

## TRIVIAL PURSUIT

Judges 13:24-25; 16:4-5, 15-17, 19-20, 28-30

There are some very smart people in the world who understand such things as how digital computers work at the basic level of the binary numbers. They have mastered the programming languages and can create software and hardware that can allow people to carry out solutions to problems in a few minutes that would have taken thousands of years without the computers. There is more information on almost any subject you can imagine that is available in two seconds than you could find in the finest libraries in the world. This is very helpful and has the potential to make life easier and will allow people to get more done than ever before.

At the same time, some of these very capable people choose to use their rare gifts to create programs that allow people to expend large amounts of time playing games on their computers or cell phones that accomplish little more than amusement. Beyond this trivial use of capability, there are some who do programming that is malicious and can be destructive to data bases and information that is stored on computers.

I have often heard that we as individuals use only a small portion of the mental capability we have. If this is true, then we might wonder how much could be accomplished if we dropped the pursuit of trivial things and focused on being productive. I would think that this same argument regarding the use of only a small fraction of our brain's capability could be applied to people in our culture. So many people have considerable ability and we squander our potential by failing to make good choices of what we will do with our ability and our time. Too often we choose what is entertaining or what feels good and not what is productive.

We can learn from history as we study a variety of people who were given opportunities to serve as judges in the early days of the nation of Israel. Some had great leadership ability, others were reluctant leaders and some failed to safeguard the ability God had given them and followed foolish temporary pleasures that ensnared them and diminished their influence. Samson was an example of someone who was set apart for greatness from the time of his birth but was tripped up and undone by uncontrolled passions.

### Empowered by the Lord – 13:24-25

<sup>24</sup>Then the woman gave birth to a son and named him Samson; and the child grew up and the LORD blessed him. <sup>25</sup>And the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol. Judges 13:24-25 (NASB95)

Israel had been going through the cycles of sin and deliverance by God Who raised up various people who served as judges. After the death of Abimelech who tried to make himself the king, there was a succession of six judges who were not very remarkable in what they accomplished and Israel continued to be oppressed by the Philistines. Apparently, it was difficult to find a good leader among the people, so, God intervened by causing a barren woman to conceive and raise up a child who would have special ability that God could use to deliver Israel from the oppression of the Philistines.

We are familiar with the story of birth of Samson and that he was to be set apart from birth for the work God had for him to do. As he grew older, we are told that the Lord began to work within Samson.

Immediately following this statement at the end of chapter 13, we find that Samson was attracted to a Philistine girl and pursued that fantasy with the reluctant help of his father who thought that Samson should find a wife among the young women of Israel. While the route his father advocated would have been generally the path that was in keeping with the principle of not

intermarrying with the heathen, this was a special situation in that God was putting Samson into a position that would bring him into confrontation with the Philistines.

We know from the accounts in Judges that Samson did cause a lot of problems for the Philistines. They tried to stop him but he always proved to be too strong for them because the Spirit of the Lord would come upon him so that he did great feats. Samson's strength was recognized as being unnatural or, more properly, supernatural. The Philistines thought that his strength was "magical" or could be attributed to some superstitious routine or ritual or object he carried. If that were the case, then they thought that they might be able to remove whatever was giving him strength and rid themselves of all the problems he was causing them.

In spite of Samson's great strength, he had a significant weakness and that was his inability to control his attraction to beautiful women. The Philistines recognized this and they used this weakness to eliminate his influence.

Have you noticed how little human nature has changed over the course of time? In the political realm, whenever a person of ability comes on the scene, then those who are opposed to his ideas will try to find some weakness in his life so as to discredit him and eliminate his influence. Such tactics work very well.

#### Enticed to Trifle with God's Gifts – 16:4-5, 15-17

<sup>4</sup> After this it came about that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. <sup>5</sup> The lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, "Entice him, and see where his great strength *lies* and how we may overpower him that we may bind him to afflict him. Then we will each give you eleven hundred *pieces* of silver." <sup>15</sup> Then she said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when your heart is not with me? You have deceived me these three times and have not told me where your great strength is." <sup>16</sup> It came about when she pressed him daily with her words and urged him, that his soul was annoyed to death. <sup>17</sup> So he told her all *that was* in his heart and said to her, "A razor has never come on my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaved, then my strength will leave me and I will become weak and be like any *other* man." Judges 16:4-5, 15-17 (NASB95)

Verse four starts out with "after this" and is a reference to Samson visiting a harlot and the Philistines waiting to attack him and kill him the next morning. However, he awakened at midnight and removed the gates and posts of the wall around the city and carried them to the top of a nearby hill. Once again he humiliated the Philistines.

If we engage in sinful practices, then we put ourselves in danger from the enemy of our souls. Our deliverance from such is found if we realize the sinfulness of the situation (Samson got up in the middle of the night) and flee from it. Such repentance allows God to intervene on our behalf. In Samson's case he was strengthened to be able to remove the gates and posts of the walled city. When we are confronted with temptations, we would do well to remember the words of Paul in 1 Cor 10:13: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

The lure of the world is always with us. In some cases the attractions appeal to our shallow interests or baser drives. For example we may be attracted to a shiny new sports car and would like to have that. However, this attraction is not based on a deep-seated passionate drive in our lives. Consequently, we will resist the temptation to spend the money or (in the case of some) to steal the car. In other cases, the attractions appeal to nobler and even altruistic motives. For example, a mother may find herself in a situation where she cannot find a job to provide money to feed her children. She may then resort to shoplifting or selling illegal drugs to support her family. The temptation to do something wrong is much more difficult to overcome when the passions behind the actions are deep-seated. Samson's encounter with the harlot was a shallow

relationship and he was able to escape from the trap the Philistines had laid for him. However, he was “in love” with Delilah and that would prove to be his undoing.

Samson may have been in love with Delilah but she cared only for herself and the money she could make. In other words, she had her own personal agenda. There is a lesson here for the church. The church realizes that we have a responsibility to help others and it should be a passion for us to heal the sick, bring deliverance to the captives, clothe the naked, and feed the hungry. On the other hand, the world system is interested in the church only to extent to know how to weaken and use it for their own purposes or agendas. Just as Delilah used Samson, the world will use the church to gain access to us and capture the church for its own purposes. We see such influence manifesting itself under the guise of “social justice.” It also shows up in “black liberation theology.” Their agendas are not related to the Kingdom of God but are primarily “political.” In the past, we have seen such error in the political activism of the National Council of Churches, the embracing of the politically correct agendas of various “moderate” (read that liberal) denominations. It is interesting that we don’t hear much about the National Council of Churches today. I’m not sure if it is because they have been discredited or have gone underground to avoid detection. Nevertheless, we can see evidence of their activities in churches (denominations) that ordain those involved in sexual perversion to positions of ministry. All these activities are lauded in the secular press. The true church must take a stand against ungodliness and when it does the secular press is quick to censure.

There are other lessons in the Scriptures that would teach us to stand firm on principles and to follow the commandment of the Lord even when our deepest passions would draw us away. I think that it was Adam’s love for Eve that caused him to sin when he participated in eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. It was David’s “love” for Bathsheba that caused him to commit adultery and murder. True love would have demanded that Adam rebuke Eve for tempting him and it would have demanded that David think of the consequences of following the temptation to sin with Bathsheba.

Don’t let your passion to “do the right thing” cause you to violate your covenant of grace with God. Samson’s love for Delilah caused him to drop his guard and violate adherence to his vow that was the basis of God’s Spirit empowering him.

### Blinded by Spiritual Insensitivity – 16:19-20

<sup>19</sup>She made him sleep on her knees, and called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his hair. Then she began to afflict him, and his strength left him. <sup>20</sup>She said, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” And he awoke from his sleep and said, “I will go out as at other times and shake myself free.” But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him. Judges 16:19-20 (NASB95)

The agents of the devil are persistent. Delilah tried on several different occasions to get Samson to tell her the source of his strength. He resisted, but she did not give up. Several years ago we watched as the pro-liquor forces came with wave after wave of assault on the community to get package stores and then liquor by the drink approved. In many other areas of decency and morality we have sat by and allowed the enemies of the Kingdom of God to capture the minds of our inheritance (our children). We are now having a national debate regarding the despicable idea of same gender marriages in our nation. Little by little we are being changed and led away from the basic moral position that is the basis of God’s blessing for any people. In some cases those who have sold out to the enemy have done so for money. In every case the church has been asleep and seemingly powerless to prevent the devastation from happening. Why was Samson powerless to prevent the Philistines from taking him captive? It was because the Spirit of the Lord had left him. Why is the church powerless to stop the onslaught of the secular

humanist in taking over our nation?

How can we recover from such a condition? Let's see what we can learn from what happened in Samson's case.

### Victorious Through Faith – 16:28-30

<sup>28</sup> Then Samson called to the LORD and said, "O Lord GOD, please remember me and please strengthen me just this time, O God, that I may at once be avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes." <sup>29</sup> Samson grasped the two middle pillars on which the house rested, and braced himself against them, the one with his right hand and the other with his left. <sup>30</sup> And Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" And he bent with all his might so that the house fell on the lords and all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he killed in his life. Judges 16:28-30 (NASB95)

The "Dagon" of modern America and most of Western Civilization is "humanism." We think that education is the key and economic prosperity will solve all the problems of the world. The church is seen as the enemy of what the humanists are trying to accomplish. The secularization of America is seen as a victory for them. In the meantime, they make "sport" of the church – they ridicule and criticize the church and Christ at every turn.

The two central pillars of secular humanism are the basic good of humanity and the power of education bring out that goodness. We have to show the depravity of the old sin nature and the uselessness of trying to reform that which is depraved. These "pillars" must be pulled down!

Samson was called to a mission in life even before his birth. His life was not one of sinless perfection, but he was useful to God in bringing liberation to the people of God. That liberation was temporary but is an example of what was to happen with the coming of the Savior.

Samson's victory was found in his willingness to sacrifice himself in order to destroy the kingdom of the enemy. Is this not what Christ did on the cross? In the sacrifice of Himself, he destroyed the kingdoms of the world, the flesh and the devil. Repeated, we are told that we are to follow the example of Christ in our lives and we are to do the work that He did. So, what does that mean for us in the church today? Do we take the politically correct path or do we lay it all on the line and stand firm on the word of God?