

Zoom Sunday School: 4 October 2020 Samson (Judges 13-16)

If I told you that someone's name was 'Little Sun', what kind of person would you expect him to be? (Small? Cheerful? Pleasant?)

There is a person in the Bible whose name we think meant 'little sun' but he wasn't like that at all! He was big and strong, grumpy and stubborn so he really can't be described as either 'cheerful' or 'pleasant!' We know him as Samson and find it amazing that God had a job for him to do: he was to be one of Israel's champions (heroes, judges) even though he wasn't really a nice person!

He was born at a time when the Philistines shared the land with God's people. The groups were all getting along, but only because God's people weren't keeping to God's ways and living differently. God needed to wake his people up. And he would use Samson to do this.

Samson's parents had waited for many years to have a baby. Then an angel appeared to his mother, announcing the birth. She took what the angel said seriously, though his father seems to have been doubtful. The father therefore prayed that the angel would reappear and give them some more guidance. The angel did so and confirmed that this baby was to be dedicated to God. This meant that his mother must keep herself pure avoiding unclean foods and places so that the baby she was carrying was not contaminated either through her blood or her milk. After his birth Samson was to be brought up as a holy man, a Nazarite. This meant that he must never cut his hair. Because, this was the sign of his obedience to God it was to be the secret of his strength!

As Samson grew up, he continued to obey the rules, not perhaps because he loved God, but because they were habits! The stronger he became, the less peaceful he grew. He seemed always to want his own way. Against his parents' advice, he even decided to marry a Philistine girl rather than one of God's people. How could God's chosen champion of Israel casually marry a Philistine!

But God does not abandon his great plans. God even used Samson's desires to make it clear to the Philistines that they would always be 'outsiders' to the promise if they did not worship him.

In a fit of anger because his wife had been threatened, Samson killed 30 Philistine men! The Philistines were furious! Understandably the father of the bride cancelled the marriage and arranged for Samson's ex-wife to marry his best man! That made Samson even more furious, and he burnt Philistine fields and properties. In turn they killed the ex-wife and her father! Revenge again!

Later Samson showed his lack of wisdom once more. He had an affair with a prostitute, Delilah. She was bribed to discover the secret of his strength, so she nagged and nagged him to tell her the secret of his strength. Eventually he did, even though she had repeatedly shown that she was not in love with him! The consequence was that, while he slept, she allowed men to shave his hair off. Then the Philistines had no trouble taking him prisoner and blinding him.

During the weeks and months and maybe years in prison, Samson had time to think. It seems he realised again that his power came from God and that God was at work. Meanwhile, inch by inch, his hair and his strength grew.

One day as the Philistines celebrated their god, Dagon, they decided to have some fun with blind Samson! They brought him in to their temple and probably joked about how weak his God was,

about how great Dagon was and about how clever they were! In his last moments, with God's help, hairy Samson pulled down the pillars of the temple, killing the mockers and himself.

Not a nice life. But God was in charge as he always is, working out his purposes.

Readings

Monday: Judges 13: 2-5

Tuesday: Judges 14: 1-4

Wednesday: Judges 14: 12-18a

Thursday: Judges 16: 4-6, 18-22

Friday: Judges 16: 23-30

It is still true that God uses all kinds of people to do his work for him. Although God's people should be pleasant, some don't ever learn to be like that – and yet God can still use them to do his will!