

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
4-10-24

Judges 14

Samson Demands A Philistine Wife – Verses 1-3

Samson went down to Timnah and saw there a young Philistine woman. ²When 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.” ³His 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.”

14:1 Samson’s parents objected to his marrying the Philistine woman for several reasons: (1) It was against God’s law (Exodus 34: 15-17; Deuteronomy 7: 1-4). A stark example of what happened when the Israelites married pagans can be found in 3: 5-7. (2) The Philistines were Israel’s greatest enemies. Marriage to a hated Philistine would be a disgrace to Samson’s family. But Samson’s father gave in to Samson’s demand and allowed the marriage, even though he had the right to refuse his son.

14:2-3 Samson said to his father, “Get her for me, for she pleases me well”: In demanding a Philistine wife, Samson showed a sinful disregard for his parents and for God’s will (Deuteronomy 7:3-4). Bound by romantic feelings, there are many people who still demand from God a mate out of God’s will.

God’s Will Behind The Scenes Of Samson’s Desire To Marry A Philistine Woman – Verse 4

⁴(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.)

14:4 His father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD: As the rest of the chapter shows, some good ultimately came out of this ungodly marriage. Many Philistines were killed, and they were kept off balance in their attempts to dominate the Israelites. However, none of that justified Samson’s actions. Though God can make even the evil of man to serve His purposes, it never justifies the evil that man does.

14:4 Someone today might justify their desire to marry a non-Christian because they trust some good will come out of it — such as their non-Christian partner eventually coming to Jesus. Things may work out that way, but even though God used Samson’s marriage to a Philistine woman, it all came at a great personal cost to Samson. No matter how much good God can bring out of even the bad things we do, He can always bring far more good out of our obedience - and we ourselves experience much less pain.

Samson Slays A Lion And Eats Some Wild Honey – Verses 5-9

⁵Samson 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. ⁶The Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon him 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. ⁷Then he went down and talked with the woman, and he liked her. ⁸Some time later,

when he went back to marry her, he turned aside to look at the lion's carcass, and in it he saw a swarm of bees and some honey. ⁹He scooped out the honey 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.

14:5 He came to the vineyards of Timnah: Samson was dedicated to God with a lifelong vow of a Nazirite (Judges 13:4-5). Nazirites were to have nothing to do with grape products in any form (Numbers 6:3-4). Samson was dangerously close to significant compromise.

14:6 He tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat: Though Samson flirted with compromise — both with his impending marriage and the vineyards of Timnah — he still had miraculous strength because the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him. The Holy Spirit of God wants to come upon us and give us power but power for something far more important than ripping apart lions. The Holy Spirit comes upon us for the empowering to live for God as we should and for the power to tell others about Jesus effectively.

14:7 She pleased Samson well: This does not mean that she was a good woman for Samson to be attracted to or to marry. It is possible to fall in love with someone who is actually very wrong for us. This is why Proverbs 4:23 says: Keep (literally, guard or protect) your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life. If we don't guard our hearts, we can end up in trouble.

14:9 He took some of it in his hands and went along: When Samson gathered honey from the dead carcass of a lion, he expressly violated his Nazirite vow, which stipulated that a Nazirite should never touch a dead body or carcass (Numbers 6:6-7). Significantly, Samson did this after he was remarkably filled with the Holy Spirit. This shows that an outpouring of the Holy Spirit does not automatically make a person godlier. An outpouring of the Holy Spirit gives one 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 very spiritually immature.

Samson Hosts A "Bachelor Party" For Philistine Friends – Verses 10-11

¹⁰Now his father went down to see the woman. And there Samson held a feast, as was customary for young men. ¹¹When the people saw him, they chose thirty men to be his companions.

14:10-11 Samson gave a feast there: Literally, this was a drinking feast. If Samson didn't break his Nazirite vow by partaking in the wine, he certainly put himself in a situation where it would be easy to do so. They brought thirty companions to be with him: It was not — and is not — difficult to get many people to be part of a drinking feast.

Samson Poses A Riddle Concerning The Lion And The Honey – Verses 12-14

¹²"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. ¹³If 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." ¹⁴He replied, "Out of the eater, something to eat; out of the strong, something sweet." For three days they could not give the answer.

14:12-13 Changes of clothing: This literally describes a fine suit of clothes one would wear to an important occasion; therefore 30 fine suits were wagered. Like most betting, this "friendly wager" would turn into something not quite so friendly.

14:14 Out of the eater came something to eat: This was a clever riddle, and Samson showed that even if he was weak morally he was not weak intellectually.

Samson's Philistine Wife Extracts The Answer To The Riddle From Samson And Tells It To The Philistines – Verses 15-18

15 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 steal our property?" **16** 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?" **17** 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. **18** 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."

14:15-17 Then Samson's wife wept on him, and said, "You only hate me! You do not love me": Samson's Philistine wife knew how to manipulate the situation and how to make herself a burden to her husband until she got what she wanted from him.

14:17 He told her, because she pressed him so much: A woman easily manipulated the world's strongest man. This weakness of Samson will later be the cause of his downfall. The willingness of Samson's Philistine wife to side with her people against Samson shows a fundamental weakness in their marriage. She did not fulfill the idea essential to marriage of leaving one's father and mother to be joined in a one flesh relationship to their spouse (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5). Yet this also shows why it was wrong for Samson to marry a Philistine. We cannot expect someone who does not love the God of Israel to build a marriage on God's principles.

14:18 If you had not plowed with my heifer, You would not have solved my riddle: Samson's use of this proverb showed the anger and bitterness he felt at being manipulated. Samson's wife "won" what she wanted through manipulation, but she lost her husband's heart.

Samson's Anger And Revenge – Verses 19-20

19 Then the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon him. He went down to Ashkelon, struck down thirty of their men, stripped them of everything and gave their clothes to those who had explained the riddle. Burning with anger, he returned to his father's home. **20** And Samson's wife was given to one of his companions who had attended him at the feast.

14:19 Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily: The Spirit of the LORD did not come upon Samson to avenge the hurt feelings of a husband. God's strategy was larger: He was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines (Judges 14:4). Therefore, He used this occasion to pour out His Spirit on Samson to fight against the Philistines.

14:19 Samson impulsively used the special gift God gave him for selfish purposes. Today, God distributes abilities and skills throughout the church (1 Corinthians 12:1-31). The apostle Paul states that these gifts are to be used "that the body of Christ may be built up" (Ephesians 4: 12). To use these abilities for selfish purposes is to rob the church and fellow believers of strength. As you use the gifts God has given you, be sure you are helping others, not just yourself.

14:19 Killed thirty of their men, took their apparel, and gave the changes of clothing to those who had explained the riddle: Samson paid off the bet, but he did it at the expense of the Philistines. He killed thirty of these enemies of Israel and gave their garments to satisfy the debt.

14:20 Samson's wife was given to his companion, who had been his best man: Samson won the battle but lost the war. His wife left him and went to his best man. It is interesting to think what Samson and his wife might say if they went in for marriage counseling.