

Samson and Delilah

Part 1

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Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.

[00:00:01] Judges chapter 16 and verse 4. And it came to pass afterward that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek whose name was Delilah. And the Lord to the Philistines came up unto her and said unto her entice him and see wherein his great strength lies and by what means we prevail against him that we may bind him to afflict him. And we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred pieces of silver. And Delilah said unto Samson tell me I pray thee wherein thy great strength lies and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee. And Samson said unto her if they bind me with seven green weeds that were never dried then shall I be weak and be as another man. Then the Lord to the Philistines brought up unto her seven green weeds which had not been dried and she bound him with them. Now there were men lying in wait abiding with her in the chamber and she said [00:01:04] unto him the Philistines be upon thee Samson and he break the weeds as a thread of towel is broken when it is touched with fire. So his strength was not known. And Delilah said unto Samson behold thou hast mocked me and told me lies. Now tell me I pray thee wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her if they bind me fast with new ropes that were never occupied then shall I be weak and be as another man. Delilah therefore took new ropes and bound him therewith and said unto him the Philistines be upon thee Samson. And there were liars in wait abiding in the chamber and he break them off from his arms like a thread. And Delilah said unto Samson hitherto thou hast mocked me and told me lies. Tell me therewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her if thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the web. And she fastened it [00:02:03] with the pin and said unto him the Philistines be upon thee Samson. And he awaked after his sleep and went away with the pin of the beam and with the web. And she said unto him how canst thou say I love thee when mine heart is not with thee. Thou hast mocked me with these three times and hast not told me wherewith thy great strength lieth. And it came to pass when she had pressed him dearly with these words and urged him so that his soul was vexed unto death that he told her all his heart and said unto her there hath not come a razor upon mine head. For I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb. If I be shaven then my strength will go from me and I shall become weak and be like any other man. And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart she sent and [00:03:04] called for the Lord of the Philistines saying come up at this once for he hath showed me all his heart. Then the Lord of the Philistines came up unto her and brought money in their hand and she made him sleep upon her knees and she called for a man and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head and she began to afflict him and his strength went from him. She said the Philistines be upon thee Samson and he awoke out of his sleep and said I will go out as other times before and shake myself and he wist not that the Lord has departed from him. But the Philistines took him and put out his eyes and brought him down to Gaza and bound him with fetters of brass and he did grind in the prison house. Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven. Then the Lord of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a [00:04:03] great sacrifice unto Dagon their

God and to rejoice for they said our God hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand. And when the people saw him they praised their God for they said our God hath delivered into our hands our enemy and the destroyer of our country which slew many of us. And it came to pass when their hearts were merry that they said call for Samson that he may make us sports and they called for Samson out of the prison house and he made them sport and they set him between the pillars and Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand so for me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth that I may lean upon them. Now the house was full of men and women and all the Lords of the Philistines were there and there were upon the roof about 3,000 men and women that beheld while Samson made sport. And Samson called unto the Lord [00:05:06] and said O Lord God remember me I pray thee and strengthen me I pray thee only this once O God that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes. And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood and on which it was borne up of the one with his right hand and of the other with his left. And Samson said let me die with the Philistines and he bowed himself with all his might and a house fell upon the Lords and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than there to slew in his life. The story of Samson and Delilah is the very heart and soul of dramatic tragedy. The bright promise of Samson's early life, the [00:06:10] carefree slipping into temptation, the deepening tragedy, the wiles of Delilah and the gigantic climax have always been found to stir the imagination of even those who have scant regard to the Bible as the Word of God. And perhaps the most noticeable thing about the story is a conversation that Samson never heard and was never aware of except in the dreadful climax and that is when the five Lords of the Philistines came to Delilah and said entice him, entice him [00:07:05] that we may see wherein his great strength lies. We seem to be hearing something very like the time when Satan asked permission of the Lord that he might deal with Job and try him and afflict him and as far as we can see from beginning to end of the story Job never knew what lay behind his terrible suffering. And above all there comes to mind the heartfelt appeal of the Apostle Paul to the believers in Corinth when he said I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy lest as Satan beguiled Eve through his subtlety so your hearts might be beguiled from simplicity as to Christ. Now this is a human tragedy a [00:08:06] very human tragedy but it's a great deal more than a human tragedy and I'd like to begin by explaining in a few words why it has tremendous meaning for us who are believers in the Lord Jesus and those whose lives have been called to be devoted entirely to him, to his use, to his service, to his glory. Because there are the closest parallels between certain things about the story of Samson and the Christian life. Samson had, Samson's life had a divinely ordained purpose and Samson was provided with a divine power in order to enable him to fulfill that purpose. The purpose of Samson was quite simply stated it was to [00:09:04] destroy the Philistines and to deliver Israel. In the early part of the story as we have it in Judges in chapter 13 we read and then began Samson to destroy the Philistines. It was his, the purpose of his life and it was clearly stated before his birth it was a divinely ordained purpose for his life to deliver Israel from the Philistines. And the second thing is from his earliest years the Spirit of the Lord began to come upon him and to move him at times and it was his power for the delivery of Israel from the Philistines. And very very plain indeed was the proof given in the story that there was adequate power in Samson by the presence in him of the Spirit of the Lord moving him when the occasion [00:10:02] arose there was adequate power there to deliver Israel from the Philistines. Oh how sadly the story went wrong and the way it went wrong and the lessons for us in the way it went wrong and the warnings that come to us whereby we can avoid we can be saved from it's going wrong with us these are the interests of the story for us. Now the purpose of Samson was to destroy the Philistines to deliver Israel from the Philistines and I would imagine that there are very few of us here of any age who couldn't give a pretty close idea of what the purpose for the Christian life is ordained to be by God. Perhaps one's mind runs first of all to the conversion of the Thessalonian believers and it says they [00:11:03] turned from idols to serve the living and true God

and to wait for his son from heaven. Now there you have it there was a purpose the new purpose for their new lives to serve the living and true God and to wait for his son from heaven.

And in Ephesians we read that God has created his people anew unto good works that he ordained beforehand they should live in. There you see from before the world the good works of the Saints were prepared and it's a statement of the purpose of the Christian life that in that life God shall be glorified by good works. I suppose that above all things we realize that the purpose of the Christian life is to do the will of God in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. [00:12:03] That we who are believers should find motive in the constraining power of the love of Christ to live not unto ourselves but unto him who died for us and rose again. The purpose of the Christian life is quickly stated but oh how we pray for each other that it might be during this week written in our hearts by the Holy Spirit afresh in the measure in which we know it already. The second part of the strength of the second part of the of the experience of which is so instructive for us is the divinely given strength for the purpose to which his life was to be devoted. And it's a very interesting thing to see that that strength manifested itself as being adequate for the work that he had [00:13:06] to do. In childhood it is recorded the child grew and the Lord blessed him and the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times. Chapter 13 verse 25. When he was a young man he went down to Timnath and a young lion roared against him and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him and he rent as he would have rent a kid and he had nothing in his hand. That is chapter 14 verse 6. Later when his countrymen bound him with new cords and delivered him to the Philistines they shouted against him and the Spirit of the Lord came suddenly upon him and the cords that were upon his hands became as flax that was burned with fire and his [00:14:02] burns loosed from off his hand and then with the jawbone of an ass he slew a thousand men. There was the plainest possible proof that there was power with with Samson because the Spirit of the Lord came upon him. Now in speaking further about this story I am most anxious not to be misunderstood upon an important point and I'm particularly anxious that we should not I should not be misunderstood in respect of how this applies individually and specially to us.

This story is not a warning against any close link of a man with a woman or a woman with a man. When such links are in the Lord they can purify and enrich our lives beyond measure under his hand. In contrast the story of Samson and Eliza [00:15:08] was outside the marriage bond. It warns us against the attractions of a man or a woman not a believer and in a very real way it warns us all old and young against the power of something immensely attractive to nature but designed by Satan to turn us away from our separation unto the Lord and to rob us of the power of the Holy Spirit. Because there is, and I'm brought to it by that remark, there is a very important difference between the endowment of Samson by the Spirit of God and your endowment and my endowment for the fulfillment of God's purpose in our lives. It is a wonderful thing for us to [00:16:05] read these stories of the immense bodily strength of Samson and to see it attributed to the presence with him at times of the Spirit of the Lord and to understand that it is the same Spirit of God who dwells in us that he might be our power in spiritual things, our power for the fulfillment of the true purpose of our lives. But we notice very plainly the Spirit of God came upon Samson at times. The Spirit of God did not remain permanently with Samson. Now so far as you and I are concerned as the children of God, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we must once and again, ever and again, be absolutely clear about the fact that we have received the Holy Spirit and that he has been promised by the Savior to dwell with us forever. He will never leave you. He will dwell with you [00:17:07] forever. We read in the last chapter of the Gospel of Luke that the Lord Jesus said to the disciples, I'm going over the bones of the story just once again that you might be quite clear about it, the Lord Jesus said to them, tarry ye at Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high. Tarry ye at Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high. And that is the form in which in the pages of the Gospel of Luke the promise of the gift

of the Holy Spirit is given, until ye be endued with power from on high. We read in the Acts, chapter 2, how when they were all with one accord in one place, there came as the sound of a rushing mighty wind, and as it were cloven tongues of fire rested upon them all, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak in other tongues [00:18:05] as the Spirit gave them utterance. Now how do you and I become partakers of this immeasurably great endowment, the endowment of the Spirit of God? Well, like you, all my life I've been from time to time disturbed about this question. Is it really true that every believer receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit, or is it some special attainment by way of a second blessing that comes to us? Time and again I've read the biographies of Christian men and women for whom I conceived the greatest possible admiration in their lives and in their response to the Lord. And then, sooner or later, it comes. They got this second blessing, and their faces suddenly became radiant, their heads were above water for good, and they'd arrived. And I asked myself, I can only do one [00:19:03] thing about this. It's all so impressive as a story. I can only do one thing about it, and that is go back to the Scriptures for myself. And time and time and time, I did go back to the Scriptures myself, and I came away with an ever-deepening certainty that it is true, that the believer is baptized with the Holy Ghost the moment he believes, and the Holy Ghost never leaves him. The verse which, in the end, was that my principal conviction was in Ephesians chapter 1, in whom, on believing, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is with us, we read, until the day of redemption. And there you have the plain indication that every believer, the moment they believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, they are sealed. There's a transaction that can never be reversed. God has sealed it by the gift of the Holy Spirit to dwell within, the seal and the earnest. And so [00:20:05] that becomes available to you and me, for our comfort and for our strength, every time we go back to it, the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ, I will send another comforter, and he shall dwell with you forever.

Nevertheless, we have to reckon with the fact. When we think of the power that's available for the fulfillment of life's purpose under the hand of the Lord, we have to reckon with the terrible danger of grieving the Holy Spirit, so that we do not see his mighty works. The Holy Spirit is with us. The Holy Spirit will never leave us. The Holy Spirit came to us the moment we believed. It's a seal, a transaction that God will never go back upon. But we are exhorted to not to grieve the Holy Spirit, because it's so sadly true in scripture and in [00:21:07] our experience, that if by the manner of our lives, and in that context, it's speaking truth, it's being angry, and it's the most ordinary kind of evil doing that are there instance, but by the manner of our lives, oh how sadly we know it's true, we can grieve the Holy Spirit. And it is just as it was when the Lord Jesus Christ was here upon earth. There were certain who grieved him. He looked about upon them with sorrow and anger, and he could do not many mighty works because of their unbelief. If the Holy Spirit of God is dwelling in us, it's absolutely right that you and I should say, if he's there, where are his mighty works? We want to see those mighty works. We haven't the slightest doubt that those mighty works should follow. Oh how sad it is when we have to come to the [00:22:05] conclusion that it is when we grieve him that he can do not many mighty works because of the fact that in our lives we have grieved him. But the very way that the Holy Scripture brings these things before us makes it plain that it is still and ever the desire of God that we may not grieve the Holy Spirit, we may not quench the Holy Spirit, but rather that we may walk in the Spirit and then his mighty works will become manifest in our lives. Because when we speak about the purpose of our lives, the work perhaps that we are to do for the Lord, we must always remember that probably we ought always in thought and prayer to give priority to what God desires to do in us before we can adequately give consideration to what God will do by us. And what is God ready to do in us? [00:23:06] It is to purge us from envy and falsehood and pride and bring the beauty of the Lord upon us. That's what that's what our endowment is for the work that lies to our hand. Now we understand that therefore we understand that there was this great purpose for for

Samson's life and there's a parallel purpose for our lives. We understand that the great power for that purpose was the fact that the Holy Spirit came upon him. But there's another very prominent feature in the [00:24:01] story relative to the power that was resident on Samson for the fulfillment of his purpose of delivering Israel from the Philistine, and that was that from his birth he was to be a Nazarite. Now we read the story of the Nazarite's vow in the book of Numbers, and the Nazarite's vow had two parts. There was first of all the overriding thought that his vow meant that he was to be separated unto the Lord. But there was also another part to the vow and that is he was to be separated from certain things which in a figurative way would go against his being separated unto the Lord. Now those three things in the book of Numbers were in fact that he had not to touch a dead body, and he had not to touch or drink any part of the fruit of the vine, and that he had not to have [00:25:05] ever have his hair cut. Now in the story as we have it before us, the reason best known to the Spirit of God, the emphasis is entirely upon the fact that Samson's strength lay in his Nazariteship with particular reference that his hair was not to be cut. Now there is in Christianity no separate class who are under a vow of this kind, but that we are called to be separated unto the Lord and that we are called to be separated from all evil is abundantly true and it's true for all of us. And this is very close to what I said about grieving the Holy Spirit. There are two sides to this source of strength in the picture presented by the Nazarites vow. The first is that we are separated unto the Lord [00:26:04] and the second is that we are separated from all manner of evil. And of course it presents to us the power of that separation from all kinds of evil. Well is it not something that's wonderfully true that so far as the believer is concerned it is our privilege to be separated unto the Lord. The Lord Jesus Christ wants our hearts and wants our lives. And again and again we've had it before us this week, beginning with that interview with Simon Peter, and we shall never forget, will we, that interview, that encounter between the Lord and Simon, which was personal and was penetrating and was purposeful and it resulted in Peter being entirely restored to the Lord Jesus Christ, to his being converted and to strengthen his brethren. He was a person who was [00:27:01] separated unto the Lord. And I think the great text, which certainly has been the most, one of the most powerful texts in my life, is the text I've already quoted from 2nd Corinthians chapter 5, which says, in that he died, that is the Lord Jesus, in that he died, he died unto for all, he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto him who died for them and rose again. Now what comment could possibly do more than those words themselves to make clear what is the desire of the Lord Jesus for us? Henceforth, from the moment we became his, from the moment he reached down and rescued us from sin and misery and made us his own, henceforth living not unto ourselves, not unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us and rose again. And [00:28:04] where is to be found the power within for such a life? Live not unto ourselves but unto him who died for us and rose again. It lies close by. The love of Christ constraineth us, and it's that that makes us judge this way. I've always taken great interest in the fact that what that verse in fact saying is that the love of Christ controls my judgment. It controls the way I think of things. If it rightly exercises its power over us, it's because it says, because we thus judge, the love of Christ so constrains us that we thus judge. And what do we judge? We judge that they that live, since he died for all, they that live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto him who died for us and rose again. Now I just have the briefest possible word about the idea [00:29:03] represented by the Nazarite vow with particular reference to cutting the hair. Now that there are two scriptures which seem to me to make it plain. One is that it says for a man to have long hair is a shame to him, and the other is we read that the Lord Jesus Christ endured the cross despising the shame. First Corinthians 11 and Hebrews chapter 13, and that teaches me that the long hair of the Nazarite symbolized and spoke beforehand of the cross and its place in the Christian life. Oh how we ought to take time to go into the truth of the cross. All I can do about it this evening is to remind you of the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, if any man will come after me let him deny himself and take up his [00:30:01] cross daily and follow me. It's the cross,

and the cross is the appointed means in the Christian life whereby we deal with our sins, we deal with sin. It's the sword by which we cut off those things that are offensive to God and harmful to ourselves. And so the Nazarite vow in the case of Samson with particular reference of the length of his hair, it was something which speaks to us of that means whereby we are separated from evil in our lives so that we might be in fact wholly separated unto the Lord. Now we have understood the story of Samson's strength. Samson's strength was in his Nazariteship, and it was [00:31:02] because he allowed his Nazariteship to lapse unto the wiles of the woman who had won his heart. It was because he allowed his Nazariteship to lapse that Samson the strong became weak. And what we might say since we have found out the secret of Samson's strength, what was the reason for his weakness? Well, I feel that we would have to come to the conclusion, put it in ordinary language, the reason for Samson's weakness was that he was a trifler. The very thing that should have marked his life in an outstanding way was purpose. Purpose given him, and purpose responding in his own heart. It should have been with him as it should be with us. And the Apostles exhorted the new believers at Antioch [00:32:07] that with purpose of heart they should cleave to the Lord. Now Samson's weakness, terrible, you know, not only tragic but fatal, fatal weakness, it lay in the fact that he trifled. He sported along in his strength. If he happened to meet a few Philistines, he cared had knocked their heads together and went on singing. And if he met a Philistine woman who pleased him, he abandoned himself to the gratification of his lusts and forgot entirely his purpose. He was a trifier. There was the absence of serious purpose in his heart corresponding to the purpose that God had given for his life. And oh how we're trying to help each other at times like this. That there might be in our minds and hearts corresponding, mirroring, what the Word of God tells us God has done with us and [00:33:06] for us. That there should be purpose of heart. That with purpose of heart we should cleave to the Lord. One might well ask whether Samson attained the happiness that he sought. And if for one moment we contemplate Samson with his eyes gone grinding in the Philistine prison, then we will see what comes from trifling with the serious issues of life and forgetting the divine purpose for our lives and the divine power and the love of Christ that lies behind it all as a motive for us. But there was, at the end of Samson's life, there was a gleam of encouragement. Perhaps he was the person whom the writer by the Spirit of [00:34:05] God had in mind when he said that by faith out of their weakness they were made strong. And we read of the deep groaning of prayer with which Samson called to the Lord to restore him his eyes, to restore him his strength, that he might in the end fulfill his purpose. When the blind slave leaned on the pillars of the vast hall, the glee of the assembled thousands of Philistines, his turn to consternation and terror, his muscles tighten and he feels within himself that the Lord is once more his strength. And the pillars begin to crack and sway. And then the house fell upon the Lord's and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than all they [00:35:02] that he slew in his life. Let us therefore watch and pray and the Lord will keep us faithful to himself. Our unseen foes, remember that interview that he never heard, never knew about, so fruitful in failure, entice him that we may find what in his great strength lay. Our unseen foes are ever ready to entice, taking occasion by our unguarded hours. Charlotte Elliot's hymn may well close our meditation on Samson, whose unguarded hours were so tragically fruitful of failure. Principalities and powers mustering their unseen away, wait for thine unguarded hours, thine unguarded hours, watch and pray. Hear above all, hear [00:36:06] thy Lord, him thou lovest to obey, hide within thine heart this word, watch and pray. Watch as if on this alone hung the issue of the day, pray that help may be sent down, watch and pray. Charlotte Elliot knew very well that it did not depend on this alone. When she wrote, watch as if on this alone, she was the woman who wrote just as I am, without one plea, without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me and that thou bidst me come to thee, O Lamb of God, I come. She knew that in the end it depends upon the love of God and the precious blood of Christ. What she said was, watch as if, just as though everything [00:37:02] depended upon it, let us watch and pray. And we believe the Lord will keep us faithful to himself. Now

unto him who is able to keep us from falling, to guard us from stumbling and to present us before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, the honour and power, dominion and might, both now and ever. Amen.