

SAMSON'S BATTLE

Rev. Harold C. Cranch

Reading: Judges 15

Samson is known as one of the strongest and bravest men that ever lived. He served the Lord and loved his country and wanted to help his countrymen. In his day the Israelites had no king. They were led by the Lord through judges who were willing to serve the Lord by leading the Israelites against their enemies. They also judged the grievances and troubles of the people, and helped them to establish the land. Each judge was given power by the Lord to do His work throughout his life. At the time when Samson became this leader, the Philistines were very strong and powerful and had great armies which controlled the Children of Israel.

You remember that Samson was pledged to the Lord. He was not allowed to cut his hair, for if he cut it all of his strength would be gone. So from the time he was just a little baby his hair had grown. He was so strong and brave that when the Spirit of the Lord filled him he could do anything.

But Samson did not always obey the Lord. He married a Philistine woman even though this was against a law which the Lord had given to the Children of Israel. Then, the Philistines turned against Samson, and when he returned to his old home after the wedding, the parents of his wife gave her to someone else. When he came back to take his wife home, her father said, "We thought you didn't want her, so we gave her to your companion." Then the Spirit of the Lord filled Samson. He was very angry with the Philistines, and when he went home he said, "As the Philistines have done to me, so shall I do to them." He trapped three hundred foxes, tied their tails together, and tied torches to their tails. He lit the torches and let the foxes go. As they ran through the fields they set fire to the grain, vineyards, and olive trees. In this way the Philistines' food was destroyed.

The Philistines became very angry and determined to destroy Samson. They gathered an army and came up against the tribe of Judah where Samson was living. When the people of Judah saw the army of the Philistines they were afraid. They had no weapons, for the Philistines had taken them all away. They did not know what to do, so they asked the Philistines, "Why have you come up to fight against us?" The Philistines said, "We didn't come up to fight against you, we have come to seize Samson and punish him for what he has done against us."

The people of Judah told Samson what was happening. They said, "Do you not know that the Philistines are our rulers and masters? Why then do you do these things? We must bind you and take you to them." Samson said, "If you will only promise that you yourselves will not fall upon me, then you may bind me and give me to the Philistines." So they did. They took two strong ropes and wrapped them around Samson and tied them very strongly. Then they took him to the army of the Philistines.

The Philistines marched Samson toward their city, and they mocked him and laughed at him. Then the Spirit of the Lord filled Samson, and he stretched his muscles and all the ropes broke and fell from him as if they were string. Samson looked down and saw some bones lying at his feet. He took the jawbone of a donkey, which is shaped something like an axe, and used it to fight against the Philistine soldiers. He slew a thousand of them before they ran away. The power the Lord gave Samson was so great that he overcame that great army.

The strength and power of Samson represents a strength and power that we can have in our own lives. Like the judges of Israel, the Lord provides something that will judge and lead us in the way He wants us to go. And we need this power, for every evil thing that we love and do, every bad and false idea, and everything that is harmful to the Lord's purpose for us, is like one of the enemies of Israel. These things come up in us and try to overcome our spiritual life, just as the Philistines tried to overcome the Children of Israel. But the Lord never leaves us alone. He always provides a strong hero to guide our life and fight against evils to lead us toward heaven.

What, then, does Samson represent in us? His power and strength represented the power and strength of the truth of the Lord's Word. The only thing that can overcome the evil in us is the teaching that the Lord Himself gives to us. Sometimes these teachings are powerful and strong in us, and sometimes they are weak. It depends on us, whether we will learn them and use them or not—whether we will allow them to have power with us. So it was with Samson. When the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, he could overcome all his enemies. He wasn't afraid of anything. He could even use a piece of dead bone to fight against the armed soldiers of the Philistines, and he overcame their entire army.

At times, it seems that the evil thoughts that come to us are very strong, so strong that we could not possibly overcome them. This is when we should remember the story of Samson. For if we allow the Lord to give us strength, we can certainly overcome all the enemies of our spiritual life. Evil thoughts and desires have absolutely no power before the Lord and the teachings of His Word. So, whenever we are tempted to do wrong, we should think of the power the Lord gave to Samson. We should ask Him to give us this power, also, so that we may fight against our evils and, in the Lord's strength, overcome them. For if we ask sincerely, He will surely give this power to us.