

For Better or For Worse Lesson 6 3Q 2007

Samson and His Women: The Folly of Passion

Let's do a basic review of the history of Samson's life:

- Parents visited by an angel and told child will be special and given special instructions for mother and child's rearing.
- Child blessed with exceptional strength
- Grows up and tells parents to get philistine woman for his wife
- At wedding she betrays him
- He leaves and she is given to another
- He rules Israel for 20 years
- He meets Delilah and begins relationship outside marriage
- She betrays him three times and then he still tells his secret
- His strength is lost and he is captured
- He kills himself while killing many philistines

Parents went and did what Samson told them to do, what do you parents think about that?

What do you make of "But Samson said to his father, "Get her for me. She's the right one for me." (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.) Judges 14:3,4

Is this another case of the Bible attributing to God what He doesn't prevent? When God stops intervening to hold destructive consequences at bay the Bible then attributes this to God actually doing it.

"The LORD was angry at Israel again, and he made David think it would be a good idea to count the people in Israel and Judah." (2 Samuel 24:1 - CEV).

"Satan wanted to bring trouble on the people of Israel, so he made David decide to take a census" (1 Chronicles 21:1 - GN).

Which version do you think is more accurate?

"By the living LORD,' David continued, 'I know that the LORD himself will kill Saul, either when his time comes to die a natural death or when he dies in battle.'" (1 Samuel 26:10 - GN)

"So the LORD killed him..." (1 Chronicles 10:14 - GN).

But what actually happened? Saul committed suicide.

“The city of murderers is doomed! I myself will pile up the firewood. Bring more wood! Fan the flames! Cook the meat! Boil away the broth! Burn up the bones! Now set the empty bronze pot on the coals and let it get red-hot....You will not be pure again until you have felt the full force of my anger. I, the Lord, have spoken. The time has come for me to act.” (Ezekiel 24:2,9-14).

But what actually happened? The Babylonians came and burned down the city.

“And when Pharaoh saw that the rain, the hail, and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet more; and he hardened his heart, he and his servants. So the heart of Pharaoh was hard; neither would he let the children of Israel go, as the LORD had spoken by Moses. Now the LORD said to Moses, ‘Go in to Pharaoh; for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his servants, that I may show these signs of Mine before him.’ (Exodus 9:34,35; 10:1 - NKJV)

What do you think about this?

“But on the way the people lost their patience and spoke against God and Moses. They complained, ‘Why did you bring us out of Egypt to die in this desert, where there is no food or water? We can't stand any more of this miserable food!’ Then the LORD sent poisonous snakes among the people, and many Israelites were bitten and died. The people came to Moses and said, ‘We sinned when we spoke against the LORD and against you. Now pray to the LORD to take these snakes away.’ So Moses prayed for the people.” (Numbers 21:4-7 – GN)

Do you think God used His power to send in poisonous snakes or that God withdrew His protection? What is the natural state of things in a desert? Did they experience those natural consequences prior to this? (“the vast and dreadful desert, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions.” Dt 8:15).

It was God's power alone that had preserved them in "that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water." Deuteronomy 8:15. Every day of their travels they had been kept by a miracle of divine mercy. In all the way of God's leading they had found water to refresh the thirsty, bread from heaven to satisfy their hunger, and peace and safety under the shadowy cloud by day and the

pillar of fire by night. Angels had ministered to them as they climbed the rocky heights or threaded the rugged paths of the wilderness. Notwithstanding the hardships they had endured, there was not a feeble one in all their ranks. Their feet had not swollen in their long journeys, neither had their clothes grown old. God had subdued before them the fierce beasts of prey and the venomous reptiles of the forest and the desert. If with all these tokens of His love the people still continued to complain, the Lord would withdraw His protection until they should be led to appreciate His merciful care, and return to Him with repentance and humiliation. {PP 428.3}

Because they had been shielded by divine power they had not realized the countless dangers by which they were continually surrounded. In their ingratitude and unbelief they had anticipated death, and now the Lord permitted death to come upon them. The poisonous serpents that infested the wilderness were called fiery serpents, on account of the terrible effects produced by their sting, it causing violent inflammation and speedy death. As the protecting hand of God was removed from Israel, great numbers of the people were attacked by these venomous creatures. {PP 429.1}

So do we find evidence in the Bible that sometimes what is attributed to God is actually God ceasing intercession and allowing natural consequences to come? God allowing people the freedom to make their own choice? What about in the case of Samson marrying a philistine?

Who gave Samson his strength? Did God control His use of it?

What does it say about God?

What does it say about God that He chose someone like Samson to start with?

Would you have preferred God would have chosen someone else to give the power to? Or do you like the fact that God is willing to work with and bless those of us with serious weaknesses?

Do you think Samson was powerful? Does power tempt toward arrogance? Does power corrupt?

Did Christ have power? How did Christ use His power? What does that say?

How would you describe Samson's relationship with Delilah? Dysfunctional? This is a great example of dependency, the most powerful and destructive counterfeit to love. The Bible says that Samson loved

Delilah, but were his actions loving toward Delilah? What was Samson more interested in, getting his own needs met or do what was best for Delilah?

When she betrayed him and lied etc. was he interested in her flawed and damaged character and how lying was destroying her soul? Was he interested in bringing her into a saving relationship with God? Or was he more interested in getting her to be attracted to him?

And when she kept betraying him, did he take that evidence in a loving way or a selfish way?

JDG 16:15 Then she said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when you won't confide in me? This is the third time you have made a fool of me and haven't told me the secret of your great strength." ¹⁶ With such nagging she prodded him day after day until he was tired to death.

Do you think Samson actually had become so discouraged he wanted to die? How do we explain this? This sounds like many of my patients in dependent relationships when their significant other threatens to leave they become suicidal – I don't want to live without them. I would rather die than live without them. Is this love?

And so he tells her his secret and what happened? Notice he didn't even know his strength was gone:

JDG 16:20 Then she called, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!" He awoke from his sleep and thought, "I'll go out as before and shake myself free." But he did not know that the LORD had left him.

What significance is there to this passage? Sin damages the mind and over the course of time we lose the ability to perceive our own condition and we become weaker and weaker and don't even realize it.

We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The sinner brings the punishment upon himself. His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. By choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death. {1SM 235.2}

When Delilah was caught betraying him how did she handle it? She accused him of not loving her, of betraying her. This is projection, blaming someone else for one's own defects.

How does this happen today? Husband is controlling, commanding wife like a slave to serve him, make food, clean, do laundry, who she can talk to etc. If the wife should question him about his treatment he accuses her of not loving him. Is he right? No and yes, no because he is the one failing to love his wife and treating her like property and his accusations are projections of his own failings, but yes in that the wife, by colluding with his mistreatment is not acting in the best interest of the husband. His conscience is seared and character damaged by treating his wife in such a way and in love she has the responsibility to bring Godly principles to bear in her response to him and not merely respond in fear of rejection.

Do you think God did the right thing in abandoning Samson? Why? Because He loved Samson and wanted Samson to be saved:

What a change to him who had been the judge and champion of Israel!--now weak, blind, imprisoned, degraded to the most menial service! Little by little he had violated the conditions of his sacred calling. God had borne long with him; but when he had so yielded himself to the power of sin as to betray his secret, the Lord departed from him. There was no virtue in his long hair merely, but it was a token of his loyalty to God; and when the symbol was sacrificed in the indulgence of passion, the blessings of which it was a token were also forfeited. {PP 566.2}

In suffering and humiliation, a sport for the Philistines, Samson learned more of his own weakness than he had ever known before; and his afflictions led him to repentance. As his hair grew, his power gradually returned; but his enemies, regarding him as a fettered and helpless prisoner, felt no apprehensions. {PP 566.3}

Are there lessons in this story that we can apply to our lives? Do we sometimes in love need to "let go" of someone and "restrain" ourselves from intervening to protect someone from reaping consequences?

SUNDAY

Where do we find Samson in Hebrews – why? Not because of his deeds before his disgrace, but because of his repentance and restoration. What does this say about God? Have you ever let God down? What does the story of Samson tell you? Did God "leave" Samson because He didn't love Samson or because He did? Have you ever had a child who was addicted to bad behavior or substances and you have patiently continued your

support for years, but finally you cut the tie? Is cutting the tie because you don't love them or your last hope that the consequences of their choices might bring them to their senses?

What about the 20 years – what happened then? (Judges 15:20).

Read second paragraph – true or false? Does that include those called by God to be prophets? Should we ever let anyone else do our thinking for us?

We should not take the testimony of any man as to what the Scriptures teach, but should study the words of God for ourselves. If we allow others to do our thinking, we shall have crippled energies and contracted abilities. The noble powers of the mind may be so dwarfed by lack of exercise on themes worthy of their concentration as to lose their ability to grasp the deep meaning of the word of God. The mind will enlarge if it is employed in tracing out the relation of the subjects of the Bible, comparing scripture with scripture and spiritual things with spiritual. {SC 89.3}

WEDNESDAY

Read bottom green section – thoughts?

James 1:14 tells us we are dragged away and tempted by our desires or feelings, but John 8:32 tells us that we are set free by the truth – how do we apply these truths to our lives?

Healthy living comes by using our judgment to determine the truth and exercising our will to follow the truth despite what we feel in the moment. Whenever, in any situation, we allow our feelings to overrule our judgment and make a decision to follow our feelings instead of our judgment we damage ourselves – every time.

Think of the 10 decisions you regret most in life, how many came from a reasonable review of the evidence with a clear conscience and how many came based on feelings?

THURSDAY

Bottom paragraph read – thoughts? Do you think God's purpose was wrought in Samson's life or that God could work a purpose in spite of Samson's life?

FRIDAY

Question 1 read and discuss