

## THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

### JUDGES 13-16

The California redwoods are a wonder of nature. They're colossal. The trees are skyscrapers - their girth is gigantic - they're the kings of the forest. Nothing is as impressive as the falling of one of these redwoods.

The cutters will score the trunk; then move the saw back and forth. The cut line deepens. The tree bends further and further from the cutters. Before long you hear the crackling of wood fibers. With each slice of the saw the noise builds; then swells to a roar. The tree begins to fall. If you're underneath it seems like the sky is falling. The trunk explodes along the cut-line, and the tree crashes to the forest floor. It sounds like thunder.

Well, today I need to yell "*TIIIMBEEER!*" For we're going to watch the falling of a redwood - not a giant tree, but a giant of a man. Samson was huge, not so much in physical stature, but in privilege, and power, and effectiveness for God. Samson *came from a godly home - served in an important post - was feared by his enemies - and used by God in supernatural ways.*

Samson was God's Strongman, a violent vigilante, a one-man Philistine wrecking crew. *He was a redwood. Yet Samson fell...* The saw slides back and forth. The slender score line around Samson's heart deepens. He leans - he finally cracks - he falls hard.

We've all met a Samson, a person who had it all: *beautiful spouse, great job, healthy kids, good reputation, effective ministry.* Then one day he crashes.

A secret, sinister side is exposed. *A name gets muddied, families get broken, hearts get wounded. The Church gets another black-eye.* Samson's story should wake us up, lest someone yells timber over you.

Chapter 13 begins, "**Again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.**"

The Philistines fled Greece around 1200 BC, and settled on the Canaanite coast, in what is today Gaza. They knew how to smelt iron and forge weapons. Their knowledge made them a threatening neighbor to Israel.

**"Now there was a certain man from Zorah..."** A city 14 miles due east of Jerusalem. **"Of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had no children."** Barrenness was the scourge of the ancient world. It was considered

to be a divine curse... *nothing brought greater shame...*

"And the Angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, "Indeed now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. Now therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or similar drink, and not to eat anything unclean. For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines."

Notice, "**he shall begin to deliver Israel.**" Samson will never unite the entire nation against the Philistines. Unlike other judges, Samson fought alone. His struggles were more *personal vendettas* than *national campaigns*. Samson will begin Israel's revolt against the Philistines. But it'll take Samuel to rally the nation and conquer the Philistines at Mizpeh in 1 Samuel 7.

So Mrs. Manoah was promised a son... who'll take a special, lifelong vow. Numbers 6 speaks of the "**Nazirite**" - which means "**to dedicate.**" It was an act of special devotion to God. Only three lifelong Nazirites are in Scripture: **Samson, John the Baptist, Samuel.**

The Nazarite's special act of devotion consisted of three elements: *he was forbidden to eat or drink of the fruit of the vine - cut his hair - or touch anything dead.*

And this is the opposite of what makes the world go round. People want **a nip, a clip**, and to rest in peace (**a rip**) - we live for earthly pleasures, outward beauty, and temporal rewards. Yet this is the antithesis of God's values. 1 John 2:16 sums up the world, "**The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.**" **It's about feeling great, looking great, being great.**

Yet the Nazirite sent the opposite message - **life is more than a nip, a clip and a rip.** True fulfillment is found in the spiritual and eternal. A Nazirite was a walking billboard - an advertisement for godly values... **Real joy** isn't produced by *distilled spirits*, but the *Holy Spirit*. **Real beauty** isn't created inside a barber shop, but inside a heart. And every mortuary is testimony that **real meaning** isn't found in earthly pursuits, but in the life to come... And the child that was to be born to Mr. and Mrs. Manoah was to be a life-long Nazirite.

When Mrs. Manoah tells her husband of her encounter with the man, he prays, and the Angel of the Lord appears to Manoah and his wife a second time.

Manoah asks for more information about their future son, but the Angel of the Lord reveals more information about Himself. In verse 18 the messenger reveals His name, "**Why do you ask My name, seeing it is wonderful?**" In Isaiah 9:6 Jesus is referred to

prophetically as “Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace...” And I believe this Angel is none other than the pre-incarnate Christ.

So often like Manoah we pray for more *information about God’s plan*, but what we really need is a *revelation of God’s person*. We want details about the *mission - what we’re suppose to do* - but that we really need is a clearer vision of the *Messiah - who God is*.

### We need to see Jesus!

When Manoah offers the Angel some food, instead the Angel tells Manoah to offer a burnt offering to God. He’s saying I don’t need a meal, but I’ll accept a sacrifice! And the only person worthy to receive a sacrifice is God. Certainly, this was no ordinary angel!

Verse 19, “So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering, and offered it upon the rock to the LORD. And He did a wondrous thing while Manoah and his wife looked on - it happened as the flame went up toward heaven from the altar - the Angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar! When Manoah and his wife saw this, they fell on their faces to the ground.” Talk about “*going up in smoke*”? Here’re some fireworks! The angel ascends to heaven in the flame of the sacrifice... And here’s some brief, but vital marriage counseling. If you’re looking for a new spark. To relight a fire in your marriage follow the Manoahs. Put yourselves and your marriage on the altar. Dedicate both to God, and Jesus will join your flame.

“When the Angel of the LORD appeared no more to Manoah and his wife, then Manoah knew that He was the Angel of the LORD. And Manoah said to his wife, “We shall surely die, because we have seen God!” Manoah obviously feared God. No mortal is worthy to look on God and live. Yet Manoah knew that in seeing the Angel of the Lord he’d seen God, for he’d seen His Son. Now he’s worried about God striking him dead.

“But his wife said to him, “If the LORD had desired to kill us, He would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering from our hands, nor would He have shown us all these things, nor would He have told us such things as these at this time.” Again, a wife settles down a husband with some common sense.

“So the woman bore a son and called his name Samson; (the name means “*sunny*”). And ole Sunny will provide the Philistines many dark and stormy days.

“And the child grew, and the LORD blessed him. And the Spirit of the LORD began to move upon him at Mahaneh Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.” *Where did the Spirit first move on Samson’s life?* “*Mahaneh Dan*” which means “*the camp of Dan*.” Perhaps it was the *MS or HS or Kids camp*, but God uses camps!

Between Zorah and Eshtaol God's Spirit filled Samson, and baptized him with power. Until now he'd been a typical Jewish kid, but at Mahaneh Dan the Spirit moved on him in a new way. It wasn't something that gradually dawned on him, nor was it a phase, nor did it come on him by osmosis, he didn't catch it like a cold. This was a specific turning point in Samson's life where He experienced God in a brand new way.

And I still remember the first time I was first baptized with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit was *in* me from salvation, but at that point He moved *upon* me with power... And this can happen to you! If you've never been to *Mahaneh Dan* - ask God to take you there!

Chapter 14, "Now Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines. So he went up and told his father and mother, saying, "I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife." These are the first recorded words from Samson's lips, "*I have seen a woman...*" In Timnah he meets temptation. He likes her looks - wants her as his wife. He insists that his parents arrange the marriage.

Samson doesn't care that she's a Gentile, and God forbids Hebrews to marry Gentiles. All Samson cares about is satisfying his sexual desires. He wants the girl.

This was Samson's problem in a nutshell – he may or may not have been an exerciser, but he was definitely a *womanizer*. He had an eye for the ladies, and liked to chase skirts. Samson could slay 1000 Philistines, but not his own libido. It's been cleverly said, "*Samson was a he-man with a she-problem.*"

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources reports 17,000 deer are struck by motorists every year on state roads. And the peak season for road kill is late November - *the time when the bucks like to mate*. The state Wildlife Director states, "*Deer are concentrating almost exclusively on reproductive activities, and are a lot less wary than they normally would be.*"

This happened to Samson. Sex was his Achilles heel. Sure, sex is pleasurable, but the pleasure is physical and fleeting - whereas our deepest needs are spiritual... and always remember, a *physical pleasure will never satisfy a spiritual need*. The key to real, lasting, permanent fulfillment is not *physical intimacy* with another person, but *spiritual intimacy* with God.

"Then his father and mother said to him, "Is there no woman among the daughters of your brethren, or among all my people, that you must go and get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?" And Samson said to his father, "Get her for me, for she pleases me well." Samson was all about his own, self-centered desires.

"But his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD..." God didn't

approve of Samson marrying a Philistine, but he will use Samson's selfish actions.

For God "was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines. For at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel." The Philistine wars were a see-saw battle. At this time the enemy had an upper hand.

"So Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother, and came to the vineyards of Timnah."

"Now to his surprise, a young lion came roaring against him." At the time lions were common in Israel.

"And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat, though he had nothing in his hand. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done." If God did such a miracle for me, I'd probably put a foot on the lion's carcass, take a photo, and then send it to the Calvary magazine for publication. At least I would post it to Instagram. *And yet to Samson's credit, he did nothing like that. He kept it all quiet.*

"Then he went down and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well." A relationship develops. It was lust at first sight. "After some time, when he returned to get her, he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion. And behold, a swarm of bees and honey were in the carcass of the lion." And the honey made a nice snack... "He took some of it in his hands and went along, eating. When he came to his father and mother, he gave some to them, and they also ate. But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion.' Notice, long before his infamous haircut, Samson had already broken his vow to God. He touches what's dead - *the dead carcass of the lion.*

"So his father went down to the woman. And Samson gave a feast there, for young men used to do so." Samson threw himself a bachelor's party. The Hebrew word "feast" means "drinking bout" or "drinking celebration." Knowing the kind of guy Samson was it's hard to imagine him content with a soda pop. But if he was slugging down glasses of wine it would've violated the first part of his vow - drinking the fruit of the vine.

And it happened, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him. Then Samson said to them, "Let me pose a riddle to you. If you can correctly solve and explain it to me within the seven days of the feast, then I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing." Samson is probably a little sauced. He proposes a friendly wager.

"But if you cannot explain it to me, then you shall give me thirty linen garments and

thirty changes of clothing." They're both wagering thirty new suits from the Men's Warehouse. "And they said to him, "Pose your riddle, that we may hear it." So he said to them: "Out of the eater came something to eat, and out of the strong came something sweet." Now for three days they could not explain the riddle." They were stumped, so they pressure Samson's wife to tell them the riddle. They threaten to burn down her and her dad's house.

"Then Samson's wife wept on him..." The blackmailed babe turned on the tears. She made Samson feel guilty... She said, "You only hate me! You do not love me! You have posed a riddle to the sons of my people, but you have not explained it to me." "Sunny, honey, you've left me out of your game. If you really loved me you would whisper the answer to me."

"And he said to her, "Look, I have not explained it to my father or my mother; so should I explain it to you?"

Now she had wept on him the seven days while their feast lasted." Samson could kill a lion with his bare hands, and slay a band of Philistines, but he lacked the strength to tell a woman, "No." And so, "On the seventh day that he told her, because she pressed him so much. Then she explained the riddle to the sons of her people. So the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down: "What is sweeter than honey? And what is stronger than a lion?" Immediately, Samson is upset. He knows he's been doubled-crossed. In verse 18 he shows *his way with words*... 'And he 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 mightily, and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of their men, took their apparel, and gave the changes of clothing to those who had explained the riddle."

Samson paid his bet, but he took the clothes off the backs of dead Philistines. Instead of the *mall*, he went to the *brawl*. He *mauls* thirty Philistines. "So his anger was aroused, and he went back up to his father's house." In the meantime, "Samson's wife was given to his companion, who had been his best man." Talk about adding insult to injury... When Samson learns of his betrayal, the Philistines better brace themselves...

Chapter 15, "After a while, in the time of wheat harvest (that is, late May or early June), it happened that Samson visited his wife with a young goat." A young goat was the Hebrew equivalent of a dozen roses or box of candy. Samson loves his bride and will forgive her act of betrayal. He's coming to make up.

And he said, "Let me go in to my wife, into her room." But her father would not permit him to go in. Her father said, "I really thought that you thoroughly hated her; therefore I gave her to your companion. Is not her younger sister better than she? Please, take her instead." Tries to pawn off the baby sister on Samson.

"Samson said to them, "This time I shall be blameless regarding the Philistines if I harm them!" It's payback time! "Then Samson went and caught 300 foxes..." The Philistines took Samson's foxy woman, now he'll take 300 of their foxes. "And he took torches, turned the foxes tail to tail, and put a torch between each pair of tails. When he had set the torches on fire, he let the foxes go into the standing grain of the Philistines, and burned up both the shocks and the standing grain, as well as the vineyards and olive groves." Samson was quick enough to catch thirty foxes - strong enough to tie their tails together... smart enough to turn them loose into the fields with a hot torch between their tails. It burned the Philistine crop.

Verse 6 "Then the Philistines said, "Who has done this?" And they answered, "Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he has taken his wife and given her to his companion." So the Philistines came up and burned her and her father with fire." They torch his wife and in-laws. The love of his life dies in the flames. You could say the Philistines are now fighting *fire with fire*.

"Samson said to them, "Since you would do a thing like this, I will surely take revenge on you, and after that I will cease." So he attacked them hip and thigh with a great slaughter; then he went down and dwelt in the cleft of the rock of Etam." He retreated west toward the borders of Israel. Etam was south of Bethlehem.

And notice, "he attacked them hip and thigh." This may've been a wrestling term, for dismembering an opponent. He was probably yanking hips out of joint.

Well, the Philistines go to arrest Samson, but they first recruit the men of Judah to talk Samson into turning himself in peacefully. Three-thousand Hebrews visit the cave where he's hanging out. They figure to arrest Samson it might just take 3000 fighting men.

Samson, after getting the tribe of Judah's promise that they wouldn't hurt him, allows himself to be bound with new or unbreakable ropes. Verse 14, "When (Samson) came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting against him." They immediately rail on their enemy.

But "Then the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him; and the ropes that were on his arms became like flax that is burned with fire. His bonds broke loose from his hands." Samson snapped them like frayed thread.

Verse 15, “He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, reached out his hand and took it, and killed a thousand men with it.” Imagine, the posse’ transporting Samson through a narrow canyon, squeezing through the rocks. He breaks free, but because of the tight passage the Philistine soldiers have to attack in small bands of men. They’re trying to wiggle through the tight corridors. Samson picks them off one or two at a time.

“Then Samson said: “With the jawbone of a donkey, heaps upon heaps, with the jawbone of a donkey I have slain a thousand men!” The phrase “heaps upon heaps” is a word play. In Hebrew the term “heaps” resembles “donkey.” He mocks the enemy. Donkeys are being slain with a donkey’s jawbone. We would say Samson is boasting - better yet, “he’s trash-talking.”

Jewish historian, Josephus, says this incident went to Samson’s head. He figured he was now invincible. Josephus says verse 16 is a small portion of a longer victory song... *He’s jawing about the jawbone.*

Josephus writes, “(Samson) said that this did not come to pass by the assistance of God, but that his success was ascribed to his own courage...” Proving two jawbones of a donkey were at work in this story.

“And so it was, when he had finished speaking (implying he spoke a long time), that he threw the jawbone from his hand, and called that place Ramath Lehi.” “*Ramat Lehi*” means “*Jawbone Heights*.”

In verse 18 God seeks to humble his strongman, “Then he became very thirsty; so he cried out to the LORD and said, “You have given this great deliverance by the hand of Your servant; and now shall I die of thirst and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?”” So God split the hollow place that is in Lehi, and water came out, and he drank; and his spirit returned, and he revived. Therefore he called its name En Hakkore (or “*Spring of the Caller*” - Samson called to God in his thirst), which is in Lehi to, this day. And he judged Israel twenty years in the days of the Philistines.”

Chapter 16, “Then Samson went to Gaza (a major Philistine city) and saw a harlot there, and went in to her. When the Gazites were told, “Samson has come here!” they surrounded the place and lay in wait for him all night at the gate of the city.” A squad of Philistine police lock down the city gates, and set a trap for Samson. Ancient gate complexes were serious fortifications. We saw a few last week. They’re smartly designed to resist an invading army. So all night long Philistines waited for day break, hoping to kill Samson.

Verse 3, “And Samson lay low till midnight; then he arose at midnight, took hold of the doors of the gate of the city and the two gateposts, pulled them up, bar and all, put them on his shoulders, and carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron.”

Samson preempts their trap. At midnight he rips the anchored gates out of the ground, *ending the lockdown*. If anyone was in his way he bulldozed them over. Proving not even city gates can stop a man empowered by God's Spirit.

Samson's life is such an enigma. He's a walking contradiction... he's "*filled with the Holy Spirit*." He's *familiar with God's power*, but he's a *stranger to God's purity*... Here's a man who spends the night with a hooker. He walks out of a *brothel* - not a *chapel* - yet God still uses him to do miracles and win victories.

*How can this be?* Nobody in the Bible paints as stark a contradiction between his *personal life* and *public ministry* as does Samson. How can he be so powerfully used by God, while so nonchalant about obeying Him? There's only one answer - it's *His mercy*. God uses flawed, imperfect vessels. He supplies His servant's on-the-job training. He fixes us on the fly. He works *in us*, *on us*, and *through us* all at the same time.

But don't make the wrong assumption! Just because God continues to use you doesn't mean He approves of everything you do. God is extremely concerned with Samson's sin. We'll see in Chapter 16 there comes a point when enough is enough. Samson crosses a line. He goes too far, and the power he's come to expect - and believes will always be there - is suddenly gone.

Samson's life teaches us there's a definite point - a line you cross and God says "*enough*." He withdraws His blessing, puts you on the shelf. The giver of the *Great Commission* puts you *out of commission* if you cross that line. **And here's the added problem** - you don't really know where God draws that line until it's crossed. Chapter 16 marks Samson's pathetic end...

Verse 4, "*Afterward it happened that he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.*" Samson's vice led him to a *valley* - not just *geographically*, but *spiritually*. Even as God used Samson, each time he yielded to temptation the condition of his heart grew worse and worse....

*Notice the deterioration...* **The first time** he lusts for a woman at least he tries to do the honorable thing and get married... **Second time**, he settles for a one-night-stand, but it's done in secret. It's not permanent. He still senses a shame... **But the third time**, he throws away restraint. He shacks up with Delilah in an open act of defiance. I detect a progression - a *seedy slide*...

Samson has a lust problem he never turns from. He tries to *legitimize it*; then he *privatizes it*; finally he *secularizes* his outlook. He *gives up* the fight for virtue, and *gives in* to sin. Samson ends up brazen and shameless... He has traveled down the slippery slope.

"And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, "Entice him, and find out where his great strength lies, and by what means we may overpower him, that we may bind him to afflict him; and every one of us will give you 1100 pieces of silver." There were five lords of the Philistines so that's an offer of 5500 pieces of silver. She'll get big bucks if she can deliver the secret of his strength. *Which brings up a point...*

If Samson had a muscular physique, like he's often pictured - a buff, beefy, muscle bound brute - *why would anyone want to know the secret of his strength?* It would be obvious. Keep him off the steroids or out of the weight room. This is why I believe Samson had a slight, slender frame - he may've been a pipsqueak.

I don't think there was a ripple in Samson's shirt - but when God's Spirit came upon him he exuded super-human strength. *This is why they wanted his secret...*

So Delilah sets out to learn his mystery and get her silver. But Samson teases her. At first he says, "**bind me with seven fresh bowstrings**" - and she does. The Philistines are staked out nearby, when she yells, "**The Philistines are upon you Samson.**" Suddenly, he flexes and the bowstrings pop off him as a strand of yarn breaks when it touches a flame. Delilah is angry at him.

Verse 10, "**Then Delilah said to Samson, "Look, you have mocked me and told me lies. Now, please tell me what you may be bound with."**" This time he says "**new ropes that have never been used...**" But again the ropes break off his arms like a thread. Samson is just playing with Delilah - *stringing* her along literally - it's a game. It never hits him she's serious and so is God.

The third time he tells us, "**If you weave the seven locks of my head into the web of the loom...**" And now he's getting close to his actual secret. His long hair is the last remnant left of his vow to God. So why does he even mention his hair? *Samson has lost all bearings.*

And this time when her efforts fail, Delilah brings out the full court press. Verse 15, "**Then she said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and have not told me where your great strength lies."**" Delilah pulls out the old, "*if you really love me*" line.

How many people have thrown away their virginity and integrity because of that line, "*if you really love me.*" If you really love someone you won't ask them to disobey God. And if you really love the person asking, you'll say "**No.**" You'll insist on God's best for them.

Yet imbedded in Delilah's statement was the ultimate issue for Samson. Her

questioned, “How can you say, ‘I love you,’ when your heart is not with me?” She’s really asking “*where is your heart, Samson?*” And this is what God asks us... For awhile, despite his failures, Samson’s heart still belonged to God. He yielded in moments of temptation, but deep in his heart he wanted to please God. Yet repeated compromise takes its toll. It chips away at the will. It erodes your desire and devotion. Eventually Samson no longer cares.

*Where is his heart now?* It used to belong to God, but in the valley of Sorek it now belongs to a girl!

Verse 16 is an awful verse, “*And it came to pass, when she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, so that his soul was vexed to death, that he told her all his heart, and said to her, "No razor has ever come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man."*” This was the one part of his vow he’d kept. His long hair was the last tie between him and God - the last way Samson could prove that he cared about pleasing God, and following God. As long as there was a desire for godliness, God would forgive his weakness, but now that desire is no longer.

“*When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart...*” Delilah knew this was it, so she called the lords of the Philistines - *get that silver ready!* She lulled Samson to sleep, and they shaved off his seven locks.

Verse 19, *Then she began to torment him* (It just goes to show how little Delilah really loved him.), *and his strength left him. And she said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!"* So he awoke from his sleep, and said, “*I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free!*” But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him.” A single woman did what a thousand Philistines couldn’t – bring down Samson.

But it wasn’t just Delilah. It was a lifestyle that built up over years - a tolerance - an accommodation with a sin Samson should’ve never allowed. It was a cavalier attitude toward a serious problem. It was a man who kept playing with a poisonous snake, and finally got bit.

Samson teaches us that sin rarely causes instant failure, rather it saps spiritual life from us one breath at a time, until finally there’s no more air to breathe.

The Philistines immediately begin to torture the man who’d tortured them for twenty years. Verse 21, “*Then the Philistines took him and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza. They bound him with bronze fetters, and he became a grinder in the prison.*”

They poke out Samson's eyes, and parade him in the temple of Dagon, crediting their god for delivering their enemy into their hands. How it had to break his heart to know he was now a trophy to an empty idol.

And it's ironic - they pluck out his eyes. Samson's problem his whole life was *his wandering eyes*. Samson has to become blind for him to really see.

Verse 22 makes a passing comment, "However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaven." Even now, a *fresh commitment is possible*.

Of course, there was always something fishy about Philistine religion. They worshipped Dagon, the fish-god. And his adherents planned a celebration to credit their god with the capture of Samson. Verse 25, "So it happened, when their hearts were merry, that they said, "Call for Samson, that he may perform for us."

Realize, probably everyone attending that day had a relative Samson killed. They hated him with a passion. Verse 25 ends, "And they stationed him between the pillars." - between the structure's two supporting posts.

Verse 26 "Then Samson said to the lad who held him by the hand, "Let me feel the pillars which support the temple, so that I can lean on them." Now the temple was full of men and women. All the lords of the Philistines were there - about three thousand men and women on the roof watching while Samson performed. Then Samson called to the LORD, (he prayed his final prayer) saying, "O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may with one blow take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!" *And the Spirit came upon him one final time.*

"And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars which supported the temple, and he braced himself against them, one on his right and the other on his left. Then Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" And he pushed with all his might," Imagine, inside the building - beams wobble and shake - then cave in like a house of cards. "The temple fell on the lords and all the people who were in it." You could say, "In his final performance Samson brought down the house."

And what an epithet, verse 30, "So the dead that he killed at his death were more than he had killed in his life." Samson went out with a bang. His greatest victory was his last. *And it came as a result of his own death!*

And how true for us all... It's only when we die to our own selfishness, and lust, and pride; then sacrifice every thing we have to Jesus that we really live. Once Samson lost his eyes, he could see what life was all about. Pleasure no longer mattered. In the end all he desired was to experience the power of God's Spirit, and bring God glory... even if it cost him his own life.

How desperate are you to know God's power? *More than life itself?* Even if God has placed you on the shelf, ask Him to use you again! *And I believe He will.*

“And his brothers and all his father's household came down and took him, and brought him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of his father Manoah. He had judged Israel twenty years.”