was that he would be used to counter the Philistine advance upon Israel's territory. The Philistines symbolically represent everything that the flesh and the world presents to people today.

1. Samson and his call:

Samson was conceived with a specific word from God and a call in mind- he was to be a Nazirite from birth **Judges 13:5**. Normally a person would make that kind of choice themselves. They would determine if they wanted to be a Nazirite and would take the appropriate vows. We read that a Nazirite would abstain from drinking wine, wine vinegar, vinegar, grape juice and could not eat grapes, raisins, and could eat nothing produced from the vine. There was to be no razor come upon a person's head until the time of the vow is over. Also, they were prohibited from touching a dead body **Numbers 6:3-6**, even the body of a dead relative. This was God's calling and instruction to Samson and it was to continue from the *womb until the day of his death* **Judges 13:7**. It was his parents' responsibility to teach him these things and his responsibility to follow. It was God's call.

When the call of God comes upon a person's life there comes with that call very often certain restrictions of behaviour and lifestyle. In the OT a Nazirite was separated to God and that separation recognised by his appearance and lifestyle. The NT refers to this type of separation as separation from the world **John 17:11,16** and exhorts us to be sanctified (separated) through the truth of God's word. Just as Samson had an activity of God as he grew up, so we as NT believers also have an activity of God that distinguishes us as being in the world but not of it. We are to be separated from the world, its lusts and its desires! We should display the fruit **Gal.5:22,23** and gifts **1 Cor.12:4-11** of the Holy Spirit, and be empowered by that same Spirit. There are certain patterns of behaviour that were unacceptable to God back then as well as today.

Samson whilst having the spirit of God upon him **Judges 13:25** could depend upon that power to overcome the attacks of anything that would come up against him as we see in the incident of the roaring lion **Judges 14:6**. We understand the principle that God protects us when our enemy the devil would come against us like a roaring lion...

1 Peter 5:8,9 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith,

Samson did many things through the Spirit of God coming upon him. Is it any wonder that he is included amongst the heroes of faith in **Heb.11:32**.

2. The weakness of Samson:

Samson had numerous weaknesses that we can identify from Scripture. His first was to seek a wife from among the Philistines and not from the covenantal community of Israel. This situation although used by God was not well pleasing to his parents **14:1-3**. They acquiesced and went to Timnah to find the woman that he spoke of. Samson also travelled to Timnah, encountered a lion, and tore it apart with his hands **14:6**. On his return however he examines the lion's carcass and takes from the carcass honey and eats it. He even gives some to his parents but does not tell them where it has come from, why? The honey coming from a dead lion's carcass is unclean. This defies his calling as a Nazirite and makes him unsanctified. Not only is he refusing to live according to the call on his life but is also deliberately deceiving his parents by not telling them where the honey has come from. This honey episode led to him posing a riddle to friends of his Bride with the result that he kills thirty men from Ashkelon and takes their garments to pay for them solving the riddle. He pays his debt but does not like the fact that they have solved the riddle by threatening his future bride **14:16-20**. Having returned to his parents in anger he later returns at the time of the wheat harvest to find that his wife has been given to his best man. To punish the Philistines he catches 300 foxes, ties their tails together and lets them go in the standing grain after tying torches to their tails, burning their harvest. This time the Philistines kill his ex wife and his Father-in-law. To further punish the Philistines he allows the men of Judah to hand him over bound to the Philistines. He braves loss and kills 1,000 of them with the fresh jaw-bone of a donkey **15:14-20**. Whilst he is doing all of this activity by the Spirit of God we see him constantly compromising his standing as a Nazirite by handling the unclean **v.15**.

The next time we hear of Samson he has sex with a prostitute **Judges16:1**. All of the time there has been compromise and finally it culminates in this act. The only thing that he hasn't done to maintain his vows is not to cut his hair. This is the only thing remaining between Samson and his total loss of power!

3. The result of compromise:

We no longer read in the text of the Spirit of God coming upon him after his visiting a prostitute. Gaza was in the enemies' heartland and he should have been a lot smarter. Although he does acts of strength **Judges 16:3** no longer is it the result of God's Holy Spirit coming upon him. He is still a judge in Israel but not for long. Later we see him cohabiting with a woman; no mention of marriage this time. Perhaps one Philistine marriage and being widowed was enough, however God only looks past sinful behaviour and compromise for a period of time then it all catches up with a person. This forbidden relationship would be his downfall. This Philistine woman found out the secret to his strength and cut his hair off while he slept. He awoke to fight the Philistines and *did not know that the Lord had departed from him* **Judges 16:20**. Cohabiting with the enemy is always dangerous- his spiritual blindness now becomes physical as he is blinded and humiliated by the Philistines. His uncontrolled sexual appetite involving the enemy with whom he prostitutes his position with God causes his undoing. He is held captive by those he once conquered and is now a physical wreck. Over a period of time his hair grows, he is abused daily and put to hard labour. His last act is a prayer to God, the only time in his life we read of him praying and then he commits suicide. We read that he takes more with him in his death than he did in his life **Judges 16:28-31** taking with him the aristocracy of the Philistines. What a pitiful end to a man who started so well!

God is sovereign, he used Samson despite himself, but there did come a day of reckoning. This is a mighty lesson for all that would be called of God to follow Him and not to compromise their faith through co-habiting with the enemy.

Conclusion:

- Compromise always has a gradual beginning
- Compromise increases when not addressed
- Compromise eventually grieves the Holy Spirit and His activity in a person's life
- Activity then continues in one's own strength
- Eventually, compromise kills you and those around you

Questions

1. What was Samson called to do and what was different about the type of Nazirite call that was upon his life?
2. What did the Nazirite vow entail?
3. How did Samson compromise his calling as a Nazirite?
4. At what point in Samson's life did the Holy Spirit's activity stop?
5. Why do you think that Samson did not realise that the Lord had departed from him?
6. What life lesson can we learn from Samson?