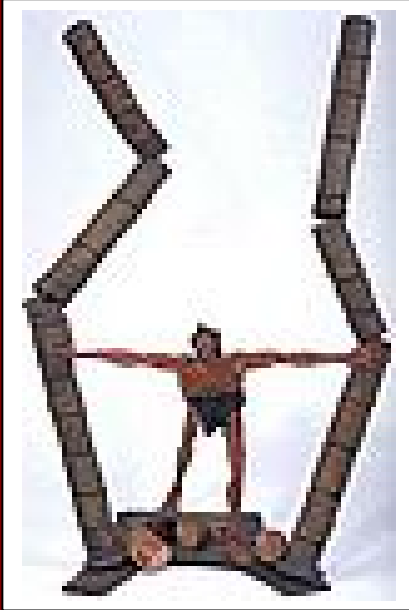


The “Samson Trail”



A Walk of Faith, Failure, Forgiveness and Victory
Judges Chapter 13-16

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Introduction

The “Samson Trail” is a dangerous one. It is filled with pitfalls, deceptions, attacks, and hardships. It is one of the ways to reach victory but probably not the best road to travel. Samson’s walk with God, as revealed to me, mirrors many modern day Christians as they walk with Jesus. It is one of great zeal, a loss of faith, repentance and stumbling into victory. Many fall on the path to live out a dead religion. The trail is littered with regrets, sorrows, and dead dreams.

This short story is aimed at encouraging the Samson type Christian to not give up and to see that God is still there ready to empower him or her for that “One Last Battle”.





Significant Points of Interest

Listed below are theological concepts that interact in the Samson saga. They make for great group discussions and deeper study.

- Divine Calling and Free Will
- The Nazirite vow compared to the Christian commitment to God.
- The “Valley of Decision” and its importance.
- Unequally yoked and its affect on faith and values.
- Flirting devils and how they seduce.
- Compromise and its consequences.
- Bondage, torment and sorrow. Is it really necessary?
- Discerning the Spirit of God and “The Flesh”. What’s the difference?
- Repentance-What’s it all about?
- Failing God and getting back on track.
- How to keep on keeping on without all the anguish.

Most of us have read the Biblical story of Samson and his love affair with Delilah. What we probably never realized is that his story is a portrait of the way many modern Christians walk out their salvation. We see Faith, Hope, great Zeal, as well as Defeat, Bondage, Despair, and yes even Repentance and Redemption. Let's see if you are on the "**Samson Trail**" to heaven. If so, there are some things you should consider.

Samson was remembered in Biblical history for his great strength. He was a warrior of sorts, always able to beat off the enemy. He fought them in great numbers and always won. He was a man called of God with a definite purpose to lead his people against the onslaught of ungodliness. He was chosen of God to be a champion.. He also was a man that had a secret, a mystery, to those around him. It was the source of his great strength. What was it that made him so powerful in faith and produced such great courage to face the evils of his day?



Samson's secret was not his long hair, as most believe. That was only the outward visible link to a deeper walk with God. His vow of obedience, his love for God, and his heart that forged a relationship with the Almighty and brought favor upon his life was the true secret to his power.

Here was what God said to Samson's mother through an unknown messenger that was later found to be an Angel. ("Do not be afraid!" the man said. "I have come with good news. You are going to have a son!" "You must not drink any wine, or strong drink," the man continued, "and when your son is born, you must never cut his hair. He is going to be a Nazirite, a person set apart for God. He is going to save your people from the power of the Philistines.") This was his destiny and why he was chosen. He did in fact move in the zeal and power of his God. It was his choice to become what God had spoken over him. He accepted the "Nazirite" vow and dedicated himself to be God's Champion..

The Philistines heard of Samson and the things he had done, and so they sent an army to find him. Samson defeated the Philistine army, and for 20 years he led the people of Israel against the Philistines.

Like Samson, we all have that “One Thing” that keeps us walking in the love and grace of our Lord. That “One Thing” that causes us to stand up in adversity and speak out against evil. It is our relationship with the Lord that causes us to fight against the evils of our day. If we are play-acting and just going through the motions, we never become the warrior type. We never want to be the cause of any conflict. We keep the Status Quos and hide our light under a bushel.

But this story is about those that like Samson, jumped in with both feet; those who captured the real meaning of a life with the “Creator of All Things” This is the story of, not only Samson, but also the brave hearted Christian, the one called by God with a destiny to be fulfilled, a peculiar type, the “Called Out Ones” that make up the Church of Jesus Christ. It is the story of the guy or gal who on their way to his or her destiny got mixed up with a seducing spirit that, like Delilah, sought to find the secret and destroy it.

Now that “Mighty One”, the called of God for greatness is only a “Has Been,” lost in the uncertainty of life, caught up in regrets, full of sorrow and despair and ever wondering where things went wrong. They fill the pews of hundreds of churches in America today. They walk the streets of our cities, rule our governments and profess to be Christian. Over 80% of Americans today believe in God but do nothing about it. When you tell them that God speaks to you, they freak out, as if you were the odd one. They have no knowledge of such things. But Samson did hear from God and walked with Him in such a relationship that it shook the world around him.

The scripture says that we ought to guard our spirits, for out of them flow the issues of life. Samson’s “One Thing” and our “One Thing” are both the same. It is that issue of life that flowed from God the Father to us through the Holy Spirit. This life force, some of us call, “The Anointing” must at all times be guarded for it is the secret to our strength and the source of our power and what gets us through the struggles of life. It was also the very thing that Delilah wanted to discover and defeat in Samson.

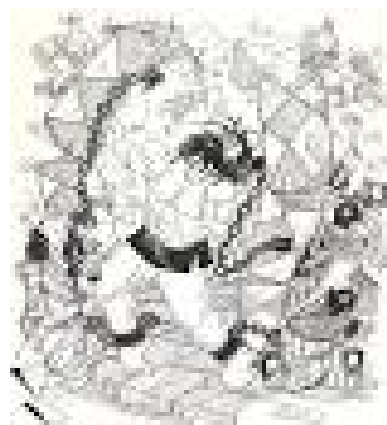
Most of us know that the enemy will attack us at our weakest point. That's why we are to seek the Lord to overcome those weaknesses. This will keep us strong in faith and our walk with Him. We often forget, however, that the enemy also attacks us when we are strong. I never



used to believe that. I always thought, "if I am strong in the Lord, the devil can not get me"...**Wrong**. He does attack us at our most powerful level of faith but in a very different way. He uses his secret weapon, a "Delilah" spirit, who comes to us smelling good, looking pretty and full of all the desires of the flesh. Her purpose is to tempt us, toy with our emotions and seduce us into revealing the

secret of our power. Then that evil spirit, guised in beauty and desire, strips us of our faith, steals our joy, and leaves us naked before God in shame and hopelessness. Our eyes of discernment are darkened and we are assigned to the tormentors to live out a miserable defeated Christian life. Our prayers fall short, our hearts are empty and we end up believing the lie that God has somehow given up on us because we failed Him so terribly.

You know how I know that all of this is true. It all happened to me. I was on the "Samson Trial" to heaven. Like many of you, I started out so powerfully in the Spirit only to end up in the flesh, bewildered as to what had happened and how I ended up where I did. I was like the foolish Galatians the Apostle Paul spoke of. I had been bewitched into thinking that I could follow Jesus by walking in the flesh.



As a result of all of that went on in my life, I found myself in such utter darkness. I, like Samson, thought I was invincible; after all, I walked with God. I was a "King's Kid". I never saw the "Delilah" spirit coming. It hit me like a ton of bricks and I fell hard.

Nobody, at that time, taught on what to watch out for and how we really can be hurt by evil if we are not watching. Doesn't Peter tell us in



the Scripture to “be sober, be vigilant, for your adversary, the devil, like a roaring lion, roams to and fro upon the earth, seeking whom he may devour”? (I Peter 5:8) We are to resist him steadfast in the faith but we first must be able and \ or willing to recognize it for what it really is.

What is a “Delilah” spirit? I believe it is that spirit of compromise that hounds us to give up on what we really believe is truth. Go back a while in history and see how our forefathers held fast to Christian ideals and when morals were the norm for building a society and compare it to today when the sin of homosexuality, which God has denounced, is made out to be just another lifestyle, acceptable in modern thought and practice...When almost every community now has to publish a list of sexual predators who might be lurking in and around our children. The list goes on and on. We were a great nation, founded upon faith in the Almighty God and a determination to serve one another. Where are we now? How far did we move away from the faith and light our fathers walked in?

The “One Thing” that made us strong as a nation and as individuals was our walk with God and our commitment to Him. It has always been the source of our strength, just like it was for Samson. The secret to our power and success, that Godly Anointing, has been lost, stolen, blocked and forgotten in the lives of so many modern day Christians. They have been separated from the only source of strength that can move mountains and defeat their enemies.



So here we are, our great America, some of us and, of course, Samson. We are plunged into spiritual darkness and chained to the grind of an empty day filled with regrets, disappointments and heartaches. Let’s not forget the tormenters who never let us forget the mistakes we made and all the bad choices in the past. They follow us as we walk around life’s grinding wheels laughing, taunting, accusing, and telling us how bad we are.

Don't Despair, The Story Doesn't Have to End Here

What you may not know is; God hasn't forgotten us, America and Samson. Ever so slowly, amidst the stress of life's hardships, our hair is growing back. That relationship that once was, is growing little by little, and the eyes of our understanding are being opened. God is a God of "Resurrection Power" who speaks those things that are not, as though they were. (Romans 4:17). He did that for Abraham. He did that for Samson and He will do it for us as well. A dead relationship can live again in the heart of a repentant soul.

Samson's hair, as I previously stated, was an outward symbol of his inward relationship with God. What died along the way somehow now lives...in the middle of the torment, the taunting, the beatings, and all the other abuse, God is still there, healing our broken hearts and mending our wounds.



Let's talk a bit about Samson's choices. He was, as I see it, twice in the valley of decision where his choices changed his destiny. The first was in the relationship with Delilah. She was not an Israelite. She was unequally yoked with him and came with a totally different perspective on life and how to live it. She was a Philistine who, as a people, were at odds with Israel. She was a believer in a false god and obviously a bad influence on Samson.

Jesus said about false prophets, that we would know them by their fruits. Doesn't that also apply to the general populace that we brush shoulders with every day? I think so.

So here Samson is, or am I talking about you flirting with the devil, while walking with God? He had one eye on his eternal destiny and one on the desires of his flesh. Sounds a lot like many of today's modern Christians, doesn't it? What Samson didn't realize, and we often overlook, is that the influence of a flirting devil, if entertained, can change the course of our destiny. That influence led him to finally

reveal the secret of his strength to someone that had no real interest in him as a person or his God.

But it was more than a short hair cut that defeated Samson. It was a slow process of drifting away from his first love, his God. He ever so slowly walked from the light of God's glory into the darkness of Delilah's heart and along the way justified it as being ok, even when family and friends told him it wasn't right. Isn't that the same as a Christian saying that a woman should have the right to choose, even if it is an abortion that kills her unborn?; That sex before marriage is not that bad?; That sin is just the evolution of modern thought? Everybody thinks and feels it so it must be ok for me.

The second choice in the valley of decision occurred while Samson was bound to the grinding wheel. It was not the wheel of fortune but the wheel of despair. It was there that his relationship grew again with God. I can only imagine the times he cried out to God, asking for death itself instead of such bondage. That would be my first prayer. "Sorry I failed you and missed your perfect will with all of its blessings but since I am where I am, how about taking me home so I do not have to be in this place anymore." Any real hope for the future was gone. He had no eyes to see and nowhere to go except in circles. Under these circumstances, most of us would ask for death. But Samson didn't, maybe at first, but then his prayers turned to **"Use Me Once Again"**.

Samson must have realized that his victory over his enemy laid in his own death. As Christians, we must also realize that our victory also comes through death. We are called to die to the deeds of the flesh in order to live in the Spirit. If we are ever to be used of God, we must take up our cross and follow Jesus. However, where will Jesus lead us? We are asked to take everything, our very existence, and place it on the cross and suffer with Christ until our will is dead and His can shine through.



On the cross, our will is put under subjection to His. Jesus said that we must lose our life in order to find it. Did you know that you cannot be raised from the dead unless you are really dead? Putting on a face, acting dead or trying to be dead does not qualify. We are admonished,

in the scriptures, to mortify (Put to death) our fleshly desires. Odd isn't it, that we are in charge of that process, not God. We must kill the lust, greed, anger, hate, pride and all the other deeds of the flesh listed in Galatians chapter five. But when we are buried with Him, we are also raised with Him, into newness of life. Then and only then can the will of God rule in our hearts and set us free. Love blossoms where hate was before. Peace flows like a river where confusion once reigned...and it all takes place within us as He raises us from the dead.

Even in a state of darkness, we still cry out to God. Remember Jonah's prayer in the belly of the whale? He prayed and was heard. How about king David when he was hiding in the cave from his enemies? We all can think of times when we cried out to God in the midst of our troubles. He always hears those that seek His face.

The Caveman's Prayer

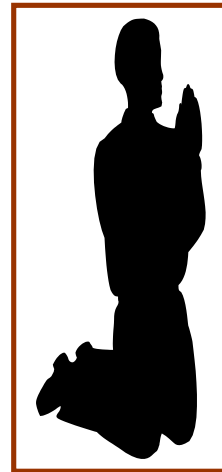
Lord! I cannot see the light of day,
For this cave is dark and yet I pray.
Life has overwhelmed me on every side,
Because of oppression, fear and pride.

But you, oh Lord, are my strength,
My refuge in times of worry and fear.
You will deliver me from all of this,
And will gently draw my soul near.

I will yet stand victorious,
Even though I am in a cave.
Before I can see it happen,
I give you lord, all the praise.

For the light will surely come
And I will see better days,
Because you heard my cry,
When I prayed in the cave.

John Marinelli



Psalm 142

I remember a time, once long ago, when I was backslidden, (In That Place of Darkness), when I was at a business conference and in a hotel room drinking beer with a bunch of other “Backslidden” Christians. I didn’t know at the time that we were all in the same place...DARKNESS, but as we got acquainted and each spoke of their backgrounds, it became evident. We all had somehow subscribed to the “Has Been” society. Here’s what I heard, “I used to be a Sunday school teacher”; “I used to lead worship in my church”; “I was a pastor” and so on. We all ended up trying to sing hymns from memory while holding a bottle of beer in our hands...Go Figure!

It was here, in bondage and misery that Samson, and I, found the Lord and began the long walk back into the light of His Glory.

Sometimes we can escape the wages of sin. Sometimes we can just go on as nothing has happened and live out a productive and fruitful life, right? **WRONG!!!** The Scriptures again speak, saying, God is not mocked, whatsoever a man soweth, (Plant) he will also reap, (Harvest). Samson couldn’t just go on as though nothing had happened. He lost his focus. He lost his family and his loved ones. He lost his dignity...but he never lost God’s loving kindness. His harvest came and went and he reaped its full fury.



The Lord showed me my harvest and said, “the only way to stop the harvest is to cut it down before it truly grows up to choke you.” Then I had to plant a new crop and water it and keep it until it could grow up into a fresh anointing. I suspect you will have to do the same.

Repentance made all the difference in the life of Samson. Without it, he could never find the favor of God again. Now that is odd, isn’t it? God will never leave you or forsake you but when we are out of His will, we do lose favor with Him and all the blessings of a full relationship. Wasn’t that what happened to the prodigal son? He left with his inheritance to follow a Delilah type spirit of compromise only to end up lost and alone in a state of sorrow and confusion.

His repentance came when “he came to himself” and realized that it would be better for him to be a servant in the house of his father than where he was then. So as he went back, his father saw him, “A LONG WAY OFF” and ran to kiss him and brought him back into his love and care. He was even treated as a son, not a servant. As the story goes, it is also with every “Backslider”. We must “Come To Ourselves” (Repent) and return to God, in humility and lowliness of heart.



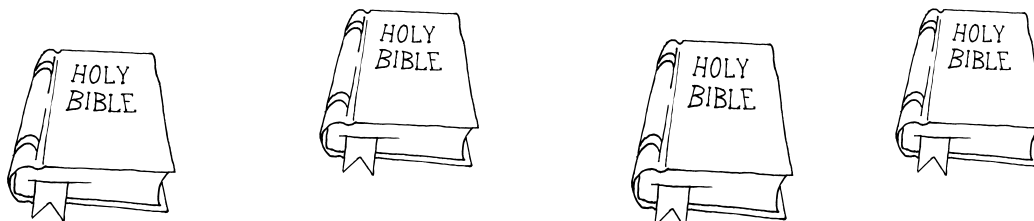
So God answered Samson’s prayer to use him once again to fight against his enemies. "Dear Lord, my King," he prayed, "please remember me, your servant. Give me strength just one more time." His end was not what God originally wanted but it was a new direction that would free him from bondage and defeat the enemy at the same time. God always has a new and living way for repentant souls.

Samson is the man in Biblical history that everyone knows killed more Philistines in his death than when he was alive. He brought down their false god and their city, killing thousands. Although Samson missed out on a life of victory continuing to lead his people against the Philistines, he did in the end regain his power and accomplish the purpose to which he was called. I believe that the beginning of his life was of God; the middle was of Samson and the end, well...that remains to be seen. It could have been different, without the suffering, without the torment, and without the sorrow.

What about you? Will you cower under the tormenters and settle for a dead religion? Or will you repent in the midst of it all and cry out to your Heavenly Father saying, “**Use Me Once Again?**” It’s never too late. God has called you for a purpose and even though you were sidetracked, you can get back into the game and finish the race as a Champion.

The people of God are waiting for your decision. They need your leadership and long to see the power of God on you once again. In fact, the scriptures declare that the whole creation groans in travail, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God.

We all stand in the valley of decision with a choice to make and a commitment to keep. It's time to come out of the darkness and walk into the glorious light of God's love. Only you can make it happen.



Winning The Battle

We must use the Word of God
To calm emotions that fray.
For the enemy never sleeps
Until he has led us astray.

So when your emotions overflow
With feelings like depression and fear.
Know this! If you dwell in that place,
You invite the enemy to draw near.

When your emotions rage
With fiery darts aglow,
Stand in the power of the Lord
Against its awful woe.


And if you get confused
And lost in the storm,
Put your thoughts on trial
Rejecting all but heaven born.

You can win the battle
That rages within your soul.
By casting down imaginations
And breaking Satan's hold.

Remember to focus on Jesus
Holding the world at arm's length.



Lift up your head above the trial
And the Lord will give you strength.

John Marine 

121 PSALMS

God's Fallen Champion

I was a champion,
because God was with me.
I could do great things,
and was known in every city.

But I tell you this story,
so you will not fall.
That you will learn from me,
and answer God's call.

The power of God,
made me great.
Yet I gave it up,
in one fatal mistake.

I knew deep inside,
what God desired of me.
His voice was clear,
But it wasn't my reality.

My parents sought after me,
to marry within our own,
but the women outside our camp,
were more alluring than at home.

So I went my own way,



Using God's power for gain.
I boasted about my strength,
and traded my soul for fame.

I once fought a thousand men,
with the jawbone of an ass.
People were afraid of me,
and turned away as I passed.

My fame spread quickly,
all through the land.
The elders of my city,
said I was God's man.



But my destiny
went out of control.
When I saw Delilah,
I lost my very soul.

They used her beauty,
to strip me of my power.
She deceived me,
in the passion of the hour.

I told her my secret,
how God's power came.
I thought she loved me
and would share in my fame.

But trusting Delilah,
proved to be a mistake.
When I came to myself,
It was just too late.

So my enemies
stripped me of my fame.
They put my eyes out,
and desecrated my name.

I became a laughing stock,
to all who passed my way.
They made fun of me, saying,
"How's God's champion today?"

But God looked again,
to remember me.
I repented before the Lord,
and prayed about my destiny.

Blind and without strength,
I cried out to God.
He saw my tears,
and lifted His mighty rod.

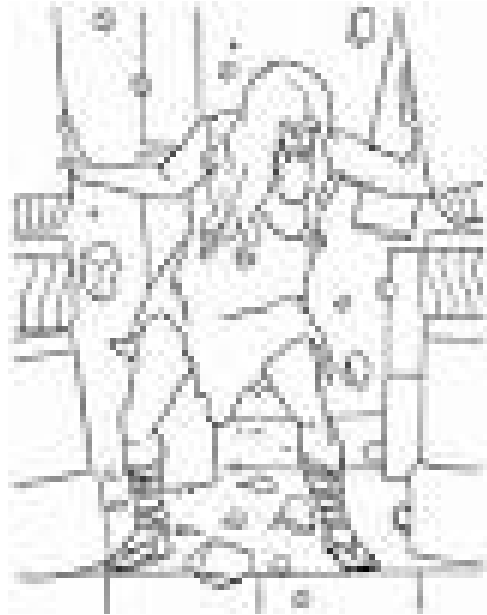
The time finally came,
and that is a fact.
He heard my prayer,
and my power came back.

There in the midst of them all,
I tumbled the pillars into the court.
I caused great destruction.
This I am proud to report.

My destiny was also sealed,
that glorious day.
But hundreds fell with me,
as I passed away.

I was again God's champion,
in that final defining hour.
A vessel of the Lord,
full of His mighty power.

Written by
John Marinelli



Conclusion

We can follow in Samson's footsteps or walk in obedience and faith. His way starts out great but goes down hill to a tragic end. The other way is to trust and obey from the start and pay attention when in the valley of decision so as not to displease the Lord.

God always works things out in the end but we have the free will to be a Champion all the time or a loser most of the time. It's all up to us. Our destiny hangs on the decisions we make along the way.

