

# Preaching Through The Bible

## Michael Eaton

### Judges

## Part 23

### Learning to Pray (15:18-20)

- Sampson – weak, exhausted and vulnerable

A little incident after the slaughter at Lehi is one of the greatest turning points in Samson's life. He had slaughtered a thousand men single-handedly. But it left him totally dehydrated and utterly weak. At that point any Philistine could easily have killed him – and there were some Philistines around after the slaughter of their companions who would have been delighted to despatch Samson from this world altogether. For the first time in the story of Samson, he prays! I suppose he had prayed before, but you would hardly know it from the story of Judges 14:1–15:17. Prayer is totally unmentioned. It does not seem to have been a great priority in Samson's life until now.

- Sampson prays

But now Samson is desperate. God had given Samson a gift of physical strength but now, just after many Philistines have just been mightily defeated, the gift of physical strength is not functioning and any passing Philistine would have been able to defeat Samson!

- Now he is desperate

- Thanks and pleadings

- God works a miracle

- Israel's leader for 20 years – fulfilling the call predicted for him

¶<sup>1</sup> 15:18

¶<sup>1</sup> 15:19

¶<sup>1</sup> see 13:5

#### 1. He accepted the call imposed upon him.

- Clear and authoritative

1. **He accepted the call imposed upon him.** God's call to Samson came before he was born. He was a Nazirite, one specially dedicated to God, even in his mother's womb. Samson's call was not a casual invitation; it was an authoritative demand. God gave him very little choice. It is wonderful when we have a clear calling from God and we know what it is. 'Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel', said the apostle Paul. He knew clearly what his calling from God was; he had very little choice in the matter.

#### 2. His sense of calling enabled Samson to move with assured faith

- He knew God's will

2. **His sense of calling enabled Samson to move with assured faith.** For most of his life he is gripped with the conviction that God will work for him. When he killed the lion at the time of his visit to Timnah, he kept quiet about it. He knew that it would be used by God in some way in provoking the Philistines and opening up the way for their downfall. When he allowed the people of Judah to send him bound and apparently helpless to the waiting Philistines he knew that God's Spirit would empower him. Later in the Bible Samson is known as a hero of faith ¶<sup>1</sup>. He constantly lived with great assurance. Until Judges 15:18 there never is the slightest feeling in the story of Samson that he had any doubts about himself or about his way of doing God's will. When questioned by his parents he calmly overruled them and insisted on his own way. He knew God's will! His parents did not know what was happening but he did.

¶<sup>1</sup> see Hebrews 11:32

### **3. He was slow to attend to his own character**

- I troublesome and dangerous way to live

### **4. Samson came to a crisis when his physical strength failed him**

- There is something prophetic and parabolic about the miraculous quenching of Samson's thirst

- We too have to find out the secret of drinking from Jesus, God's well of living water – and drawing our strength from Him

**3. He was slow to attend to his own character.** God's will and Samson's will were constantly intertwined. God used his violent and vindictive nature, his determination to avenge the wrongs committed by the Philistines. But this is a difficult way to live. It will get him into trouble eventually. When one gets one's own way too much, when everything one does for God easily agrees with what one wants to do anyway, there is a danger that the sinfulness of our own nature is not attended to.

**4. Samson came to a crisis when his physical strength failed him.** His exhaustion after the slaughter at Lehi let him know – if he did not know it before – that without God's special help he could be vulnerable to easy defeat. He could not rely on his gift; he had to learn to rely on God. His gift of strength could let him down, and almost did let him down at Lehi.

There is something prophetic and parabolic about the miraculous quenching of Samson's thirst. He knew he was desperately thirsty. He told God of his desperate need. God dramatically opened up a supply of living water for him. The supply was not enough; he needed to drink from it. Steady drinking produced steady recovery. It was a lesson he never forgot. The place became known as 'The well of the one who calls'. From that time forward his gifting and his knowledge of God led into a lifetime of ministry towards the people of God.

Each aspect of the matter expresses principles that Samson perhaps would remember and we would do well to apply to ourselves. We too, in our own way, know what it is to be thirsty. Jesus gave an invitation: 'If any person thirsts...'. Jesus too promised that a supply of living water would be opened to us. We too have to find out the secret of drinking from Jesus, God's well of living water. The mighty Samson could become a weakling. The one who has slaughtered a thousand could himself be slaughtered by any passing Philistine. He needed to live not upon his gift, but upon the moment-by-moment powerful activities of God. We ourselves have to learn similar lessons. We too have to learn to be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. 'Out of his innermost being flows rivers of living water.' This Jesus said of the Spirit which those who believe should receive.



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Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His *Preaching Through The Bible* (PTTB) books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.



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