

"The Results of Recklessness" - Judges 14:10-20

Wednesday 7/11/18 – Jeff Lyle

I. The Folly Of Young Men (10-13)

A. An opportunistic crew (10-11) – “His father went down to the woman, and Samson prepared a feast there, for so the young men used to do. As soon as the people saw him, they brought thirty companions to be with him.”

Nobody wanted to miss the opportunity to enjoy a big party. The custom in Samson's day was to celebrate weddings in a big way for at least a full week. This celebration was among the people of the Philistines as Samson had chosen to marry someone outside of his faith. Typically, there would have been an atmosphere of excess with food, wine and indulgence lasting for many days. The people in that area found 30 young men to come and enjoy the celebration which led up to the wedding.

B. An unnecessary risk (12-13a) – “And Samson said to them, “Let me now put a riddle to you. If you can tell me what it is, within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothes, 13 but if you cannot tell me what it is, then you shall give me thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothes.”

Samson, full of cockiness, sets up a bet that he actually did not have the ability to fulfill if he was to lose. Thirty garments and thirty secondary sets of garments (one complete package for each of his new companions at the party) was a very large risk in that day. Even in our current day, a man's suit plus a backup suit would be a huge expense. In Samson's day it was an even larger risk due to the fact that the average person had one article of body-covering clothing that they would wear for as long as it would fit them. Samson was cocky, and his mouth led him in to a precarious situation.

C. An immature cockiness (13b) – “And they said to him, “Put your riddle, that we may hear it.” **Put up or shut up!**

The 30 companions possessed the exact same level of cockiness that Samson displayed. While not reserved solely for young men, arrogance, brashness and recklessness is a common trait of those who act according to impulse outside of consecrated obedience to God.

II. The Blindness of a Man Who Still Had His Eyes (14-18)

A. Blind to his living beneath his calling (14) – “And he said to them, “Out of the eater came something to eat. Out of the strong came something sweet.” And in three days they could not solve the riddle.”

Samson took a sacred event, wherein God had given him supernatural strength to kill the attacking lion, and cheapened it by using it as a means by which he hoped to triumph over his companions. This is an example of how people often cheapen the precious activity of God for personal gain.

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B. Blind to the trouble he had stirred (15) - "On the fourth day they said to Samson's wife, "Entice your husband to tell us what the riddle is, lest we burn you and your father's house with fire. Have you invited us here to impoverish us?"

Samson was strong but not wise. His life displays the consistent theme of him trying to always handle things on his own, and usually in his flesh. The problem with this approach to life is that we inevitably encounter circumstances that occur outside of our knowledge and beyond our control. Samson's companions wanted the garments more than they wanted his friendship. They deceived him by seeking to cheat their way into winning the foolish contest. They went behind his back to extract the winning solution to the riddle from Samson's wife.

C. Blind to overt manipulation (16-17) - "And Samson's wife wept over him and said, "You only hate me; you do not love me. You have put a riddle to my people, and you have not told me what it is." And he said to her, "Behold, I have not told my father nor my mother, and shall I tell you?" 17 She wept before him the seven days that their feast lasted, and on the seventh day he told her, because she pressed him hard. Then she told the riddle to her people."

This would not be the last time that Samson allowed himself to be manipulated by a woman. Utilizing her female cunning, his new wife sought for a week of feasting to pressure Samson to disclose the answer to the riddle. He withstood the temptation to give her the answer, but she eventually broke his will in some weakened moment of Samson. She was a determined woman and she prevailed over Samson.

D. Blind to the cost of his gamble (18) - "And the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down, "What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?" And he said to them, "If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have found out my riddle."

Samson played the fool. When the men provided the correct answer to Samson's reckless riddle, he immediately discerned that his wife had betrayed him. His disgust at her for deceiving him is disclosed when he referred to her as a cow. How quickly Samson fell from being the one in power to the one who was overpowered. Few things sting the soul like recognizing that those close to you have betrayed you. Samson was standing in the rubble of his own reckless decisions.

III. The Ugly Harvest From Careless Seed (19-20)

A. Samson experienced grace (19a) - "And the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon him..."

Once again, God comes to Samson in grace. Though he had acted foolishly, the Spirit of God rushed upon him for the big-picture purpose of eventually defeating the Philistines. Though Samson had been unwise, the plan of God remained fixed. God would empower Samson to humiliate the Philistines.

B. Samson reclaimed dominance (19b) - "...and he went down to Ashkelon and struck down thirty men of the town and took their spoil and gave the garments to those who had

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told the riddle." **What he might have established through influence he had to establish through violence**

Samson kept his word by providing the pledged clothing to those who had answered the riddle. He did it, however, by killing thirty Philistine men. In essence, Samson began a war with the oppressive Philistines. He fulfilled his obligations but did so at the expense of Philistine pride. This event would set into motion all the chaos that would soon follow. God used Samson to pick a fight with the wicked Philistines.

C. Samson was being mastered by his flesh (19c) – "In hot anger he went back to his father's house."

It is noteworthy that God is able and willing to use people for his big-picture purposes, even when those people live at times according to their flesh. Not everyone whom God raises up for seasonal purposes is a person who is always living in a way that pleases Him. We should remember also that people who displease us with their actions may, at times, be the chosen instrument of God in some big-picture plan that He is working out. Be wise about whom you resist and how you resist. You might be ignorantly fighting against what God is doing.

D. Samson lost the prize (20) – "And Samson's wife was given to his companion, who had been his best man."

This whole episode revolved around Samson's determination to have this woman become his wife. After all the planning, partying, riddling, humiliation and violence, Samson goes home with nothing but loss. God would use the events of this week in Samson's life but, as far as Samson was concerned, there was no true victory.