

Samson 2

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Date: 21 April 1994

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[0 : 00] Let us turn now to the two chapters we read together here this evening.

And without taking any particular text, I want to look with you at these two chapters, throughout the life of Samson, in the light of these chapters, continuing the series that I began here last Sunday night.

And just in case you may be tempted to think that they will go on too long, may I assure you that it is just my intention to complete this series next Sabbath evening.

And that will be three lectures on the life of Samson. Because at fortnight tonight, we hope to have the Reverend Vernon Hayam from Cardiff preaching at the conclusion of the week of evangelistic services.

Now, last week, in connection with the birth of Samson and his early life, we saw the uniqueness of the man in the announcement that was made of his birth, of his conception, of his birth, and the announcement that was made, the uniqueness of the ministry that he was going to undertake.

[1 : 47] And following on from that, I want to look now at the incidents that are recorded for us in chapters 14 and 15, which took place probably from the beginning of the 20 years of the period in which he was judged in Israel, and led up to the momentous events that are recorded for us in chapter 16, where his life ultimately came to an end.

Now, I want to look with you this evening at one or two of these incidents that are recorded for us in these two chapters. And in the first place, and this has to be dealt with in any study of Samson's life, we look at the account that we have here at the beginning of chapter 14, and that belongs to a thread, and a very large thread of that, right through the whole of his life, Samson and the emergence of his problem.

Now, we saw last week that Samson was the child of promise, the child of many prayers like Augustine, and we have always remembered what the Hebrews tells about this man.

Let us never forget this as we study his history. He was, of course, one of the champions of faith. He was a man of faith.

But he also was a man with a problem. And Samson's problem was a moral one, a sexual one.

[3 : 50] Now, there is no point in trying to hide from the facts that the Bible makes abundantly clear. This was Samson's great problem.

I suppose that there is a sense in which everyone has his own or her own particular problem. His or her own particular weakness.

Each one of us differs. Remember what they said of Naaman, the Syrian? That great man who was commander-in-chief of the Syrian army, a man who held a very, very prestigious position.

And yet this is what the Bible says of him, but he was a leper. I suppose that in some respects there is a but in the life of each one of us. Even in the life of the strongest man or woman of faith here tonight, there may be a very pressing problem in that person's life.

It can, as I said, it can take various forms, but there is no doubt at all what form it took in the life of Samson.

[5 : 10] And it emerged at a very early stage in his life. We read here that in the first few verses, he went down to Timnath, to the land of the Philistines, and he saw a Philistine woman there who greatly attracted him, so much so that he set his heart on having her as his wife.

Now, he made this known to his parents, and it was left to his father to make the necessary arrangements to bring them together.

That was the custom of the day, when someone falls in love today. He normally, I suppose there are some of the fairer sex who make the running, but he does the running, but makes the running.

But in those days, it was the father who made all the arrangements. To bring the two of them together. So, in the course of time, Samson made his feelings known to his parents, that there was a girl with whom he had fallen in love, and whom he wanted for himself.

And I suppose that, as we saw last week, there were very godly parents. They, no doubt, would have responded, reacted predictably, that they would have shown an interest in who the girl was.

[6 : 31] And the roof fell in when he revealed to them that she was a Philistine. Now, why should the roof fall in? Why should the whole world seem to fall apart then for them?

Well, for very simple reasons, and obvious reasons. They were godly people. They were Israelites. And it was forbidden in the law, the law of God, for an Israelite to be associated with a Philistine. That was number one. And then for this man particularly, it was a shattering blow to them, because he was an Israelite, which I saw last week.

He was separated to God from the very moment of his conception. He was the Lord's. And his life was dedicated to the Lord.

And here he was now, going contrary to the law of the one whom he served, and whom he claimed to honor.

[7 : 32] And they remonstrated with him. They tried to point out to him the folly of his actions, the consequences of his actions. They showed him that it wasn't just, that it wasn't compatible for him as an Israelite to marry a Philistine.

Surely there's some girl amongst the covenant people whom you could marry. No, he said. I have set my heart, no, he said.

You go and get her for me to wife. No, he said that was a social custom. It was a father of the fellow who was going to propose marriage.

It was he who made all the arrangements, brought them together so that the romance could flourish, hopefully culminating in marriage. So the poor father, in accordance with the custom, was left to go with his wife and their son down to Timnah to make this arrangement.

Now, of course, this was a disastrous course for Samson. And a course from which he never, ever recovered. Because he allowed his weakness to a full play in his life.

[8 : 49] Perhaps there is a sense in which the spirit of the age had caught up with Samson. We know from the book of Judges that in those days, there was no king in Israel.

And men did as they pleased. That about sums up the lifestyle and the spiritual lifestyle in those days. People did as they pleased.

There was no respect for authority. There was no self-discipline, or a little of it. There was almost spiritual anarchy abroad amongst the people.

Now I suggest to you that perhaps we in the 1980s, 1990s, perhaps know more about this even spiritually, religiously than perhaps our forefathers did.

There is no doubt that there has crept into life at every level in the home, in the school, in the church, at work.

[9 : 53] There is no doubt that there has crept in over the years the same spirit of a lack of respect for authority, indiscipline in life.

That doesn't seem to be the same cohesion and the same adhesiveness as there used to be in days gone by.

You see it, of course, for us the application here must be to our own spiritual lives and to our own church life. And I suggest to you that there may be the same lack of respect for authority creeping in all over the place into our lives individually.

It doesn't come to us so readily today to exercise self-discipline, to mortify the things that ought not to get full play in our lives.

Now, as I said, it may not be the immorality that Samson was guilty of from time to time. It may very well be something quite distinct, something quite different from that.

[11 : 07] But what it does is that it eats in at a person's spiritual vitality. And you have this lack of commitment and lack of acceptance of rules and regulations and what have you.

I spoke to someone recently. The father of a young... It doesn't belong to this congregation. The father of a young boy who was showing an interest in religious things.

And I noticed something very interesting that his father said. I asked him, where does he worship? Worship, he says. Oh, he says, I'm beginning to wonder if some of our people today have a church.

If they have a congregation. If they have a denomination, they're all over the place. That was what he said to me. And it set me thinking. And I think that I've noticed this trend myself coming in over the years.

Now, I'm not getting at anyone particular. You've got to recognise that a person in my position and in charge, at the head of our congregation this size, must of necessity say things in public and be prepared to put his head on the block.

[12 : 21] And if I lose my head, so be it. I've lost it often enough, perhaps, not to bother about that nowadays. But nevertheless, it still bothers me when I say things like this, how people may react.

You know that there is a sense in which much of what constitutes our form, as a church, as a denomination, as a congregation, there are many aspects of that form, of that mould which has been formed over the years, that we could well do without.

I acknowledge that. And I'm not afraid to say that. And some people know what I'm getting here. There are many aspects of the forum that we could do without. But that's one thing.

To get rid of the whole forum is another. And I think it is absolutely ridiculous that you get so much of this emphasis coming to the fore today in young people who are showing an interest in the things of God.

That there seems to be so much of the spirit of, a reactionary spirit to the things that have been.

[13 : 32] And I fear, I often wonder, if I preside over a body which may numerically be strong, I'm not saying stronger, but strong, and yet spiritually, spiritually, religiously becoming weaker for the simple reason that there is this tendency to opt out and to abandon what has been and to do our own thing.

That's the spirit that Samson manifests to his father. Look, said his father and mother, you're wrong. Consider what you're doing. Think about it. Never mind that.

You do as I say because this is what I want. Is that not the spirit of the age? This is what I want. I don't care what other people say or what other people feel. If I want it, I'll do it.

I'll get it. I'll have it. I'll do it. I'll go. My friend, that is not the spirit of the gospel. It is not the spirit of Christ.

And I would plead with you in your own interest, not for my sake. Who am I anyway? None of us will be here all that long, but for your sake and in your interest, those of you who are showing an interest in the things of God, don't be ashamed to submit to the authority of those who know better than yourself, who are guiding you for your own sake and in the hope that in the providence of Almighty God, you may yet be pillars in this church spiritually.

[15 : 21] And this church has stood and this congregation has stood and this denomination has stood because over the years it has had men and women who prepare to submit to the authority of the Word of God and who refuse to move from it.

I commend that spirit to you in your own interest. And there's no edge to the spirit or to the way in which I have said that to you tonight.

Take from it what you will. Now, that was the way in which this problem came to light. But then, there are one or two interesting incidents that these passages, that these chapters refer to.

First of all, there's a famous story of the encounter that Samson had with a lion. As his mother and father himself went down to Timnath to make the arrangements so that he and his girl could come together and socialise more and get to know one another better and become more romantically involved, that was a social of custom.

As they went down there, they went through the vineyards. And this lion met them. This lion was prepared to attack them. Now, seemingly, it was an unknown, an unknown feature of life in those days and in these areas for a lion to attack humans.

[16 : 55] And it's interesting, the way it is put there, that it was while he was on the way down to Timnath. Here, there is a sense in which Samson is on this downward spiral, spiritually.

A process that's begun in his life that is going to have disastrous consequences for him. And we know that in a most wonderful way he was able to kill this lion.

We know that we saw this last week that the Holy Spirit supernaturally took possession of him and empowered him from time to time to do these supernatural feats.

Now, of course, we must remember that there is a lesson here for us as well. Let's try to apply this as we go along. The lesson that we have is a lesson that Peter reminds us of.

Every Christian, he says, has this. God, he says, puts at his disposal all the resources that he requires for his calling and grace.

[18:06] Everything that God, that he needs, God has put at his disposal. Now, every Christian here tonight knows this. that God, he says, hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness through the knowledge of him that called us to glory and to his kingdom.

Everything that you will ever need in your pilgrimage as a Christian, God has made over to you. He has put at your disposal. God has put on the way. So, when you and I encounter, as Peter again tells us, we will encounter a spiritual lions along the way.

The devil himself is a roaring lion going about seeking whom he may devour. We're going to encounter problems from our friends and our folks. People are going to attack us. People are going to malign us.

People are going to oppose us. People are going to laugh at us. People are going to make life difficult for us. We're going to find it going rough. But every Christian has at his disposal the resources which will enable him to overcome.

And if he doesn't overcome, the responsibility for that lies at his own door. And the problem with Samson was this. That though God had put at his disposal enormous resources, he didn't make use of them the way he ought to have.

[19:24] Perhaps I'll listen there for you and for me tonight. I don't know what problem is confronting you. I don't know what difficulty you have. I don't know what it is that makes you afraid. I don't know what enemy stands in your path.

I don't know what your problem is, who the opposition is or are. I don't know. But I know this, that the grace of God is sufficient and his strength is made perfect in weakness.

And if it be that you are overcome, the fault for that lies with you. because God's grace is strong and is sufficient for you.

So he overcame this life. But perhaps there may be something else here. I don't know.

Perhaps another application we can make out of this is here's this man on the downward path, downward spiral. Now the question is, as a man falls, as it were, as a man goes on this downward course, there is a way that seemeth unto man to be right, but the end thereof is death.

[20:35] There are many people tonight who think that things are going wonderfully well with them, but they're not. They're on the wrong track, on the wrong course. The question is, does God ever speak to people like that?

Does he ever speak to them like that? Of course he does. He speaks to Union Providence and the providence of someone else. You may not hear him, you know the advert that used to be on television, I don't see it, beyond years ago.

The advert where people were warned, people who were in industry, warned against suffering industrial injuries. And when they were working in a place where the noise was sufficiently great, they were warned, they were encouraged to put on these ear protectors.

But there was this man who didn't bother. And he was in a social club one night and he was listening to probably, I think it was a comedian, telling jokes and he was looking around and he was seeing all his mates laughing at what the man up there was saying.

But he wasn't hearing a thing. And the message was, you see, wear your ear protectors in case your eardrums get damaged. And I couldn't help but think how like this was to the gospel and to people under the gospel.

[21:50] The gospel is preached. Some people don't hear a thing. They don't understand anything they said to them. Perhaps a person sitting beside them is drinking it in, loves the truth.

And you ask that other person to leave this door, one of these doors to the church tonight. What do you think of that? Oh, I never heard a word that man said. I never understood a word. I couldn't be bothered. I shut off.

I had a good snooze. Never heard a word. But you see, the fault doesn't lie, I hope, with the gospel. It may lie with the presentation of it.

But it doesn't lie with the gospel. The fault lies with people to whom God is speaking and they're not hearing a word that is being said to. That's a dreadful spiritual situation you could be in tonight.

There is one man in the Bible of whom it is said, and I don't know but that it's the only man in the Bible of whom this is said. I'm not sure. You can think of this yourself. He questioned the Lord and Jesus answered him, not a word.

[22 : 56] There may come a time in the life of an individual when God has spoken to him so often and the man has switched off so often that God in judgment will leave him alone.

That's a dreadful spiritual state to be in. Samson, God was speaking to him. Perhaps he was speaking to him through this lion. But though the Lord enabled him to overcome the mercies of God did not lead him to repentance and that is true of many people.

The mercies of God surround them but remain impenitent under his mercies. Well, the rich Timnah seems that the program that was devised so that they could get to know one another went very well.

Parents returned home. Samson returned home. In the course of time, again according to the social custom, they went down so that the marriage service and feast party could be held, the reception could be held.

Now, the reception lasted for seven days. on the way down, Samson decided to have a look at where he had killed this lion. And he found in the carcass of the lion a honeycomb had been formed by bees.

[24 : 18] Now, again, this is not uncommon because in those days the carcass of a lion could have been eaten pretty cleanly and dry by ants and insects within a matter of days.

so there is nothing strange in seeing this honeycomb formed in the carcass of the lion. Turned aside and satisfied himself, filled his hands with honey and ate it and gave to his father and mother. Didn't tell them that he had killed the lion. Didn't tell them at all. You know that there are people who are engaged in a course of sin.

They don't tell people what they're doing. Perhaps they keep it hidden from their nearest and their dearest. They're afraid that they will find out what they're doing but it'll come to the lion sometime. It'll come out. So Samson turned aside and fed himself and then fed his father and mother.

[25 : 21] Now, the interesting thing is that the killing of the lion by Samson was the means that God used to bring Samson and the Philistines into this locked conflict because it was from this incident that the riddle that he told at the wedding arose, the killing of the lion and the forming of the honey in the carcass of the lion.

I read that some of the early church fathers used to spiritualize this and say that it reminded them of the way in which Jesus Christ stood in the midst of the church, feeding the church with the sweetness that flowed to it from his own death.

Well, be that as it may, it may certainly be this, that there is no way, I don't think we're going too far certainly in saying this, that maybe it gives to us a picture of the Christian as he takes of the sweet mercies that God has provided for him in the most trying of all circumstances.

Very often a person may be under great conviction of sin and yet the sweetest taste of all is the taste of the forgiveness of sins through the mercy of God for him.

And he satisfies himself with that and there are others who are satisfied with it as well. Anyway, we'll leave that. Samson went down to Timnath and the marriage feast was held.

[27 : 01] Now the social custom of the day was that just as you have today at a wedding reception, perhaps there are speeches in the old days used to be five major speeches. I've been at some reception, but I've been even more.

But you know the way that speeches are made, toasts are proposed and replies are given. Well, the social custom in those days was that someone would stand up and give a riddle, perhaps a puzzle, and challenge the people present to unravel the riddle.

So in the course of the festivity Samson may have got up, there are some people who reckon that it was as a result of drink, but he should not be taking anyway as a Nazareth. Well, we're not told that. So why say what we're not told? Anyway, he stood up and he proposed this riddle. Now he said, I've got something to say to you myself.

And this is the riddle, out of the eater came forth meat and out of the strong came forth sweetness. That's the riddle. Now this is the next thing he did. He placed a bed.

[28 : 07] Yes, that's what he did. Right, he said, if you unfold that riddle within seven days, I will give you thirty pieces of clothing. If you don't, you will give them to me.

Now, of course, thirty pieces of clothing, as they've put there, sheets and an outer garment. This was a particularly ornate Middle East dress. Highly acceptable to anyone in those days.

Highly acceptable. A great gift. And so this was the bed that he placed with them. And they failed for three days to unravel the riddle.

Then they got at Samson's wife. And they threatened her with death through burning. If you don't entice them to unravel the riddle for us.

Eventually, Samson succumbed to his wife's overture. But there is an interesting aspect here again to the social customs of the day.

[29 : 17] As she pressed Samson to give her the answer to the riddle, Samson said to her, behold, he says, I've not told my father or my mother, and how can I tell you what it means?

Now, that was a social custom that the bride for some considerable time played second fiddle to her in-laws. that was the custom of the day.

And that's the meaning of these words. I haven't told them, he said, so how can I tell you? But anyway, she pressed him so that she got the meaning of the riddle, and she related to the Philistines, and the Philistines told Samson, but Samson knew how they had found it out.

He said to them, if you had not ploughed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle. If you hadn't used my wife, you wouldn't have solved the riddle.

You wouldn't have broken the code. Now, perhaps there is one or two things that one should say about this. It gives us an insight into the kind of people that Samson was dealing with, the Philistines.

[30 : 33] they were prepared to burn this woman and her house and her father if he didn't give her the answer to the riddle.

And that in itself is an indication of how wrong Samson had gone in this association. And I don't think that one, I don't think it is in accord with the teaching of the word of God to warn all you who may be on the point of forming relationships.

Boy-girl relationships. Oh, how often you hear that question, that theme being asked. If you ever want to speak at a youth fellowship as sure as anything, it will be suggested to you that you speak on relationships.

And that's quite natural. Of course it's natural that people should be concerned about relationships. but my friend, let me counsel you here.

Make sure that whoever you get involved with, you get involved with someone who has an interest in the things of God. Someone who has a sympathy for the things of God.

[31 : 49] Someone who will be a help rather than a hindrance. saw the many homes tonight. If you only knew the many, many homes tonight in which there are so many sad hearts because their partner in life is totally opposed to the things of God.

Many a sigh has risen from a heart which has recognized that years ago they made the wrong choice and took the wrong turn and now it is too late.

I counsel you in the light of the word of God, be sure who you get involved with and make sure that they are on the same wavelength as yourself.

Well, Samson, I'm not going to deal with the morality of this act when he went down and killed 30 men so that he was able to honor his own bet.

There is something to my mind extremely immoral in what he did. Killed these men albeit Philistines, perhaps someone said they were guerrilla leaders, perhaps he knew that they were the leaders of these pockets of resistance, people who were murderously engaged, involved with the Israelites.

[33 : 16] Well, the Bible hasn't said so why said? I think we just have to look at this man as it were what the Lord said last week and recognize where he went wrong just as we want to recognize where he went right.

And we should never try to whitewash, never try to gloss over the wrongness of actions just because they were perpetrated by someone like Samson. If they were wrong, they are wrong, no matter who did them.

Anyway, after this incident, he returned home. And then chapter 14 tells us, chapter 15 tells us, after a while, he decided to go back down to see his wife.

Quite natural. I mean, if he loved her after all, I suppose absence makes the heart grow fonder. You never miss the water till the well runs dry, so what's wrong with him going back down to see the one whom he loved?

To discover to a chagrin, that she had been given to the man who had acted as his best man by the Philistines, because they thought that as a result of what she had done with the riddle, he had turned against her.

[34 : 28] Of course, there is nothing new in this. We live in days when wife swapping is quite common, when the person who used to be your next door neighbor's wife has turned up to be someone else's wife before the week is out.

There's nothing new under the sun. Anyway, Samson was filled with indignation. And again, we read of this interesting incident where he set the cornfields afire by tying together in pairs 300 foxes or jackals, probably, as they were in those days.

And as a result of that act where they lost so much of their corn, the Philistines, again, this gives you an insight into the kind of people that were, they burnt to death his wife and her father and their home.

And then there followed this same constant running battle, this kind of guerrilla warfare with Samson and the Philistines.

Now, the verse that I want to deal with before I close is this. His father and his mother, chapter 14, verse 5, his father and his mother knew not that it was of the Lord, that he sought on occasion against the Philistines, for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.

[36 : 00] Now, someone may say, God was behind all this. God was behind the marriage. God was behind the league between Samson and the Philistines because this was God's way of getting at the Philistines through Samson.

That's the meaning of the verse, so therefore you've got to exonerate Samson. My friend, you don't. Of course God was behind it. Of course God is in control of all things.

This is the great teaching of the word of God. Let's not be afraid of it. God has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass. Everything is within decree of the Almighty God. Of course that is true, but that does not condone the wrong action of people at any time.

If you ever do anything wrong, you can never turn on and say, well, Lord, I'm sorry, but after all, that's what you told me to do, isn't it? After all, that was a new plan for me, wasn't it?

If you adopted that attitude, it would be a recipe for disaster, a recipe for chaos and anarchy. There are two sides to this. There is a side of God's sovereignty, but there is also the side of my responsibility.

[37 : 18] The God who is sovereign has told me what to do. He has marked out a course for me that I have to follow, and if I don't follow that course, I can never turn around and say to God, well, that's your fault.

The responsibility for my wrong actions rests and must always rest with me. Anyway, Samson now takes rest at the rock Etam.

He runs, he goes and he hides himself in Etam, and it is there that the philistans are that area that they come. And here you have now something very interesting where you have an account in chapter 15 of the slaughter of 2,000 men, Samson using the jawbone of an ass.

Now, it was during this 20 years as a judge in Israel that this took place, and this is all leading up to that momentous event when he took the gates of Gaza, dragged them physically, literally, out of the ground, and then met Delilah.

And that led him ultimately to his own end. But before we come to that, as we will next week, let us look just finally at the slaughter of the 2,000 with the jawbone of an ass.

[38 : 41] As Samson took refuge at Etam, the people of Israel came to him and they said to him, look what's going on here. There are thousands of philistines around here looking for you.

What's going on? And he told them, and here you have the treachery of these men. Look, they said, we don't want any harassment, any hassle from the philistines.

Now, that is extraordinary because the philistines had these people, they were dominating them. Their life was a misery.

But isn't it strange that the Israelites would rather have life under the philistines than have life under the leadership of Samson. It's strange, isn't it?

And yet it is not so strange after all because that's exactly the same spirit that you had in those who lived in the days of Jesus. There he was, the saviour of the world, prepared to lead any who followed him into liberty.

[39 : 48] And yet the vast majority of people of his day reacted in this way, we don't want this man to be king over us, we would rather have Caesar. They were reeling under the thralldom of Rome, and yet they would prefer that to liberty from Christ.

And that's exactly the spiritual condition of the vast majority of people tonight. They prefer care to be servants of the devil than to be led to liberty by Christ.

Why? Because there's too much involved in being a Christian. Too many difficulties, too many problems, too much self-discipline, too much self-denial, too much agony, too much cross-bearing. It involves too much. Far better to settle under the yoke of sin than to try and throw it off and be free, though that involves, as I said, self-discipline and self-denial.

Someone once said that Christians, people can be sorted with sin. We can even get to the place where we have so accommodated ourselves, the world's lifestyle, and to the presence of sin in our lives, that we just accept them.

[41 : 21] We give up the fight. We do not believe that things will change, so we just give in. We cave in. That's what these men did when they came to the Philistines.

Look, they said, chuck it, give it up. Leave us the way we are. Never mind all the skirmishing and fighting and killing. Give it up. Just let things be the way they are, difficult though they are.

And you know, my friend, there are times when you and I have to face up to facts. You and I have got to recognise this, that sin can make its own insidious invasion into our lives, that we are prepared to lie under its power and under its dominion.

And when the gospel comes and the gospel challenges us, and we come face to face with facts and recognise that we should be up and doing, throwing off the yoke, being involved in Christian commitment and Christian service, when we're challenged, we don't want to accept the challenge. Well, you and I must accept it tonight, if we are to be true followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. And you see also here the spirit in which Samson confronted them.

[42 : 43] Look, he said, if you want to bind me, you bind me, but don't you do anything to me. If you want to hand me over to the Philistines, that's all right, isn't it like the spirit of Christ when he said to them in his own day, if it is me that you seek, let these go their way.

He was prepared to be bound and to go and face his enemies and that's what happened to Samson. He was bound, he faced the Philistines and as he faced them, the almighty power of God came on him again and he broke the ropes which he was tied, picked up the job on him an ass and with it he slew 2000 of the Philistines.

Now, there are some lessons for us here, surely, and the lesson is this, that the power of the spirit of God can enable you to be free.

the power of the spirit of God, that Christ rose from the dead. He slew that which bound him and he rose triumphant into newness of life.

Another lesson is this, that it doesn't matter how despised the means may be, any means in the hand of God can be effective. You may think yourself to be so insignificant as a Christian, so weak, so poor, so pathetic, but my friend, in the hand of God, God can do great things with you and through you, just as he can do great things in you.

[44 : 33] Let us not despise the day of small things, and whatever God, with whatever God comes to us, let us remember that in his hand it can become the most effective instrument of all.

Oh, how wise God is, that God doesn't use the great and the mighty, God uses the weak and the insignificant, just as Samson overcame the Philistines with the jawbone of an ass.

Perhaps the last picture we are left with is the most interesting of all. Having done all that, Samson was thirsty, and he cried out in despair, I will die of thirst.

Oh, how thankful we ought to be, my friend, that the Bible gives a perfect picture of these men. Men who were able to do great exploits in the name of God, and yet, who were driven to despair by small things.

Elijah was the same, overcame thousands of false prophets on Carmel, and yet ran from the wrath of Queen Jezebel, was prepared to face Ahab, and said, who are you?

[45 : 56] I come to you in the name of the Lord, and yet a few days afterwards, hides under a juniper tree, and says to the Lord, oh Lord, take me away, my whole ministry has been a failure.

Do you not see that in your own life? Are there not highs? Are there not lows? Are there not times when the Lord has empowered you, and other times when you feel that you've got absolutely nothing?

left at all. That's the way Samson was. That's the way all of God's people were. If you're worried here tonight because yesterday you felt wonderful, and today you feel dreadful, don't let that put you off.

You're in good company. Every Christian that you come across the Bible from time to time was like that. You're Samson now, and he cries, I'm not a drink, I'm going to die.

Lord, you've helped me before, can you help me now? There's a man you see, he's a man of faith, he's a spiritual man, that's a Christian for you, a man who cries to God, who recognises when God helps him, and who also recognises when he needs help.

[47 : 02] He's not always filled, there are times when he's empty, but in his emptiness he cries to the same God, and he asks him to intervene, and God never fails. And there in a very wonderful way, God opened a rock, it wasn't the jawbone that he opened, it was the place where the jawbone was used, water gushed out from the rock, and Samson's needs were met.

There isn't a Christian here tonight who would dare say that God ever failed him. Oh yes, there were times when he felt a failure, times when things were rough, the going was rough, times when he was getting nothing, but just at the right moment God came to him to meet him in the depth of his need.

And that's the encouragement for you and for me in this history that we have studied tonight. Oh my friend, how thankful we ought to be that with all our problems and with all our weaknesses, with all our deficiencies, how thankful we ought to be that there is a God who bears with us, that there is a Christ who reigns for us, that there is a Savior whose grace is sufficient for us.

In all our weakness he is strong. Do you know this Savior? Do you know this delivering God? Do you know the God who can meet you tonight in the very depth of your need?

Oh my friend, I commend him to you. Samson at times was a miserable failure, but his God never failed him.

[48 : 50] And that's the testimony of every Christian here tonight. Let us pray. Let us Lord have mercy upon us.

Bless us in thy providence and in thy grace. And undertake for us and guide us with thy counsel and forgive our sins and holy things for Christ's sake.

Amen. Amen. Amen..