

THE TRAGEDY OF SAMSON

– JANUARY 31. – JUDGES 13:8-16,24,25. –

SAMSON BORN A NAZARITE – HIS BIRTH FORETOLD – HIS MISSION FORETOLD – THE VALUE OF A MISSION – HOW HE JUDGED ISRAEL – SAMSON'S WEAKNESSES – HIS LOYALTY TO GOD – HIS VICTORY IN DEATH.

**"Beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine, nor strong drink."
– Judges 13:4.**

ALL Jews who took a certain vow were styled Nazarites. No one should confound these people with the residents of a certain city called Nazareth. Jesus was a resident of Nazareth, but He was not under the vow of the Nazarite. The vow of a Nazarite was that he would avoid spirituous liquor in every form, and that his hair would not be cut. Samson from his birth was under this vow, which, by the direction of the angel of the Lord, was adopted for him by his parents. In some sense the vow seems to have signified the full, complete consecration of the individual to God and His service.

Twice before Samson's birth, an angel of the Lord communicated with his parents to the intent that the mind of the mother, especially, should be impressed with the importance of abstemiousness; and that thus her child should be born under a favorable endowment. Undoubtedly his parents realized to what extent parents may give mental and physical strength to their children; and they would be alert to endow their offspring favorably.

While the life, the virility, comes from the father, the mother has greatly to do with the stamping of the character. And in the mother's weakened condition prior to the birth of her child, the

father could and should realize the situation, and appreciate his privilege of surrounding the mother with fine intellectual and spiritual influences. Thus the father moulds the thoughts of the mother and leads them in profitable directions, while the mother in turn stamps those high, noble aspirations upon her child, that he may be well-born – an honor to his family name, a blessing to his community and, above all, be qualified to be a servant of God.

According to Divine promise Samson was to be one of the Judges of Israel; that is to say, one of the Deliverers of Israel. The need of deliverance is evident from the context. The Philistines (otherwise the strangers) resided in the southwest of Palestine. They are supposed to have been pirates, and preyed upon the Israelites by land, as travelers are upon the deep. They were a war-like people, and evidently very intelligent as respects manufactures. Their cunning is shown in the fact that they not only disarmed the Israelites, but prohibited their making any iron implements or doing any kind of blacksmithing work. In this manner they held down the Israelites **[R5613 : page 21]** in a species of peonage, exacting tribute of them.

A great maritime power of our day still more shrewdly practises a similar oppression in India – supplying from her mills and shops implements of labor, while guarding against importation of war materials. Moreover, modern methods of finance bring to her rich revenues without the outwardly rude and crude methods of the Philistines.

Samson's work for his people must not be measured by merely the amount of damage he did to the Philistines in various ways as a warrior and as a strategist – setting fire to their wheat fields by ingeniously using foxes for **[R5613 : page 22]** the purpose, etc. Doubtless his chief work was one of reviving the spirit of his people, who had become thoroughly dejected, hopeless, under the oppression of their enemies. The lesson of what one man could do

when he devoted his life to serving his people and to delivering them from their enemies must have been a great stimulus to patriotism, and an encouragement to return to the Lord and to expect Divine favor and prosperity as a result.

POINTS TO BE REMEMBERED

We must not forget that the Jews were not Christians, nor that the rules laid down by Jesus and the Apostles for Christians were not applicable to the Jews. Moses and the nation of Israel, according to the Scriptures, were a House of Servants. (Hebrews 3:5,6.) They were promised Divine blessings in proportion as they would serve faithfully, obediently, the Divine Law, which did not call upon them to be saints in the Christian sense of that word, applicable to the Church of Christ.

Another difference between the Jew and the Christian is that the former was promised temporal blessings as a reward for faithfulness, while the latter is promised spiritual blessings with temporal adversities and trials of faith and patience, love and loyalty. Unless this distinction between the two Ages and the two Laws be borne in mind, we shall continually be in difficulty.

According to the Law, Samson was rated as a very faithful servant of God. His faithfulness consisted in his loyalty to the Divine requirements, to the Cause of God and to Israel, the covenanted people of God. His faith was continually manifested in all that he did; and his whole life was used in serving his people. Hence he is rated in amongst the Ancient Worthies by St. Paul, in Hebrews 11:32, when enumerating those who through faith gained victories and had the testimony that they won the Divine approval.

In a hundred ways Samson was neither a Christian nor an example to Christians. In many respects he lived after the flesh, notwithstanding his noble self-sacrifice in the service of the Lord.

We should remember, however, that he was never begotten of the Holy Spirit. Only since Pentecost have any been begotten of the Spirit of the Lord as "New Creatures in Christ." True, we read that the Spirit of the Lord was upon Samson; but we are to bear in mind the distinction and the wide difference in the Spirit of the Lord coming upon the Prophets and other Ancient Worthies to move them to do this, that and the other thing for the accomplishment of Divine purposes, or to write this, that and the other thing in harmony with the Divine will. Such a mechanical operation of the Holy Spirit is wholly different from that which applies to the Christian, begotten of the Spirit, during this Gospel Age.

We are to receive the Spirit of Adoption, the Spirit of sonship, the Holy Spirit, which, more and more permeating our lives, will make us more and more like unto our Father in Heaven. In all these spirit-begotten ones will be exemplified growth in grace, knowledge and love, by their development and manifestation of the fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit – meekness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering, brotherly kindness, love.

VICTORY IN DEATH

A woman was Samson's undoing. He confided to her, and she betrayed him. He informed her that he was under a vow which included not only his abstinence from the use of intoxicating liquors, but also that his hair should not be shorn; and that if the vow were broken, his special strength and power would be broken. While he slept, his deceitful friend cut off his hair, and then aroused him, saying, "The Philistines be upon thee, Samson!" But, the vow being broken, he was without the special strength which had made him so wonderful before.

Samson's enemies gloated over him, put his eyes out, and kept him as a slave, grinding at the mills. But at a great feast they brought him forth as a trophy. He stood near two massive pillars which supported the roof of the great building; and with a prayer

to God he grasped these and pulled down the entire structure, doing more damage to the Philistines in the killing of their chief men, and more therefore for the deliverance of his people, in that one act than in all the other experiences of his life. Samson's faith in God and desire to do His will are continually manifested throughout his life, when viewed from a proper angle. He "obtained a good report through faith."

LESSONS FOR THE CHRISTIAN

One lesson we may learn from Samson's experiences is the importance of having an object in life. No one can get the best out of his life unless he have some definite purpose before him. Parents should encourage their children not to aspire for things for which they have no capacity, no qualification, but to aspire for the best of what they are capable in life.

"Dare to have a purpose true,
And dare to make it known."

In boys and girls between the ages of twelve and sixteen, there is a surging of the life forces which, rightly directed, tends to make of them noble men and noble women; but which, perverted into wrong directions, may make them vicious; or which, discouraged entirely, may make them do-less. Every parent and every guardian should realize these facts, and shape his dealings with the young under his care accordingly.

Not only so, but there is in youth a striving for nobility, a realization that life is as so much of value, that it can be used but once, and that the direction of its start has much to do with the results. At such a time the faithful parent or guardian may be very successful in setting before the opening mind the reasonable obligation which he has toward the Creator, and the blessed privilege of laying down life itself on the side of right against wrong, on the side of Truth against error. With these matters

thoroughly appreciated, the number of moral heroes in the world would be greatly multiplied.

Another lesson associated is in connection with vows. Vows are voluntary matters. No one is obligated to take a vow; but a vow once taken should be observed faithfully, if its blessing would be enjoyed. We are not advising vows to men or to social or religious institutions, but we do recommend vows to the Lord respecting faithfulness to Him and to His Cause. But whoever takes a vow should remember that it were better not to take it at all than to violate it; for its violation serves to weaken the conscience, whereas its observance tends to strengthen the entire life and to make the individual the more fit, the more prepared, for the Lord's service here and hereafter. The Lord seeks amongst His people strong characters for efficient service.

"Up, then, and linger not, thou saint of God,
Fling from thy shoulders each impeding load;
Be brave and wise, shake off earth's soil and sin,
That with the Bridegroom thou mayst enter in.
O watch and pray!

"Gird on thy armor; face each weaponed foe;
Deal with the Sword of Heaven the deadly blow;
Forward, still forward, till the Prize Divine
Rewards thy zeal, and victory is thine.
Win thou the crown."

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