

SAMSON AND THE PHILISTINES

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JUDGES 13

The enemy were all the nations inhabiting the land of Israel's possession were uncircumcised yet it is only the Philistines who are spoken of in that way, the 'uncircumcised Philistines'.

This would give us an insight into what the Philistines represent typically because circumcision is a type of the cutting off of, or God's sentence upon, the flesh (what man is by nature). So Paul could say 'For we are the circumcision which rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh'. The Philistines, as an enemy of God's people speak of carnality or fleshliness, particularly as it intrudes upon that which is spiritual.

Paul in addressing the Corinthians says 'Are ye not carnal and walk as men?' □ COR □:□ The believers at Corinth were not walking in a spiritual way, not led by the Lord and governed by His Word but in a natural way by sight and feeling not by faith.

Another expression only used of the Philistines is that they were ruled over by five lords Judges 3.3 and to be carnal is to walk by the natural senses not by faith.

Carnality robs us of spiritual blessing The Philistines, in the days of Isaac filled up the wells that Abraham had dug with earth Genesis 26.15 and Satan would fill up our hearts and lives with the things of earth so that 'well of water springing up into eternal life' John 4.4 becomes clogged up.

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians he was grieved that, because of their carnality, they were not able to make progress and go on in the truth and enjoy all the good things that belonged to them in Christ. 1 Corinthians 3.2. Satan would take from us the true worship, true joy, and communion with the Lord.

Carnality dims our love and appreciation of Christ. The Philistines stole the Ark of God 1 Sam 4.11 The 'Ark of the testimony' went before Israel in their wilderness journey. The people followed it and the priests carried it on their shoulders. It speaks of Christ, whose testimony we bear in this world and whose word we follow and obey. Satan's object is to rob us of that glorious testimony by taking our eyes off the Lord. The lament of the prophet Jeremiah begins with the 'most fine gold' becoming dim in the eyes of God's people and results in the Nazarite becoming defiled and sickly. Lamentations 4 1 and 8. The secret of the overcomer—Nazariteship Samson was born a Nazarite through God's will. The Christian is set apart to God the moment he is born again. Once again, in speaking to the Corinthians Paul tells them 'but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified...in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God'. 1 Cor 6 11. This is a sanctification by water and the Spirit in the authority of Christ's Name. It is through the new birth of which the Lord speaks in John 3.5, 'born of water (God's Word) and of the Spirit'. It is an objective sanctification through the will of God.

But there is also the subjective side of Samson's Nazariteship. He must, therefore walk as a Nazarite, conforming his will to God's. We, as Christians must walk in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus, the true Nazarite who is the fulfilment of the type. 'He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.' 1 John 2.6

The Philistines prepared a test for the Ark. They put the Ark on a new cart pulled along by two milch kine separated from their calves, knowing that the cows would naturally return to their young. Which way would the Ark go? The way of nature or as directed by God? The Ark against all natural instinct went, under the authority of God back to Israel. So Satan in the wilderness tempted the Lord to submit to that most basic of natural instincts and satisfy his hunger by taking matters into His own hands and,

by His own power turning the stones into bread. But the Lord, as the perfect Man, would be governed only by God and His Word and would wait upon Him in everything. 'But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.'

The Mark of a Nazarite. 'Drink not wine nor any strong drink'.

We have a joy which surpasses and displaces all joy that nature can bring about. 'These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full' JOHN 15:11. The Lord would have us to know and share in the joy that was His as He served God here on this earth. In the midst of sorrow He could rejoice and indeed His heart exulted for joy as He rejoiced in His Father's will. 'In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.' Luke 10.21. 'And eat not any unclean thing' To continue in this joy the Holy Spirit must be ungrieved in our hearts—we cannot partake of that which is morally defiling if we walk with our Lord 'whose Name is Holy.'

No razor shall come upon his head The long hair speaks of subjection and the owning of lordship. It is given to the woman in lieu of a veil 1 Cor 11.5. Rebekah, when she saw Isaac took a veil and covered herself, saying in effect, 'I belong to this man only and own his authority over me' The Nazarite owns only the authority of his Lord to whom he belongs. In God's eyes that is a glory to us. In the eyes of the world, a reproach.

The Angel of the Lord It is instructive to see how the Angel of the Lord reveals Himself in Judges and in all these cases He speaks with an authority that only God has. I think we must conclude that the appearance of this Angel is in fact a theophany of the Son of God. It is true that He would not allow Manoah to offer Him a burnt offering telling him to 'offer it unto the Lord' but the reason for that is given in the next verse 'For Manoah knew not that He was the Angel of the Lord' If Manoah thought the Angel to be a mere creature, however elevated, to worship Him would, on his part have been a sin.

Manoah asks the Angel His Name and the glorious reply is given 'My Name is Secret (Wonderful).' This word wonderful in the Hebrew means that which can only be known through revelation. The Psalmist speaks of it 'Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.' PSALM 139.6 This reminds us of when Peter confessed the Lord's Name and He replied 'Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.' Matt 16.16

We have thought upon the practical sanctification of the Nazarite but where is the power in which we can walk in separation to God? The answer is intimated here 'The Angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar' We must turn to the Lord's prayer in John 17.10 to understand the meaning of the type. 'I am no more in the world, but these are in the world and I come to Thee' John 17.11 'For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.' John 17.19. Through His intercession at the Father's right hand in heaven, the Lord Jesus enables us to walk in separation to Him.

JUDGES 14

The lion We see a mixture in Samson of the carnal and the spiritual, that which is of faith and that which is by sight. His motives were 'of the Lord' (V \square) but the means which he took up to achieve them were fleshly (V \square). Perhaps Samson would remind us a little of Peter. There was in him, as in all of us that which was spiritual and that which was fleshly. But the Lord could distinguish and told Peter that although his motives were spiritual he could not achieve them through fleshly means (Matt 26.41).

A young lion roars against him. Ezekiel 19.6 shows us the young lion is the most fearsome of beasts, yet in the power of the Spirit Samson rends the lion as if it were a kid. God in His love is showing Samson at the outset of his career that the only true way of victory is in the might supplied by Him through His Spirit. The result is the enjoyment of true sweetness and blessing. The allegory has of course also an objective interpretation. Through Christ's work on the cross, the power of Satan and death have been annulled and blessing is the result.

The riddle Samson now with this secret knowledge God has given him engages with the Philistines presenting it to them in the form of a riddle. Perhaps this would teach us that even the people of God can be occupied with divine things merely on a carnal or intellectual level affecting only the mind not the heart and conscience. There is joy through meditating upon the Word of God (Jeremiah 15.17) but also the need for self-judgement as it affects the conscience like a sharp two edged sword. The apostle John ate the little book (the word of prophecy) and it was sweet in his mouth but bitter in his belly (Rev 10.10).

The Philistines can join in on this carnal level and give an answer to Samson, but only as a form of words they have learned, they could never enter into the truth of it themselves because, unlike Samson they had no living relationship with God (1 Cor 2.13) So with those who profess to be Christians but know not Christ. There can be with them an outward appearance of Godliness but no living power within. (2 Tim 3.5) Like the Philistines they may seem to have had a change of raiment but in truth are still wearing the old Philistine garment.

JUDGES 15

Samson bound by his own people The Philistines, having suffered at Samson's hands demand that Samson be bound and handed over to them. The object of the Philistine is always to take away the liberty of God's people, to bind them. Amalek (Satan's enmity) seeks Israel's destruction but the Philistine wants his subjugation. What a sorry state Israel is in. They have been brought to it by doing 'what was right in their own eyes'. They accept Philistine rule and even see it as right and normal 'knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us' In this we see the state of the Christian profession today, how it is governed not by the Word of God but by a carnality borne of self will. The liberty of the Spirit has been usurped by carnal ordinance and clericalism. Worship in spirit and in truth has been replaced by a soulish form of worship evoked by mere emotional response and sensual stimulation. However God's cry to the Nazarite rings out through the ages 'Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you' 1 Cor 6.17

Given over to the Philistines Samson submits to his own people and allows them to bind him. He wishes them only good although he can have no fellowship with them in the course they have taken. His controversy is with the Philistines and the Spirit of the Lord 'comes mightily upon him'.

His bonds are broken and taking up a new jawbone of an ass he slays a thousand Philistines. Samson is now acting in dependence to his God. He has been dwelling in the cleft of the rock and it is in that place of communion and safety that the victory is gained. All the glory of the victory belongs to God for he has put into Samson's hand as a weapon a weak and base thing to confound the mighty 'That no flesh should glory in his presence' Enhakkore-'The caller's spring' Samson now has a terrible thirst. He knows that only God can satisfy it and so he 'called unto the Lord' that he might live and not 'fall into the hands of the uncircumcised'. The Lord is quick to answer his call and opens up a spring in the rock Etam (jaw) which, after Samson drinks he names 'Enhakkore' which means 'The caller's spring'. This is familiar territory to us. 'Speak ye unto the rock.and it shall give forth his water' God said to Moses and the word for rock there in Numbers 20.8 is different to the word for the first rock that was smitten, it is 'cela' which comes from a root word meaning 'lifted up' The Lord Jesus has been lifted up by God and given the highest place in heaven and He wants us to cry to Him for that spiritual water which he will freely give through His Spirit, ministering His Word to our souls. Sustained by Him in

the life we have received from Him we will not 'fall into the hands of the uncircumcised' we will not fall into fleshly ways of thinking and acting. That spring is there 'unto this day'

JUDGES 16

Samson in Gaza Twenty years pass by. Samson is indeed a true child of God but the old nature is still there and it begins to stir within him and Samson submits to it. He enters Gaza, the stronghold of the Philistines, satisfies his fleshly lust and then with a great display of strength breaks out of the city evading his enemies and goes on his way. In all this we read nothing of the Spirit of God. Samson thinks he can enter and leave Gaza with impunity, that his strength will deliver him and he can carry on with the Lord as before, but he is mistaken. Although he thinks he is at the top of the mountain he is in fact many miles from Hebron (communion). Perhaps we think we can indulge fleshly desires and also walk in communion with the Lord, but we deceive ourselves. Knowledge of the Word, a gift given by the Lord may carry us along for a while and conceal from us, and even others our true state but we are away from the Lord and easy prey to the enemy of our souls.

Samson and Delilah When Samson walked with his God the mightiest fell before him, but away from Him he falls prey to the weakest. Having trifled with the Philistines in Gaza like a moth with a flame he now forms an alliance with them through falling in love with Delilah (feeble), a Philistine woman. The Philistines are quick to seize their opportunity and pay Delilah a fortune to betray him. She finally discovers the secret of Samson's strength and shaves off his hair. Even to the end Samson is blind to his true state 'I will go out as at other times before and shake myself. And he knew not that the Lord had departed from him'

Blind, bound and under heavy labour, Samson has sown to the flesh and now is reaping its bitter harvest. We can, through disobedience allow sin to reign in our mortal bodies and in doing so we come under its power but it cannot have dominion over us for we have only one Lord. It is to Him we belong and His reign over us is one of grace. (Rom 6 12-14). Christ our Lord will have the victory.

Although the Lord had departed from Samson He had not forsaken His beloved Nazarite. 'The hair of his head began to grow' Samson called upon the Lord Samson called unto the Lord twice in his life and in these two cries we have the two sides to the secret of the victorious Nazarite. Once he cried out that he might live, now he cries out that he might die. One side we have seen, to live unto God, this is the other side to die unto self. God has finished with the old 'I', it can no more live before Him. All die in Adam but it is in Christ we are made alive and so morally our death precedes our life. In our spiritual experience though, we are conscious firstly that we are alive in Christ and then learn that we must reckon ourselves dead to sin (Rom 6/.11) in simple faith submitting to God's judgement and walking according to it in the Spirit's power.

'I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me'. Gal 2.20

The greater the sense of the glory and love of Christ in our souls the less of a problem self becomes.

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