

Judges Chapter 16 Part 2

The book of Judges deals a great deal with the errors of man. We have spent a great deal of time on them. It can be a bit depressing.

Here is something that may lift your mood and provide focus to your spiritual life. Here is the solution from the Christian perspective. It is from L. S. Chafer's Systematic Theology, Volume 6. As a preliminary note before reading the quote, let me observe that L. S. Chafer did not find anything written on dependence upon the Holy Spirit to draw upon for his books. As he stated somewhere, he had to learn it from study and experience. A daily faith-walk, depending upon the Holy Spirit can change the direction of your life.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith [or, as in R.V., faithfulness], meekness, temperance” (or, as in R.V., self-control—Gal. 5:22-23).”

“This context—Galatians 5:16-25—follows naturally after a portion of Scripture but recently considered, namely, Romans 6:1-8:4, in which the Apostle has laid the foundation upon which all spiritual living and effective service is based: it is that aspect of Christ's death which is a judgment of the sin nature, and by which the freedom is secured for the Holy Spirit to pursue an unhindered operation within the Christian in spite of the active presence of the sin nature which is in the flesh. Since God in Christ has "condemned sin in the flesh," the whole will of God may "be fulfilled in us," but never *by us* (Rom. 8:3-4). That is, the Spirit is appointed to bring the whole will of God to realization in the believer's life, which experience could never be achieved when depending upon human ability (cf. Rom. 7:15-25). This end result, which is doing the whole will of God, is not accomplished in all Christians or by virtue of the fact that they are saved, but only in those among the saved ones who

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“walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” The contrast is between those Christians who depend on their own human resources—which line of action is compatible with the character of all law-relationship to God—and those Christians who depend upon the power of the indwelling Spirit. One method represents “the works of the flesh,” or that which the law anticipates when it makes its appeal to human resources; the other method, since it contemplates the enablement of the Spirit, results in a realization of all that the Holy Spirit may do. That which follows in the context of Romans 8:4 is an important development of the contrast between the law principle and the faith principle; then too, as stated above, the determining walk by dependence upon the Holy Spirit as announced in Romans 8:4 is taken up in Galatians 5:16-25, with the continuation of the same contrast between the works of the flesh and the inwrought works of the Holy Spirit. In the Galatians passage the flesh and the Spirit are declared to be wholly irreconcilable. The fact that the two cannot ever be reconciled is true without exception in every child of God (cf. Gal. 5:17), and so long as he remains in this body and in this world. No believer has ever reached the place where he does not need to walk by means of the Holy Spirit. The most mature Christian must, if awake to the truth respecting himself, witness to the fact that the flesh with its affections and desires is present with him and will demonstrate its presence through “the works of the flesh” if not held in check by the superior power of the Spirit. Ideals of respectability may deter one from shocking disregard of society's demands, but the full inward victory over the flesh is gained only by the working of the Spirit in response to specific dependence upon Him. Extended and appalling are "the works of the flesh": “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft,

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hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like" (Gal. 5:17-21). But over against the works of the flesh is the fruit of the Spirit."

"When walking by faith or in dependence upon the Holy Spirit, two results are secured: (1) the works of the flesh shall not be fulfilled and (2) the fruit of the Spirit shall have its manifestation. Both the negative and the positive aspects of the spiritual life are guaranteed to those who thus depend upon the Spirit."

Here is a link to some of the L. S. Chafer lectures on the spiritual life:
<https://voicesforchrist.org/speakers/show/1739>

The Samson and Delilah narrative is familiar to more people than many of the other narratives in the book of Judges. It is kind of like a Romeo and Juliet story except in this case, Juliet doesn't love Romeo and is only driven by money.

The text is full of ambiguous words that play into the irony and tragedy of this story. Also, keep in mind the different perspectives in this text. There are four perspectives represented in the text:

- a) The Philistines,
- b) Delilah
- c) Samson and
- d) the author/Holy Spirit.

Get out your Bibles and let us read together Judges 16:4-31.

Judges 16:4 After this it came about that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.

After this it came about. This is obviously a break in the text. This is another story about another woman and Samson. This is the third and

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final woman Samson is involved with as far as the text is concerned. As some commentators suggest, there could have been many other women. But let us not speculate on what the text does not say.

Loved. That is what the text says. But what did this love mean? Obviously Delilah didn't love Samson. Last week we saw that this is perhaps an overwhelming emotion from Samson's sin nature rather than true love.

Valley of Sorek. Literally Sorek means "choice vines." The root word means "red grapes (<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/sorek-valley-of>) Interesting play on words with the Nazirite "vow" that Samson is under. Remember, Samson did not make the vow. It was God's plan that he stir up trouble between the Philistines and Israel.

This word, love, also sets up another contrast among the women a) His unnamed wife was a Philistine who he should not have married. The text never says that he loves her, only that she looked good in his eyes. b) the prostitute was just a "one night stand" for sex. It was wrong to have relations with her. and c) now he goes to the valley of (red) grapes and falls in love with a woman. As we said before there are three aspects of his sin nature on display a) legalism, b) anti-law (anti-nomianism) and c) emotion (or as Thieme said, "emotional revolt.").

Delilah. This name can mean several different things, which brings up several questions:

1. Was Delilah a Philistine or a Hebrew? Her name would suggest Semitic influence, so perhaps Hebrew. Yet, she is living in an area seemingly belonging to Philistines. The text does not specifically identify her ethnic background. It is my guess that she is part Philistine and part Hebrew. If Samson's wife had lived long enough

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to have children, they would have been half Israelite and half Philistine.

2. How Delilah and Samson met is not said. It is unimportant for the purpose of this narrative.
3. Her name could be derived from several different Hebrew roots. Hence the great confusion over what her name means. Possible meanings range from “with dangling curls,” “to bring low,” “flirtatious,” or “to praise, to glorify.” Her name may have the Hebrew word for “night” embedded. This would be an ironic contrast to Samson’s name which means “little sun.”

Of the three woman in the Samson narratives, this is the only one that is identified with a name.

Some commentators are adamant that Samson was married to Delilah. But it never says that in the text. Some want to say she is a prostitute. The text doesn’t say that either. The only part of their relationship that is important to this narrative is the conversation they have between themselves.

Judges 16:5 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.”

Came up. They didn’t just come to her; they didn’t walk to her. No they “went up.” If she lives in a valley, how did they go up to her? I do not have a topological map of Israel handy. But it is possible that these lords of the Philistines lived along the seacoast and went up the sides of a

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mountain or hill and then down to a valley that may still have been above sea level.

Lords. This particular word is used only of the Philistines. The TDOT suggests that is a loanword from the Philistine language. “Lords” or “rulers” or even “princes” are good translations. There were five lords of the Philistines (Joshua 13:3). That comes into play with the narrative of David and Goliath. David didn’t have five stones in case he missed on his first try. No, he had one stone for each of the five lords of the Philistines. He was an expert shot. He didn’t plan on missing.

Eleven hundred pieces of silver. Without getting into the numeric details, this was an immense amount of money, perhaps as much as \$25 million in today’s money terms.

Entice him. It can also mean to trick or to fool. The Philistines know from previous encounters with Samson, that he will not on his own tell them what they want to know. However, they also know that he is vulnerable when it comes to women. The only other time this word is used in the book of Judges is in Judges 14:15 when the Philistines tell Samson’s wife to “entice” him to give them the solution to the riddle. Same speakers, same concept. Trick him. But, as we have seen, tricking Samson can be dangerous. Ralph Waldo Emerson is reputed to have said, “When you strike at a king, you must kill him.” That applied to Samson.

Afflict him. This is in the intensive form. This can mean several things related to being poor, afflicted, weak, humbled. The author is complicit in this wording. There is a double entendre here. The Philistines want to bring Samson down before they kill him. They are going to blind him, then make him work at woman’s work and then make him perform for them in their temple. God was using this to enforce humility on Samson. It was the only way he was going to learn about God’s grace provision

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and trusting God: faith dependence on Him. Samson was teachable, but only when he was totally humbled. Kind of like us.

The first perspective is that of the Philistines. That is verse 5. They have a purpose, to capture, humiliate and eventually destroy Samson.

**Judges 16:6 So Delilah said to Samson,
“Please tell me where your great strength is
and how you may be bound to afflict you.”**

Delilah does not hide what the purpose of getting this information is. Samson is all in. In his arrogance he is going to enjoy the “game” until it is no longer a winning strategy for him. As an aside, this kind of thinking is not unusual for people who are narcissists being arrogant and full of themselves, like Samson.

Without going into too much detail, many serial killers taunt the police with letters or clues that point to themselves.

From the listverse.com website. “The Zodiac Killer is an unidentified serial killer who murdered five known victims in Northern California between December 1968 and October 1969. The crimes frustrated detectives as the killer sent coded messages to the newspapers following each murder.”

Afflict you. Delilah repeats the Philistine desire.

Here is the second perspective, Delilah. She is being paid to set Samson up for a great suffering and death. She is aware of what they want to do. They said they want to “afflict him.” Then she repeats the word to Samson, “to afflict you.”

**Judges 16:7 Samson said to her, “If they bind
me with seven fresh cords that have not been**

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dried, then I will become weak and be like any other man.”

Here is the third perspective, Samson. If you haven't picked up on it yet, please understand that Samson is arrogant about his strength. In fights he is 1,000+ to zero. He has never lost a fight. No one can beat him. When Delilah asks him how he may be bound, he may see this like some of the serial killers in America. They sent letters to various people taunting the authorities. So here, Samson is taunting the Philistines through his girl friend. He makes up three different stories. He chose the vocabulary. You have to realize that he is smart and likes to play with words. Unfortunately, he is also arrogant. That will be his downfall.

If they bind me. Notice that he says “they.” He knows that the Philistines want to do this to him. But he is so confident that he can get out of any trap they set, he is all in their game.

Seven. This is a number associated with completeness.

cords. Cords means, remnant, remainder, sinews, bowstrings, cords. Some translations use “bowstrings” instead of “cords.”

Fresh cords. Fresh can mean moist, fresh, new. Samson helps us out here when he says not dried. So this is something that is moist when new. If this is a sinew for a bowstring, then it is acquired from an animal. Sinews are tendons which connect muscles to bones. The tendons would appear to be single strands of tendons.

If these were indeed bowstrings as some translations have, then this has a military connotation. Is Samson connecting his life's tasking from God to this encounter with the Philistines? The few commentaries on the book of Judges gloss over the meaning of the three “bindings” that Samson chooses. Samson is playing with the Philistines. And the author lets him do it to us as well.

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Let us step back for a second and ask a question. Let us assume, based upon what we already read in chapters 14 and 15, that Samson has a well developed Hebrew vocabulary as well as a sense of humor that no one else seems to enjoy. Combine that with his arrogance and this challenge from the Philistines, and you would have to guess that Samson is playing with his audience. He chose these methods of binding him. What did he mean by them? Is this a riddle that no commentator wants to engage with. Instead, all commentators have used the “passover” rule – make no comment on why he used these methods and these words.

Any other man. The Young’s Literal translation says, “as one of the human race.” It has the word for “one.” The word for man is “adam.” It can mean Adam the name, but more often it refers to any “man.” Perhaps another irony. Samson’s Old Sin Nature inherited from Adam is on display throughout this narrative. Apart from God, we are all “weak” and under the control of our sin natures. When Samson’s hair is shaved off, he becomes like Adam outside of the garden. Another irony: Eve gave Adam to eat. Here Delilah gets the secret which leads to Samson’s downfall.

Judges 16:8 Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh cords that had not been dried, and she bound him with them.

Not much to add here. They accomplished what they thought would work.

Judges 16:9 Now she had men lying in wait in an inner room. And she said to him, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” But he snapped the cords as a string of tow snaps

when it touches fire. So his strength was not discovered.

The Philistines had been reassured by Delilah that Samson had told his secret. So Delilah thinks she has tricked Samson while he has tricked Delilah and the Philistines. He snapped the bowstrings or cords easily. He is enjoying this game. Enter the fourth perspective: the author. He chose the words “as a string of tow snaps when it touches fire.” What is he telling us about Samson’s latest “riddle?”

Tow. This is the material that yarn is made from. This is the material before it is twisted into a string of yarn. Gesenius says it comes from a word meaning “shaken out” like what is shaken out from flax to make the tow. In Isaiah 1:31 it is translated “tinder” which makes for a double entendre here. Perhaps tow was used as tinder in those days. It doesn’t say. The bowstrings or cords brake like tinder near a flame. Poof!!!

Now there is another meaning of a word from the same consonants that has already been used in Judges chapter 13 of Samson. It can mean a male child.

Judges 13:5 “For behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall come upon his head, for the boy (this is our word) shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines.”

Note, this is being said by the Angel of the Lord, the second person of the Trinity. The text of Judges is the second author of the book of Judges.

His strength was not discovered. Samson thought his strength came from his hair. So not even Samson discovered that it was God the Holy

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Spirit that gave him the strength. When his hair is finally shaved off, he loses his Nazirite status, the Holy Spirit removes his strength. So there is a sad irony here. Samson will be the one “burned.” His eyes will be gouged out, he will be confined, humiliated and finally he will die.

Judges 16:10 Then Delilah said to Samson, “Behold, you have deceived me and told me lies; now please tell me how you may be bound.”

Judges 16:11 He said to her, “If they bind me tightly with new ropes which have not been used, then I will become weak and be like any other man.”

Bind me tightly. This is the “infinitive absolute,” a Hebrew method of emphasizing the action of the verb. Let us take a short detour to look at this word. It is used ten times in this one chapter. This chapter is in part about the “binding” of Samson. In his arrogance he plays with the Philistines giving them ways he could be “bound.” Yet, the final use of this word in this chapter is about Samson actually bound by the Philistines. This did not surprise God. He allowed it because it was the only way God was going to get Samson’s attention. There are two words that might join to provide a sadly ironic situation. The Philistines want to bind him so they can afflict him. From God’s perspective, He allows Samson to be bound so that he will become humble (another meaning of the Hebrew word for afflict). We see this word first used for Joseph.

Genesis 39:20 So Joseph’s master took him and put him into the jail, the place where the king’s prisoners were confined (this is our word

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for binding; it can also mean confinement); **and he was there in the jail.**

Genesis 39:21 But the Lord was with Joseph and extended kindness (God's lovingkindness - chesed) to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer. (God was and still is in charge)

New ropes. The word for ropes here comes from the Hebrew meaning "twist." The ropes are formed by twisting individual strands together until a strong rope is formed. This is in contrast to the bowstrings previously mentioned that would have been single strands or at most a few strands twisted together. These new ropes would have looked much more impressive than the thin bowstrings.

Judges 16:12 So Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them and said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" For the men were lying in wait in the inner room. But he snapped the ropes from his arms like a thread.

Men. There is no word for "men" in the text. It is the participle for the word for lying in wait or ambush. Young's Literal Translation says, "the ambush is abiding in an inner chamber."

Snapped the ropes from his arms like a thread. Here again the author is inserting his perspective by choice of words.

Snapped. Same word as before when he broke the bowstrings. I suspect that Samson is having fun demonstrating his strength. Yet, his strength comes from the Holy Spirit.

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Thread. Means thread.

Again, the Philistines are waiting in another room to take him captive.

Judges 16:13 Then Delilah said to Samson, “Up to now you have deceived me and told me lies; tell me how you may be bound.” And he said to her, “If you weave the seven locks of my hair with the web [and fasten it with a pin, then I will become weak and be like any other man.”

Note the text in brackets in verses 13 and 14 is not in the Hebrew text but in the LXX which is a Greek translation sometimes used by the Apostles when writing the New Testament. It is included in the English translation here because it completes the parallelism established with the two previous “bindings” and what follows makes more sense if it is included.

Judges 16:14 So while he slept, Delilah took the seven locks of his hair and wove them into the web]. And she fastened it with the pin and said to him, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” But he awoke from his sleep and pulled out the pin of the loom and the web.

The text and the culture seem to obscure exactly what is being done here. Was his hair woven into a fabric or kind of a large rope that encompassed him?

There seems to be a progression here. The bowstrings were either single strands of tendon or at most a few twisted together. The rope often made from hemp would have many strands twisted together. The loom was used to weave the many strands of his seven locks of hair into a fabric of

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sorts. The bowstrings, if from tendons, were from an animal. The rope, if from hemp, was from a plant. His hair was human. And when his hair was woven into a fabric, he is getting close to the supposed source of his strength: his hair. When he is finally bound, it will be none of these. It will be a bronze chain, not animal, not plant, not human. Yet, from the author's perspective, it will be refined in fire, made into a thick thread or in this case a chain, which confines him.