

Day 16 – Feb. 20

I always get angry when I see Samson portrayed in children's curriculum for Sunday school. A huge, heroic figure with a brush cut, he is always portrayed pushing apart the pillars with his super-strength. One of the original superheroes, a man "done wrong" but blessed by God regardless. Poor mighty Samson.

But read the story as we did today and you get a very, very different picture. In fact, none of the teaching we usually do about Samson is correct, except for the last bit. We'll get to that in a moment.

Samson, the last judge, is the final step in the corrupting of the Leaders of Israel so far. With such an auspicious beginning, born of a barren woman, announced by angels, and set apart by God as a Nazarite, Samson had the makings of the restoration of the leader-hero that we've seen dissolve throughout this book. But the Nazarite vow consists of 3 things: (1) to avoid touching the dead, (2) to avoid drinking alcohol, and (3) to never cut your hair. And the story of Samson is the story of the breaking of each of these vows in turn, first with a lion's carcass, then at a banquet feast with his new friends, and finally with Delilah's haircut.

The only pity I have for Samson is when I try to think what it would have been like to live under that kind of pressure from the womb. Nazarite vows are taken, not given, yet for Samson the vow begins before he is born. So his entire life is spent under the weight of a vow he never took, and seemingly never wanted to.

But Samson's cruelty, vengeance, lust, and utter disregard for the Law leaves us with a very important point. Samson, in spite of his behavior, his attitude, and his decisions, is nonetheless blessed by God. You see, we HAVE to idolize Samson because the truth is just too hard for us to bear. If we don't turn Samson into a hero, we have to face the fact that he is a vengeful, spiteful, arrogant, lust-driven, Godless man, and yet – AND YET – is blessed by God to save His people. And then we have to begin to wonder about our own expectations of ourselves and those around us. If someone as awful as Samson could be used by God to deliver His people, what of those in our society we have deemed unworthy of God's blessing? What of the worldly, the raunchy, the cruel, the swearers, the selfish, the drunkards, the lazy... could they still bring God's blessing? Could they be blessing this world more than we are? Could it be that God is the one acting and blessing in this world and whom He uses to do it is up to Him and not up to our judgement of others? Might we be missing out on God's blessings because of our insulation in the stained-glass world in which we have captured ourselves?