

The Sunday School Lesson

by Bessie Wilbon

INTRODUCTION:

The account of Samson's life and work occupies four chapters in the book of Judges (chapter 13-16). For forty years the Israelites were in subjection to the Philistines, a warlike people who lived along the Mediterranean seacoast. Toward the end of this period "the angel of the Lord" appeared to the wife of a man named Manoah, who lived in Zorah. Though the woman had been barren, the angel told her she was to bear a son, who would "begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines."

Special instructions were given concerning the child. He was to be considered a Nazirite. (A person separated or dedicated to God, either for a specified period of time or for life.) In Samson's case, his separation was to be for life. The razor was not to touch the child's hair. He was not to come near any dead body and was to abstain from the use of grapes in any form. This included wine, fresh grapes, raisins or vinegar made from wine. No other type of fermented beverage was to be used either.

The birth of Samson is terse and beautiful. "And the woman bore a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and the Lord blessed him."

The account of Samson's life begins with the story of his marriage to a Philistine girl of the city of Timnath. During the week-long wedding feast, Samson made a wager with thirty young men that they could not solve a riddle he would put to them. In danger of losing the wager, these young men threatened violence to the bride-to-be and to her father unless she revealed the secret of the riddle.

She finally wheedled the answer from Samson and told the young men. Enraged, Samson went to another Philistine city, where he killed thirty men and took their possessions, with which he paid the debt he owed. During Samson's absence, the woman he was to marry was given to one of his closest companions.

Samson later tried to reestablish contact with his wife, but was rebuffed by her father. (Read Judges 15: 1-16: 3)

Samson continued to be attracted to Philistine women, and this led to his undoing. He fell in love with a Philistine woman named Delilah. You know the story -- Samson told Delilah the secret of his strength. (In his long hair) Delilah had his hair cut while he slept. Of course, his ultimate source of strength was God, who finally ceased to help this persistently disobedient man. Samson's enemies quickly subdued him and put out his eyes. They then brought him to Gaza and bound him with fetters of brass. Fastened to a treadmill, he was used as a workhorse, grinding grain for his captors.

A significant note is added here - Samson's hair "began to grow again." (Judges 16:22)

THE LESSON:

"The Philistine kings met together to celebrate and offer a great sacrifice to their god Dagon. They sang, 'Our God has given us victory over our enemy Samson!' They were enjoying themselves, and so they said, 'Call Samson, and let's make him entertain us.'" When they brought Samson out of the prison, they made him entertain them and made him stand between the columns. When the people saw him, they sang praise to their god! "Our God has given us victory over our enemy, who devastated our land and killed so many of us!" Samson said to the boy who was leading him by the hand, "Let me touch the columns that hold up the building. I want to lean on them." The building was crowded with men and women on the roof, watching Samson entertain them. Then Samson prayed, "Sovereign Lord, please remember me; please, God, give me my strength just this one time more, so that with this one blow I can get even with the Philistines for putting out my two eyes. So Samson took hold of the two middle columns holding up the building. Putting one hand on each column, he pushed against them and shouted, hand on each column, he pushed against them and shouted, 'Let me die with the Philistines! He pushed with all his might and the building fell down on the five kings and everyone else. Samson killed more people at his death than he had killed during his life. His brothers and the rest of his family came down to get his body. They took him back and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of his father Manoah. He had been Israel's leader for twenty-five years. (Judges 16: 23-31)

God's gift to Samson was great strength. Used for God, it could have accomplished much good. But even Samson must have realized that reliance on brute force alone may well be self-defeating. We must not suppose that God approved of all that Samson did. The gift of strength was from the Lord. The responsibility for its use rested on Him (Samson).

God's gift to His people today are many. Whatever the ability that is given each of us should receive it as a sacred trust. But the mere possession of some great endowment from God is no evidence of His approval. The approval depends on the use we make of the gift. It is possible that we may neglect it or waste it on trifles. We may even prostitute it to evil purposes.

We need not look only to the Bible for examples of spiritual failures brought on by the force of sensual appeals. Such impulses, once yielded to, have brought many to spiritual disaster. Anyone acquainted with the life and work of the church can remember ministers, organists, elders, deacons, and others whose immoral behavior has disrupted families, divided churches, and curtailed service for Christ.

Our age with its constant stress on attractiveness and relaxed standards, with the many work situations in which men and women are closely associated outside the home, makes such temptations frequent and pervasive. Samson knew success, fame and power, but lost it all because of his reckless indulgence in sensual pursuits. He thus serves as a warning and helps bring home to us the force of Paul's testimony concerning his need of physical discipline: "I am my body's sternest master, for fear that when I have preached to others I should myself be disqualified. (1 Cor. 9:27)

Spiritual failure is certain if we do not stay close to God; spiritual success is certain if we do. Amen.

POST OBITUARIES

Continued From Page 4B.

Sanders, of 4608 Ogburn Ave., Winston-Salem died July 29, 1989 - in Baptist Hospital, Winston-Salem. Funeral service was held August 2 at Long and Son Mortuary Chapel. Burial was in York Memorial Park Cemetery.

Mrs. Joereatha Little Garrett, of 1112 Mulberry Ave. died July 24, 1989, in Huntersville Nursing Home. Funeral service was held July 29 at Greater Gethsemane AMEZ Church. Burial was in York Memorial Park Cemetery.

Mrs. Beatrice Johnson, of 2701 Ravencroft Dr. died July 24, 1989, in Mercy Hospital. Funeral service was held July 28 at

Long and Son Mortuary Chapel. Burial was in Beatties Ford Memorial Gardens.

Mrs. Alberta Williams Price, of 1728 Edwin St. Apt. F, died July 28, 1989, in Mercy Hospital. Funeral service was held July 31 at Simpson-Gillespie United Methodist Church. Burial was in North Pinewood Cemetery August 1, 1989.

KING'S FUNERAL

Mrs. Irene Caldonia Baringer, 65, of Rt. 4 Box 146 Bud Henderson Rd. - Huntersville died July 31, 1989, at her place of residence. Funeral service was held August 3 at Mt. Olive Baptist Church in Huntersville. Burial was in church cemetery.

The Way Up Is Down

By J. M. Little

Before the Lord really showed me my awful corrupt and rebellious condition, I didn't believe I was all that bad. But on the afternoon in 1972 when God saved me, the Holy Spirit so opened my heart and let me see my hatred and unbelief for God, His Word, and His people so much until I almost died, and I did die.

I died to my opinion. And soon after that He revealed Christ to me. Until He showed me the hell on the back side of my heart I just couldn't believe I was all that wicked. But when He did open my heart and let me see what was there, all my arguing against the Lord ceased. I was willing to go on to Hell where then I knew I truly deserved to go. And I resolved right there, "I've done everything I know to be saved; I'm not going to read any more, pray any more, or listen to any more messages. I'll just go on to Hell where I belong."

I meant that thing, too. But it wasn't long, just a few minutes, that the Lord slipped up on my blind side, as it were, and saved me. I didn't know it at the time but when I threw up my hands to do nothing else to get saved, that was the Lord bringing me to the end of my way. Looking back by the grace of God I know that every sinner must be brought to the end of his way before Christ is revealed to his heart.

Many of you here say you are saved but these truths I'm setting forth from week to week are a foreign language to you. If you knew the Lord I could find fellowship with you in Christ. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." (1 Tim. 1:15). are you a sinner? If not, Christ did not die for you. Every sinner who ever gets saved feels that he is the chief of sinners. Paul was talking about a group who feel individually that he or she is "chief of sinners." Most of you don't want to be a sinner. One day soon you'll wish you were a sinner. That sinner who sees himself lost, guilty, totally depraved, ruined, helpless, hell-born, hell-bent, hell-bound, and having no righteousness that God will accept is the sinner for whom Christ died.

The way up is down. The way to Heaven is down in repentance. That is contrary to worldly wisdom. "...the world by wisdom knew not God..." (1 Cor. 1:21). If you wanted Christ as much as you want an education, then you'd be saved. You have made a god out of education. I believe a person should learn all he can to the glory of God. But around the world you have looked to the god of education to solve all your problems. And that god is crumbling today and I'm glad.

The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. You talk about going to the moon again, that's ABC's with God. Satan has access to the moon. The moon won't corrupt man, but man will corrupt the moon.

"Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Phari-

see, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." (Luke 18:10, 11). This pharisee represents every unsaved religionist on a profession without Christ. He is a very self-righteous devil, and filled with religious pride. He named a long list of sins he didn't commit. When I was in the religious world I was the Pharisee. I boasted of my religious accomplishments. Let me tell you something, my religious friend, the only reason you are not out there wallowing in sin as other men are is because of the restraint of God on you. You may not have gone out in sin but your heart is full of those devils. Don't you boast that you haven't lived in adultery?

Every soul out of Christ has degenerated himself to the level of a spiritual prostitute!

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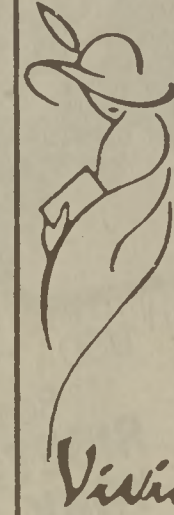
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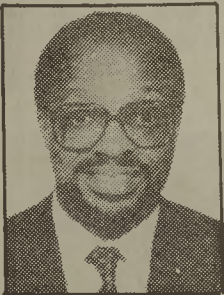
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