

The beginning of the Lord's deliverance.

Judges 14:5-20.

Sunday afternoon, September 18, 2011.

I. The background of these events.

- A. The Angel of the Lord had appeared to Manoah and his wife to announce the birth of their son, Samson, who would be a Nazirite, and who would begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines. Ch. 13.
- B. Samson had grown up, and the Spirit of the Lord began to move upon him (to deliver Israel from the Philistines). The last verse of Ch. 13.
- C. The opening verses of ch.14 show us how Samson sets his heart on a woman from among the Philistines, and how he demands from his parents that they arrange for her to become his wife.
- D. We can not underestimate the grief and disappointment, even the anger these parents must have felt in these circumstances. Not only was Samson an Israelite, he was a Nazirite; one set apart to God. What high hopes they must have had for him based on the words of the Angel of the Lord, and here he goes after a woman from among the uncircumcised Philistines. How could this possibly be a part of the Lord's will for Samson's life?
- E. And yet our text let us in on a secret in Vs. 4. What these parents did not yet know would in the end be their greatest comfort. Underneath it all the Spirit of the Lord was beginning to position Samson to begin the work of delivering Israel from the Philistines.
Even Samson's hormones, willfulness, stubbornness, and weakness were made serviceable to that end. Delivering us from evil is often a messy business as we will see again before this chapter closes, and as we might encounter it in our own lives and in the lives of others.

II. Preparation for bigger things. Vss. 5-9.

The remainder of ch.14 shows us how the beginning of the work of delivering Israel from the Philistines would unfold. Verses 5-9 deal with the preparation of this work.

- A. The stage of the work of beginning to deliver Israel from the Philistines is now set; all the elements are in place. Even Samson's hormones; his selfishness, stubbornness, and weakness have been assigned their proper place in the drama that is about to unfold. Every part has been sovereignly put in place by the Lord of heaven and earth.
- B. One thing it would seem was still not quite ready however; that was the heart of Samson. The Lord would remedy this as Samson traveled down to Timnah with his father and mother, perhaps to make the arrangements for the wedding.
- C. Samson seems to have been alone on the road when it happened. All of a sudden a young lion came roaring upon him. Just as suddenly the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon Samson; he caught the lion and tore it apart as if it had been a young goat. Young goats are utterly harmless creatures; they have no horns as yet, neither do they bite, for the only thing they have learned so far to do with their mouths is to suck. You can safely insert your fingers in a young goat's

- mouth; all they will do is suck on them.
- D. Not only should we see this event as necessary background information for Samson's riddle later in the chapter; we should also see it as God preparing the heart of Samson to begin the work of delivering Israel from the Philistines. The next time the Spirit of the Lord would rush on Samson he would not be tearing lions apart but Philistines.
 - E. So God allowed David to encounter bear and lion while tending to his father's sheep. This too was preparation, for not much later David would encounter a Philistine named Goliath.
 - F. Remember that the Lord works the same still. He will show you His sufficiency in a smaller set of circumstances to prepare you to put your trust in Him in facing more demanding circumstances down the road.

III. Samson's weakness Vss. 10-18.

- A. In this section of the chapter Samson's weakness surfaces. It was his wife. Later on in Samson's life, in ch. 16 this weakness would surface again; that time with dire consequences.
- B. In all fairness we should have some understanding for Samson's wife. Suddenly she is caught in a no win wedding celebration. She will either lose favor with her husband, or she and her family will be burned alive by the guests. She chooses to save her own neck and those of her family.
- C. The conflict revolved around the riddle and bet Samson had entered into with 30 of the invited Philistine guests. The riddle involved the lion Samson had killed and the honey he had later found in its carcass. The bet involved thirty sets of under garments and outer garments folks used to wear in those days.
- D. Via the pressure exerted on Samson's wife, and the pressure and nagging she subjected Samson to, the secret leaks out; first to Samson's wife, and then to the thirty guests.
- E. Once again we are made to see how Samson's weakness did not catch the Lord off guard, but how the Lord had made this very weakness an essential part of the work of beginning to deliver Israel from the Philistines. This ought to be of comfort to us as we, no less than Samson, are people of great weakness.

IV. The Lord's deliverance. Vss. 19, 20.

- A. Once more the Spirit of the Lord comes on Samson; he goes to Ashkelon, some five miles away and kills thirty men; he strips them of their clothing and pays his debt.
- B. This may offend us as a work of the Lord; we would rather blame it on Samson's carnal anger, but our text says that the Spirit of the Lord came on Samson mightily. Again, deliverance from evil can be a messy business.
- C. On the other hand we may be offended that only thirty Philistines were killed. How could that make a difference in delivering Israel? Remember that Samson was only to begin the work of delivering Israel from the Philistines. Perhaps this was only meant to be a small token to the faithful in Israel that the Lord had not forgotten His people. Have you ever seen the small tokens of the Lord's mercy to you in times of great darkness, bewilderment or grief?