

Chapter 14

Good evening and thank you for joining us. Would you please turn in your bibles to Judges chapter 14? We've now covered several hundred years of Israel's history up to this point in Judges.

Tonight, we're going to study chapters 14 and 15, which means we'll be almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through this book. Just a reminder when we finish Judges we'll then go back to the NT and begin our study in 1 Corinthians, starting sometime in September.

Last week we saw the account of the birth of Samson, who will become a he-man with a she-problem. And Samson's life is one of both victory and failure. As you read his account you'll feel like **SHOW PIC** you're on a roller coaster, with all the ups and downs and twists and turns as we see Samson take wonderful steps of faith, followed by one disastrous decision after another. **CLOSE PIC**

The title of tonight's message Unlikely Weapons

Let's pray

If you recall in our study last week, Samson was given the vow of a Nazarite. The purpose of the Nazarite vow was one of consecration to God, to separate oneself to have deeper communion with the Lord. Today something similar takes place in fasting.

In order to take the Nazarie vow, numbers 6 tells us of three guidelines that were to be adhered to during the time of the vow.

1st, **SHOW PIC** the Nazirite was not to cut his hair for the length of the vow. **CLOSE PIC**

Second, **SHOW PIC** the vow of the Nazarite meant that Samson was to abstain from wine or any fermented drink **CLOSE PIC**

Third and finally,

SHOW PIC Samson was not to go near any dead body, because that would make him ceremonially unclean. Even if a member of his immediate family died, he was not to go near the corpse.

CLOSE PIC

But tonight, we'll see Samson quickly and almost flippantly violate this Nazarite vow, and it's a preview of his disobedience that is yet to come.

Yet shockingly, in a picture of God's grace, God still uses this rebellious man for His glory.

1 Now Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines. If you wanted to sum up the life of Samson, Verse 1 is almost a complete summation of it. Samson went down, and he saw a woman. And notice it's a Philistine woman, an enemy of Israel!

2 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." Note the first recorded words out of Samson's mouth. Samson goes to Timnah and sees a Philistine woman and he likes her looks. He demands he wants her for his wife and insists that his parents arrange the marriage.

Yet Samson doesn't care that she's a Gentile, and God had forbidden the Hebrews from intermarrying with foreigners. See all Samson cares about is satisfying his sexual desires. He wants the girl no matter what.

As you know I'm from WNY, it's a very rural area. **SHOW PIC** And every fall, thousands of deer are struck dead by car drivers. Sadly when the leaves turn their brightest, dead deer carcasses litter the roads.

And the peak season for road kill is late November – that’s the season when the bucks like to mate. **CLOSE PIC**. And why are there so many dead deer? The state Wildlife Director says this: “The deer are concentrating almost exclusively on reproductive activities, and are a lot less wary than they normally would be.”

This is what happened to Samson. Sexual desire and lust will be his life-long Achilles Heel. Samson has yet to learn that physical pleasure can never satisfy a spiritual need.

The key to real, lasting, permanent fulfillment is not physical intimacy with another person, but spiritual intimacy with God.

So how do Samson’s parents react to his request for a non-Hebrew wife?

3 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?” Samson’s parents recognize the grave error their son is about to make!

...3 And Samson said to his father, “Get her for me, for she pleases me well.” Samson refused to listen to wise biblical counsel, because he was consumed with selfishness. All he cared about were his own desires.

The command to the Israelites to not marry with the pagan nations around them applies to Christians today. God tells us that a Christian must not marry someone who is not a Christian.

2 Corinthians 6:14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

God didn't give us this command because those who aren't Christians are unlovable. No in fact unbelievers can sometimes be more lovable than believers.

Rather God commanded a Christian to only marry a Christian simply because to be a Christian means Jesus Christ is the most important thing in your life; and when a Christian and a non-Christian get together, you have two people who disagree on the most important things in life. How can a married couple disagree on the most important thing in life? **Amos 3:3 Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?**

This also means that a Christian should never date a non-Christian. Those who do run a serious risk of falling in love with someone who they have no business falling in love with.

This is why it's so important for those who are dating to carefully discern the Christian commitment of the one they are dating. There have been many fake Christian confessions, that were uttered in order to entice a Christian to marriage. This is why I do very intense pre-marriage counseling, and I won't marry anyone who doesn't complete it the counseling.

So samson desires this Philistine woman...

4 But his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD—that He was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines. For at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel. I'm sure God didn't approve of Samson marrying a Philistine, but God used Samson's selfishness for the furtherment of God's kingdom.

And this verse might cause a Christian to protest-what's the big deal then-can't God use my relationship or marriage with a non-Christian? Of course, God can, but why would you submit yourself voluntarily to such pain, agony and heartbreak? And why

would you knowingly thumb your nose against God and His command?

5 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. Samson is on the road to Timnah to see the girl he's been lusting after, when suddenly a man-eating lion attacks him.

6 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 this miracle for us, we'd be tempted to stand on top on the lion's carcass, take a selfie and post it for everyone to see. Or the photo would appear in the next edition of Calvary Chapel magazine.

To Samson's credit, he took no glory for what the HS did in his life!

(This, by the way, is one of 39 references to "the Spirit of the LORD," in the Old Testament.)

7 Then he went down and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well." Here we see that Samson was typical of the ordinary Israelite during these days, they did what was right in their own eyes.

8 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.

9 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. Long before his infamous haircut

(next week), Samson broke his vow to God. Here he breaks the third part of the Nazirite vow - he touches a dead carcass.

Samson didn't tell his parents where he got the honey because he knew it was a compromise of his Nazirite vow.

Yet did you notice that Samson broke his vow after he was filled with the Holy Spirit! This reminds us that an outpouring of the Holy Spirit does not automatically make a person godlier. An outpouring of the Holy Spirit gives a person the resources to be godlier, but it doesn't "do it to" them.

A person can be wonderfully gifted by the Holy Spirit and yet be very spiritually immature.

10 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. It was customary among the Philistines for a seven-day feast to precede the actual wedding ceremony.

In Samson's case, the groom himself provided the feast, and it took place at the bride's home.

Now we can't say for sure, but it's very likely that during this seven-day feast Samson drank wine, though the text does not say so explicitly.

Why would I say that? The Hebrew word for feast is related to the word that means drink, and it refers to a drinking banquet. Since Samson had previously defiled himself by touching a dead body, it's not a stretch to think that he also drink wine.

11 And it happened, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him. The bride's family invited 30 other Philistine guests to the wedding feast. They were evidently proud of their prospective son-in-law. Samson fit into Philistine society quite comfortably.

Folks, we're not called to blend into this world. We're called to stand out!

12 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. 13 But if you cannot explain it to me, then you shall give me thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing."

And they said to him, "Pose your riddle, that we may hear it." We now discover that Samson not only lusted after women and food and drink, but clothing as well. Fancy clothes were items that signified wealth and status in the ancient world. If Samson was to own 30 fine changes of clothing he would have become wealthy!

We're getting an intimate peek inside of Samson's heart.

14 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. Obviously speaking of the lion and the honey.

15-17

15 But it came to pass on the seventh^[fn] day that they said to Samson's wife, "Entice your husband, that he may explain the riddle to us, or else we will burn you and your father's house with fire. Have you invited us in order to take what is ours? Is that not so?"

16 Then Samson's wife wept on him, and 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."

And he said to her, “Look, I have not explained it to my father or my mother; so should I explain it to you?” Samson’s Philistine wife knew how to manipulate her husband didn’t she? This is not a picture of a godly marriage.

17 Now she had wept on him the seven days while their feast lasted. And it happened 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. Samson could kill a lion with his bare hands, but he lacked the strength to say “no” to a woman.

18 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?”

And he said to them:

“If you had not plowed with my heifer,

You would not have solved my riddle!” Immediately, Samson smells a rat. He knows he’s been double-crossed.

19 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. So his anger was aroused, and he went back up to his father’s house. ” Samson gave the 30 wedding guests the clothes he owed them because they solved the riddle, but he takes them off the backs of dead Philistines

20 And Samson’s wife was given to his companion, who had been his best man. In verse 19 Samson went home, apparently to sort out his feelings. In the meantime, “Samson's wife was given to his best man.” Talk about pouring gasoline on a fire!

We'll see momentarily how this inflames Samson to carry out vengeance upon the Philistines.

In chapter 14 we've witnessed a tragic progression of disobedience in Samson's life. First, he refused to submit to his parents' authority. Next Samson didn't exercise self-discipline and violated his vow to God, and eventually he let his passions control him.

Samson lacks self-discipline! The issue with anyone struggling with self-discipline is a lack of submission to God's authority.

Chapter 15

1 After a while, in the time of wheat harvest, (late May or early June), it happened that Samson visited his wife with a young goat. And he said, "Let me go in to my wife, into her room." But her father would not permit him to go in. A young goat in those days was like a dozen roses and a box of candy in our day. Samson has concluded he loves his bride and is willing to forgive her act of betrayal. He's coming to make up. But her father says no because look at verse 2...

2 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."

3 And Samson said to them, "This time I shall be blameless regarding the Philistines if I harm them!" Samson's blood boils! And at first glance who can blame him when his wife was taken from him?

Even though Samson was angry with his father in law, the real root of the problem was the bad choices Samson made wasn't it? Samson had no business allowing himself to fall in love with an ungodly, pagan woman.

And now Samson devises a plan to carry out his anger...

4 Then Samson went and caught three hundred foxes; and he took torches, turned the foxes tail to tail, and put a torch between each pair of tails. The Hebrew word translated “foxes,” can either mean foxes or jackals. Since jackals travel in packs, this is probably referencing jackals.

5 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. Interestingly enough, Samson’s wife was initially afraid of getting burned (14:15). Yet when she betrayed Samson, she set into motion events that would cause the entire area to erupt in flames, herself included.

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. It’s likely the Philistines burned the house down with the woman and her parents inside.

Samson’s wife may have thought she was protecting her father by betraying her husband—but her plan “backfired” completely.

Samson’s wife has now been burned alive.

7 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.” 8 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. Samson decides to avenge his wife’s death by ruthlessly slaughtering many more of the Philistines. And after walloping the Philistines, Samson heads for the hills to wait and see what would happen next.

9-11

9 Now the Philistines went up, encamped in Judah, and deployed themselves against Lehi. 10 And the men of Judah said, “Why have you come up against us?”

So they answered, “We have come up to arrest Samson, to do to him as he has done to us.”

11 Then three thousand men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam, and said to Samson, “Do you not know that the Philistines rule over us? What is this you have done to us?”

And he said to them, “As they did to me, so I have done to them.” Look closely. This is the tribe of Judah! Look at the spiritual state of Israel at this time!!

12 But they said to him, “We have come down to arrest you, that we may deliver you into the hand of the Philistines.”

Then Samson said to them, “Swear to me that you will not kill me yourselves.”

13 So they spoke to him, saying, “No, but we will tie you securely and deliver you into their hand; but we will surely not kill you.” And they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock. The men of Judah rebuked Samson for jeopardizing their safety by attacking the Philistines. Judah was satisfied to live under the Philistines' rule!

The tribe of Judah has fallen so far, they view Samson's action as something he was doing against them, rather than as an act of righteous aggression against the enemies of God's people.

The tribe of Judah was full of compromisers who preferred slavery to freedom

14 When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting against him. 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, and his bonds broke loose from his hands. 15 He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, reached out his hand and took it, and killed a thousand men with it. 16 Then Samson said:

“With the jawbone of a donkey,

Heaps upon heaps,

With the jawbone of a donkey

I have slain a thousand men!” Notice again that it was the Spirit of the LORD who gave Samson his supernatural strength! Samson was unique among the judges because he was a “one-man army” against the Philistines. Other Judges of Israel led armies against their enemies, but Samson fought alone.

But there’s another detail we can’t miss. The massacre is done through contact with a dead animal, clearly described as recently deceased, and thus another violation of the Nazirite oath.

17 And so it was, when he had finished speaking, (implying he spoke for a long time.) that he threw the jawbone from his hand, and called that place Ramath Lehi.^[fn] The name of the place, “Ramath Lehi”, means “Jawbone Heights”. Sounds like a high school!

Can you picture the scene??

Unfortunately nowhere does Samson describe where he got his ability to slaughter the enemy from-he takes the credit!

In verse 18 Samson learns a lesson about humility

18 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?”

Wait a minute. Didn't Samson just say, "With the jawbone of a donkey I have slain a thousand men"? But as his throat gets drier, realizing how helpless he really is, he calls out to the Lord. God has ways of tempering our triumphs with trial because of our tendency to get puffed up with pride!

19 So God split the hollow place that is in Lehi,[fn] and water came out, and he drank; and his spirit returned, and he revived. Therefore he called its name En Hakkore,[fn] which is in Lehi to this day. Enhakkore means "The well of him who cried." Before, Samson inaugurated the area "Jawbone Heights." But now it's "The well of him who cried." Samson was thoroughly humbled.

Let's be careful, folks. If the Lord uses us, let's always remember it's Him. Without Him, we couldn't last a moment.

20 And he judged Israel twenty years in the days of the Philistines. For twenty years, Samson does pretty well despite his failings.

And it's a reminder that when we think of Samson, we shouldn't only remember his sins. He was a man who was used mightily by God, and who is singled out in the New Testament as one of the giants of faith **Hebrews 11:32 And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets.**

We'll see next week that for twenty years, Samson did well—and then he went to Gaza...

But as we close I want you to ponder the weapons of God's warfare. In Judges 3, Shamgar killed six hundred of them with an

ox goad. And here, twelve chapters later, one thousand more are beaten with the jawbone of a donkey. Later on, Goliath—the greatest Philistine of them all—will be beaten with a stone and a sling.

Isn't that just like the Lord to use the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. We're perfect examples of the foolish things of the world confounding the wise **1 Corinthians 1:27 26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. 27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; 28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, 29 that no flesh should glory in His presence. 30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption— 31 that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD."**^[fn]

No matter what we have or what we think we lack, we must remember as Christians we have the HS. We just need to be available and ready!