

## Bi235 Old Testament 2

### *Lesson Bi235-10 Samson's Compromise*

The evil one will take you where you don't want to go. He will also make you pay what you don't want to pay. He will make you do what you don't want to do. This was the case with Samson. He had godly parents. He grew into a physically strong and handsome man. But he frequently compromised his devotion to God. As a result he was less successful than his parents or his God hoped he would be.

He disobeyed God in his relations with women. After his Philistine wife was killed (Lesson Nine), he continued to risk trouble with non-Israelite women. He visited a prostitute in the city of Gaza, a long way from home. This was a large Philistine city. The local fighters heard that he was there and they planned to ambush him when he left the city.

"Let's wait until dawn; then we will kill him," they planned.

But Samson left the prostitute in the middle of the night and pulled up the city gate itself. He carried it on his shoulders away from the city to the top of a hill. The ambush totally failed to catch Samson.

Sometime later Samson fell in love with another woman. Her name was Delilah, and he moved in with her without marrying her. This was forbidden by Israelite religion.

Leaders from the five Philistine cities came secretly to Delilah. "Find out why Samson is so strong," they demanded. "If you do, each of us will give you 1,100 pieces of silver." The amount of this bribe is enormous—5,500 pieces of silver. (According to the Law of Moses, the cost of a slave was 30 pieces of silver!) This huge bribe shows how much these leaders feared Samson (Jud 16:1-5).

Delilah at first asked Samson a question, "Where does your great strength come from?" Perhaps she asked this in a casual way. "How could someone tie you up?"

Samson gave an odd answer. He seemed to be teasing Delilah. "If you tie me up with seven fresh bowstrings, then I'll be no stronger than anyone else."

The leaders secretly provided Delilah with the bowstrings, and she playfully tied him up. Fighters were hiding in the house. Suddenly Delilah cried out, "The Philistines are here, Samson!" But he snapped the bowstrings like threads, and the ambush failed.

Delilah tried a second and third time. "You have made fun of me and told me lies. Please tell me how someone could tie you up?"

Samson said, "If you tie me with new ropes, then I'll be no stronger than anyone else." When Delilah cried out that the Philistines were upon him, he snapped the ropes like threads.

Delilah continued to nag him and accuse him of making a fool of her. So he said, "If you weave the braids of my long hair into the warp on your loom, I'll be no stronger than anyone else."

Samson's third reply came closer to the truth. His strength depended on his uncut hair. This was part of his parents' vow to the angel. Until now, Samson had not cut his hair.

So Delilah wove his braided hair into her weaving loom. Then she cried out again, "The Philistines are here, Samson!" Samson woke up and pulled his hair free from the loom. No ambush this time, either. Now Delilah pouted and nagged Samson, pouted and nagged day after day. "How can you say, 'I love you,' when you mock me and lie to me?" she cried.

Finally, Samson told her the secret of his strength. "My parents made a vow to God before I was born. I have never cut my hair, as part of this vow. If my head were shaved, I would become weak like anyone else."

Delilah told the Philistine leaders that she had discovered Samson's secret. They gave her the bribe money, and hid their fighters in another room. She let Samson fall asleep in her lap, then called a man to cut off his hair. Gradually he began to weaken. Again she cried, "The Philistines are here, Samson!"

He woke up, and thought, "I will shake myself loose as before." But he did not know that Yahweh had left him. The Philistines fighters then seized him and gouged out his eyes. They dragged him down to Gaza, and made him turn a millstone in prison to grind grain. They treated him like an animal. But, his hair began to grow.

Months later the Philistines prepared a festival to worship their pagan god. "Our god has given our enemy Samson into our hands," they proclaimed. As the party went on, someone shouted, "Bring Samson out and let him entertain us!" They made fun of him, and stood him between two pillars that supported the roof of the pagan temple. Samson asked his guard, "Let me feel the two pillars, so I can lean against them."

Thousands of Philistines were watching Samson perform, some in the temple and some on the roof. Samson felt the pillars, and for the second time in his life, he prayed. "Yahweh, remember me and strengthen me this one last time. Help me, O God, to avenge myself on these Philistines for my two blind eyes." He pushed on the pillars with all his might. Then he said, "Let me die with the Philistines." He pushed the pillars and the temple collapsed. The leaders and hundreds of others were killed.

He killed more when he died than he had killed during his life. His family retrieved his body and buried him in his father's tomb back in the foothills (Jud 16:6-31).

This story is **important** because it illustrates how a man with great strength from God misused his strength. Samson could have become a great hero and deliverer of Israel. But he compromised his religious devotion by neglect and immorality. This led to one of the saddest sentences in the Bible: "Samson did not know that Yahweh had left him." When Samson failed the Lord, the Lord stopped blessing him.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that God can use anyone who trusts in him. He used Samson to bring judgment on the Philistines, even though Samson himself lost his life in the process. God blessed Samson over and over again, although he was half-hearted in his faithfulness

to God. At the end of his life he was physically blind, but he reached out to God in prayer. He asked for spiritual sight and understanding, and God responded with renewed strength.

To **review** this lesson, answer these questions:

1. What was the source of Samson's great strength? [Pause]
  - A. If you said, "The Spirit of God came on him and gave him superhuman strength," you are correct.
2. What was the source of Samson's weakness? [Pause]
  - A. If you answered, "His weakness was not taking his devotion to God seriously, especially in his relationships with women," you answered correctly.
3. Why was Samson's hair important to the story? [Pause]
  - A. If you said, "His uncut hair was a symbol of devotion to God," you are right.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to the story at least three times. As you hear the story each time, imagine how it happened. See the events in your own mind. Then tell the story in your own words as you remember it. You may need to have someone check that you are telling the story correctly.

Ask a friend or two who have never heard this story to listen to it. Discuss what your weaknesses may be and then pray together. Ask God to give you strength in your areas of weakness. Ask for spiritual sight and understanding as you become disciples of the Lord and leaders of other believers.