

• *Sampson abandons his wife*

Samson was angry with his wife and went back to his father's house without her ¹. The woman's father thinks the marriage is finished but does not want his daughter to be abandoned in disgrace. He persuades Samson's friend to take her on as his wife ². Presumably he was a young man looking for a wife.

¹ 14:19b
² 14:20

God used Sampson's worldly, human and self-centred character

Samson was used by God along the lines of his own character. There was one disadvantage in this. **When you are used by God along the lines of your own worldly, human, self-centred character, it does not bring much blessing for you yourself personally.** Samson was used by God but did not get much spiritual joy for himself. His relationship with the woman was not close. She nagged him but did not trust him enough to share with him what was happening. When you are a rough careless character you might be used by God despite yourself. Yet you do not get much of the personal fellowship that comes from God Himself. Even Balaam's ass was used by God. God can use anyone, even a donkey. But the deepest pleasures of life, such as close intimacy with a good companion, the presence of God in one's life – these things do not come just by being a tool in God's hands. The deepest blessings of life require some changes in our own character. The greatest privileges come through honouring God at a deeper level. Samson was a man of faith but he was missing the deepest pleasures of life because God was using him despite his wildness. There is no mention of prayer or revelations from God in this part of the story. A more spiritual lifestyle would have led Samson into a knowledge of God at a deeper level. But this was missed by Samson altogether.

• *But he experienced little spiritual joy*

• *The deepest joys of life require some character changes*

Again God uses Sampson's explosive character to terrorize the Philistines

Some time after Samson's marriage he goes back to Timnah to get reconciled to his wife. It is May, wheat-harvest time, a sunny, dry, time of the year. When he arrives he finds that his father-in-law is embarrassed. The poor start to Samson's married life made the father think Samson had abandoned his wife. The girl had been married off to someone else ¹!

¹ 15:1-3

Once again the incident is used in Samson's life to rouse him to intimidate and terrorize the Philistines. He determines to get revenge ¹. His being offended was typical of his entire story. He is offended both as an individual and as a judge; the two aspects of his life are intertwined. God wants someone who explodes like a volcano when the Philistines are around! And he had just the man he wanted in Samson! But it is more than that. **God produced Samson!** He superintended the birth of Samson in the womb – which is the point of the story of Judges 13. God did not look around and find the best that He could get when He found Samson; He made Samson the way that he was! He needed someone exactly as Samson was!

¹ 15:4

• *It was God who produced Sampson*

• *Foxes and fire - the Philistine harvest ruined*

So Samson went and caught three hundred foxes and tied all their tails together with rope ¹. Then he put 'torches' on the ropes. I suppose he got pieces of cloth, dipped them in oil, and then set the oily rags on fire. Then he let loose the foxes. We have already been told it was a dry time of the year. The foxes ran all over the place, pulling this way and that, and the burning torches set the fields of wheat on fire. The entire Philistine grain harvest was ruined. It was a clever trick. Only 'sunny boy Samson' could have done it!

¹ 15:4

• *Revenge attacks – vast numbers of Philistines slaughtered*

• *Character and calling working in partnership*

Sampson is a classic case of salvation by grace

• *More slaughter – a thousand Philistines slaughtered by Sampson – just being himself*

The Philistines soon found out what had led to the burning of their fields. Instead of attacking Samson – who was a rather intimidating figure to attack – they got their revenge on the woman of Timnah and her father ^{¶1}. That made Samson even more angry. He welcomed every opportunity to attack the Philistines; that was his calling in life. He attacked them and smote them ‘high on the hip’ (as the Hebrew has it; it is a popular expression meaning ‘ruthlessly’). With enormous physical strength he slaughtered vast numbers of Philistines ^{¶2}.

Once again we notice how Samson’s character and his calling flowed together in partnership. When Samson slaughtered these Philistines he was fulfilling his calling, but at the same time he was being himself!

In all of this **Samson is a classic case of salvation by the grace of God**. Of course, every believer is saved by grace – but this is more visible in some cases than in others. When nice people are saved, we tend to think they are saved by their niceness! But Samson was a spoilt, self-centred man, whose way of serving God was very much tied into his own character. He was on three occasions powerfully but foolishly drawn to a good-looking woman. He rebelled against being a Nazirite. But God used all of this. We had best believe Samson was ‘saved by grace’. He certainly could not have been saved in any other way.

Samson’s slaughtering of the Philistines made them thirsty for revenge. Samson withdrew to a well-known cave ^{¶1} and an army of Philistine soldiers came looking for him ^{¶2}. The people of Judah – three thousand of them – have no choice but to hand Samson over to them, but he agrees to be taken captive easily by his own people ^{¶3}. He is sent unarmed and bound with ropes towards the Philistines at a place called Lehi ^{¶4}. Seeing him apparently helpless they rush towards him in great glee expecting to easily kill him ^{¶5}. Then – as Samson knew would happen – he is given miraculous power by the Spirit. He breaks free from the ropes which tie him. He picks up the jaw-bone of an ass lying nearby and, using it as a weapon, slaughters a thousand Philistines before the rest flee in terror ^{¶6}. **Just by being himself**, Samson has won a great victory for God.

¶1 15:6

¶2 15:7-8a

¶1 15:9b

¶2 15:10

¶3 15:11-13

¶4 15:14

¶5 15:15

¶6 15:16-17

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