

Samson: Power Gone Sour

A Ray of Sunshine

In a dark time of oppression, an angel's words gave a new hope to a family and to the nation of Israel. The supernatural event took place when an angel appeared to a barren woman and announced she would give birth to a boy who would begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines (Judges 13:2-5).

The woman decided to name the child Samson, which means *sunshine*. It appeared that a new day was dawning, and Samson was the first ray of sunshine for the formerly great nation of Israel. They had lost the power they possessed under Moses and Joshua. No longer was Israel a people to be feared by the nations of Canaan: they were now themselves afraid of the warlike people who had occupied that territory for so many years. In fact, at the time Samson was born, they had been under the rule of the Philistines; for forty years (Judges 3:1).

The angel of the Lord gave Samson's mother specific instructions. She was to abstain from wine and strong drink and from unclean food because her unborn child was to be a Nazarite, separated unto the Lord, from the time he was conceived until the day of his death.

The Nazarite vow, as described in Numbers 6, included three areas:

1. No fruit or drink from the grape vine could be consumed.
2. No razor would cut one's hair.
3. The dead body of a man or an animal could not be touched.

A Nazarite was consecrated to the Lord and separated from the world. Samson's strength came from keeping his vow of separation, not from his diet or his long hair. Other children might have grown their hair and stopped eating grapes to try to be as strong as Samson, but they would never possess his strength. Samson a special gift from the Holy Spirit.

Power Without Purpose

Yet even though Samson grew up with a great gift from God, he lacked integrity. He had charisma without character. Samson was a walking contradiction. He could perform the greatest feats of strength through the power of the Holy Spirit immediately after he spent the night in the house of a prostitute (Judges 16:1-3).

Samson never showed any concern for God nor for his nation, Israel. His acts were self-centered — he protected his own interests. He was a loner who loved loose women from the enemy camp. He used God more than he allowed God to use him.

Samson did great damage to the Philistines but mostly for his own ego and personal fulfillment. Had he been a vessel more obedient to God, the Philistines might have been driven out or even destroyed. There may have never been a Goliath or a Philistine army for David and Israel to fight. Samson did not destroy the Philistines, he only bothered and hindered them. Samson truly fulfilled the angel's words: "...he shall *begin* to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines" (Judges 13:5).

Sovereign Gifts of Ministry

Every Spirit-filled Christian can expect to operate in a degree of the supernatural. We can expect the gifts of the Holy Spirit to accompany the preaching of the gospel of salvation and to produce signs and wonders:

"And they (the disciples) went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. " (Mark 16:20)

Samson, however, walked in an anointing beyond that which most people experience. He is a part of a small group of ministers who are either born with a gift from God or are given such gifts early in life. These individuals are the exception and not the rule.

In I Corinthians 12:29-30, Paul asks, *"...are all workers of miracles' Have all the gifts of healing?"*

The answer is obviously "No." These ministers walk in a special anointing from God, just like the apostles and prophets who are also listed in this verse. Not everyone will stand in these positions and minister with this type of power. These gifts come by the sovereign will of God.

This type of ministry not only *produces* signs and wonders, but is often *imparted* by signs and wonders. These ministers tell of angels or even Jesus Himself walking into their room and giving them their ministry. Sometimes, as in the case of Samson, Jesus or an angel appears to the parents and announces a "special" child who will be gifted above others in their generation.

Raising A Gifted Child

Although every one of us is personally accountable to the Lord for our actions, other factors in life often contribute to our outcome. Samson's parents did not do a good job of raising their son, so they share part of the blame for the way Samson turned out.

"And he (Samson) came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore, get her for me to wife.

"Then his father and mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughter of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines?"

"And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me, for she pleaseth me well. "
(Judges 14:2,3)

At this time, Samson was an eighteen-year-old spoiled brat. He *told* his mother and father what he wanted and *commanded* them to get it for him. Apparently, Samson ran the home. Instead of the child fearing the parents, the parents feared the child.

I have noticed that children who are born with musical talents, high I.Q.'s, or

powerful athletic abilities often scare unprepared parents. These children have their every whim catered to and often grow up to be spoiled. They expect the whole world to give them special treatment because of their gifts. They feel they do not have to abide by the same rules as you and me. They become monsters who demand extra attention and huge salaries for their gifts.

Samson's parents made the mistake many parents of gifted children make: they thought discipline and child training were unnecessary. They thought the anointing and special calling on their son's life would bring him character. But this is not the case. Character and integrity are not a gift of God. *Anointing is given, while character is developed.* Gifted children need training and discipline just like all other children.

In this regard, special ministers are like the rest of us. They need to study God's Word and develop a personal relationship with the Lord just like everyone else.

Samson was born to barren parents who were older in years. His mother probably smothered him with love and attention. When the angel told Samson's mother about her son's role in the coming liberation of Israel from the Philistines, I'm sure visions of political and military power must have gone through her mind. Her son would be a national hero! He was continually told he was special and reminded hundreds of times about the angelic visitation and his divine calling. Samson came to the point where he not only believed he was special, he believed he was *better*.

Samson not only expected his parents to jump at his every command, he expected God to do so as well. Samson never developed a lifestyle of study, worship or praise. He was apparently taught the wrath and severity of God but never learned of God's goodness and love. He only called out to God twice, when he was in serious trouble. To Samson, righteousness had nothing to do with being in right relationship with his Creator. It did not mean avoiding sin. It simply meant abstaining from strong drink and not cutting his hair.

Samson's "Signs and Wonders" Ministry

Despite his character flaws, I am convinced that if Samson were alive today, he

would have had a large, successful ministry. That sounds like a startling statement, but stop and think about it, Samson would be in demand on many Christian television programs. He may even have a show of his own. He would be a much-sought-after conference minister since he could perform miraculous feats of strength and draw great crowds. Samson would pack out coliseums, have great book and tape sales, and bring in large offerings.

Even if he came to the pulpit right after visiting the house of a prostitute, he would still be able to operate in the strength of the Holy Spirit. Many pastors and television hosts would not care, as long as the ratings were high, the audience was large and the offerings were generous.

Eventually You Will Reap

Our recent Pentecostal and charismatic history is filled with men of power just like Samson. Behind the facade of the man of God we have sometimes found an adulterer, drug addict, drunkard or homosexual. We often wonder how men who preach with great anointing and perform miracles can have lifestyles filled with sin. "How could this be?" we wonder. Look at Samson!

Samson mistook grace for tolerance. He thought God would keep overlooking his sins and his rotten attitude. But Samson eventually found out what all transgressors discover: "Your sins will find you out." There is a payday. The seeds which have been sown will produce a crop. Samson died blind and in fetters. His full potential was never realized.

The Bible tells us in Romans 11:29, "God's gifts and His call are irrevocable — He never withdraws them when once they are given, and He does not change His mind about those to whom He gives His grace or to whom He sends His call" (AMP).

God does not withdraw His gifts, yet the life of Samson shows us we cannot sin behind the scenes and think we will not be caught. Solomon told us we cannot walk on hot coals and expect our feet not to get burned (Proverbs 6:28). Sin leaves its marks and God will see to it that unconfessed sin eventually comes into the open. Ministers

today need to learn Samson's lesson early to avoid his fate, and to keep their power from going sour.

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