

Title: 'As We See Fit': A study of the book of Judges- Part 16- "The Worst Wedding Ever"

Key text: Judges 14:1-20

Suppl. texts: Prov. 31:30, 2 Cor. 6:14, Ex. 20:12

Introduction: Last time, we saw that God's people, the Jews, are under the longest period of oppression they've faced in the time of the Judges, forty years, under the Philistines. We met Manoah's childless wife. This woman, who is unnamed in the Word of God, was sterile & childless. We noted that the Jews did not cry out to the Lord this time, but God was still gracious & compassionate. God sees the barren & works through them. He meets them in their brokenness & redeems them. God met Manoah's wife as the Angel of the Lord appeared. He promised a miraculous birth in line with redemptive history. He commanded a Nazarite vow for the mother's pregnancy & the life of the child. After initial disbelief & fear, Manoah & his wife understand that they have been visited by God in the flesh & offer an appropriate sacrifice. Tonight, we see the flaw in Samson's character begin to be revealed.

Outline: *read Judges 14:1-20.*

1. A man who had no control over his eyes

- Samson, like his predecessor Jephthah, is listed in the 'Hall of Faith' in Heb. 11:32. He might have been a man of faith at times, but he is far from faithful in his life.
- His Nazarite vow set him apart from the normal vices of life, but not all of them.
- He was outwardly restricted in his diet, in consuming alcohol, & in cutting his hair. But his life shows no inward signs of restraint.
- **Vs. 1;** *"Samson went down to Timnah and saw there a young Philistine woman."*
- This simple verse begins a landslide of lust that rules Samson's life.
- Yet, there's more to this problem. It is the main chorus of Samson's life which reverberates with all of Israel: *"I will do what is right in my own eyes."*
- **What's the big deal?** He's attracted to a woman & wants to marry her.
- **Vs. 2;** *"When he returned, he said to his father and mother, 'I have seen a Philistine woman in Timnah; now get her for me as my wife.'" Bossy much???*
- Samson seems to desire this woman only by outward appearance.
- **Prov. 31:30;** *"Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised."* This woman is outside of the covenant people of Israel, outside of grace, & from the oppressive enemy of God's people.
- **2 Cor. 6:14;** *"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?"*
- Parents were essential in those days in negotiating the marriage contract.

2. A man who lost respect for his parents

- Remember, Manoah & his wife were charged by none other than Jesus Himself to raise Samson differently. They had been careful in the way they raised him.
- ***Was it their fault Samson was this way?***
- Hard to say. Maybe, maybe not. He had a godly heritage.
- His mother sacrificed for his birth. We know that they watched over him & instilled the Nazarite vow that was kept. *Couldn't stop him? Tried their best?*
- Parents can set the table of faith in several ways:
 - **Prioritizing** the things of God such as worship & other spiritual disciplines.
 - **Practicing** their faith in front of their kids, modeling authentic faith.
 - **Praying** that the Holy Spirit would draw their child at an early age.
 - **Participating** in the active discipleship of their children, not just dropping them off at church & leaving it to others.
- ***Vs. 3-4; "His father and mother replied, 'Isn't there an acceptable woman among your relatives or among all our people? Must you go to the uncircumcised Philistines to get a wife?' But Samson said to his father, "Get her for me. She's the right one for me." (His parents did not know that this was from the LORD, who was seeking an occasion to confront the Philistines; for at that time they were ruling over Israel.)"***
- **Uncircumcised** Philistines. Circumcision was the sign of the covenant.
- Samson is acting as the judge of his own life, ignoring the wisdom of his parents.
- **Exodus 20:12**; *"Honor your father and mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you."* The 5th Commandment was obviously ignored.

3. A man who had no integrity

- ***Vs. 5; "Samson went down to Timnah together with his father and mother. As they approached the vineyards of Timnah, suddenly a young lion came roaring toward him."*** He's at the wrong place, doing the wrong thing, at the wrong time.
- Samson takes a detour to a forbidden place for a Nazarite; a vineyard.
- Perhaps there out of curiosity, or convenience, he's flirting with a broken vow.
- We will come to understand that he has left his parents' company.
- ***Vs. 6; "The Spirit of the LORD came upon him in power so that he tore the lion apart with his bare hands as he might have torn a young goat. But he told neither his father nor his mother what he had done."*** Anything you have to hide is likely sin.
- *Why would the Spirit of the LORD come upon him while he's tempted to sin?*
- God's protection? God's warning? God's redirection? He is still God's judge/deliverer.
- ***Vs. 7; "Then he went down and talked with the woman, and he liked her."***
- The families have met, & apparently a marriage contract is agreed upon.
- ***Vs. 8; "Some time later, when he went back to marry her, he turned aside to look at the lion's carcass. In it was a swarm of bees and some honey, which he scooped out with his hands and ate as he went along. When he rejoined his parents, he gave***

- them some, and they too ate it. But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey from the lion's carcass."* That's pretty gross. He also drew his parents into his sin.
- Samson had played with sin at the vineyard; now he completely **breaks** his vow.
 - He ate the honey from a dead animal carcass. He was warned not to be around anything dead, but now he has gone right to it, & even consumed a sweet treat out of a dead & rotting animal carcass.
 - **Vs. 10-11**; *"Now his father went down to see the woman. And Samson made a feast there, as was customary for bridegrooms. When he appeared, he was given thirty companions."*
 - Samson is out of his territory; he has no Israelite groomsmen & is assigned thirty foreign companions.

4. A man who had no control over his **tongue**

- **Vs. 12-13**; *"Let me tell you a riddle," Samson said to them. "If you can give me the answer within the seven days of the feast, I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty sets of clothes. If you can't tell me the answer, you must give me thirty linen garments and thirty sets of clothes." "Tell us your riddle," they said. "Let's hear it."*
- The pride of Samson's heart **guides** his **tongue** to **error**. He's not satisfied that he tore a lion apart in **secret**; he wants others to know what he did.
- Here we also see the **vice** of **gambling**. Samson has no way to personally pay the promised wager if the Philistine men figure out his riddle.
- Most people in those days would have one or two sets of clothing, which they would **wear** until they were **worn** out or passed on to another once outgrown.
- Thirty sets is an **incredible** amount.
- **Vs. 14**; *"He replied, "Out of the eater, something to eat; out of the strong, something sweet." **For three days** they could not give the answer."* The groomsmen are **baffled**.
- **Vs. 15-17**; *"On the fourth day, they said to Samson's wife, "**Coax your husband** into explaining the riddle for us, or we will burn you and your father's household to death. Did you invite us here to rob us?" Then Samson's wife threw herself on him, sobbing, "You hate me! You don't really love me. You've given my people a riddle, but you haven't told me the answer." "I haven't even explained it to my father or mother," he replied, "so why should I explain it to you?" She cried the whole seven days of the feast. So on the seventh day he finally told her, because she continued to press him. She in turn explained the riddle to her people."*
- Another **flaw** in Samson is revealed. He cannot keep his tongue when a woman **presses** him. Her tears **ply** the answer to his riddle.
- She wants her life & the life of her family more than a life with him.
- He could kill a lion with his bare hands, but couldn't turn down a woman.

5. A man who had no control over his **temper**

- **Vs. 18-20;** *"Before sunset on the seventh day the men of the town said to him, "What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?" Samson said to them, "If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have solved my riddle." Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon him in power. He went down to Ashkelon, struck down thirty of their men, stripped them of their belongings, and gave their clothes to those who had explained the riddle. Burning with anger, he went up to his father's house. And Samson's wife was given to the friend who had attended him at his wedding."*
- I'm sure they rubbed in the fact that they knew the answer & Samson's pride could not take it.
- He calls his wife a 'heifer', which is not a **kind** term or way to speak about a woman.
- Heifer means a **young female** cow. Don't know any woman who would appreciate being called that.
- Samson is angry, & his anger turns to **rage**.
- He murders Philistines in another town about **twenty** miles away, the **largest** town of the Philistines, where they wouldn't be **missed** as **quickly**.
- He pays his debt but leaves his **would-be** wife behind & goes home **pouting** & **furios**.
- His betrothed is given to one of the groomsmen who had threatened her life. Yikes!
- *Why would God allow such murderous actions?*
- If Samson had married the Philistine girl & had a great wedding feast with his new friends, he might've never become the great defender of Israel that he was called by God to be. God's will can still be accomplished in, through, & despite man's sinful actions.
- These events, which Samson internalizes as wrongs towards him, become the **motivation** for his future battles against the Philistines.

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A Study of the Book of Judges- Part 16

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- _____ Philistines. Circumcision was the _____ of the _____.
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- He murders Philistines in another town about _____ miles away, the _____ town of the Philistines, where they wouldn't be _____ as _____.
- He pays his debt but leaves his _____ - _____ wife behind & goes home _____ & _____.
- These events, which Samson internalizes as wrongs towards him, become the _____ for his future battles against the Philistines.

Small Group Questions:

- 1.** We live in a time where our eyes are inundated with temptations to lust. How can we guard our eyes against such evils?
- 2.** Samson didn't appreciate the wisdom of those placed in his life, namely his parents. What role should the seasoned saint play in the discipleship of the less experienced & young?
- 3.** Integrity takes a long time to build & only a moment to destroy. We noted how Samson flirted with temptation & breaking his vow before he ever did. Discuss the slippery slope towards sin & failure & how we should be people of integrity.
- 4.** Read James 3:1-12. Not one of us can say that we have mastered our tongues. Samson's mouth got him in loads of trouble in today's text. What are some ways that you have learned to control your tongue?
- 5.** Likewise, very few of us ever gain complete control over our tempers. Someone is always 'making us mad'. Discuss ways that you've learned to let go of offense & control your anger.