

Lectures on the Book of Judges

Judges 16 — Delilah and Samson's Death

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But again, "And it came to pass afterward that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah." And here we confront not simply the old offence repeated, and in the grossest form of fleshly corruption, but along with it an infatuation as extraordinary as his degradation. This indeed becomes distinctly the moral of the tale. Delilah sells herself to the Philistine lords to entangle the champion of Israel, now beguiled by his lusts: else the various efforts to seize him must have otherwise opened his eyes to her guile and their murderous malice. But the wages of transgressors are hard, and the guilty man falls under the strange woman's spell again and again. Such is the blinding power of sin; for was he ignorant of her vileness or of his own danger? But the crisis came; and we see that at last, pressed by the harlot's toils, he tells out the secret of Jehovah. On his unshorn locks hung his invincible might by divine will. There was but one thing really involved — obedience. Alas! he fell, as did Adam at the beginning, and all since save one — Christ. But how perfectly He stood, though tried as none ever was or could be but Himself! Do we know what a thing obedience is in God's eyes, even though it may be displayed in the simplest manner? It is the perfection of the creature, giving God His place, and man his own; it is the lowliest, and withal the morally highest place for one here below, as for the angels above. In Samson's case, tested in a seemingly little sign but a sign of entire subjection to God, and this in separation from all others, it was obedience; not so in our case, where we have the highest treasure in earthen vessels, but obedience in everything, and this formed and guided by the Spirit according to the written word, now set in the fullest light, because seen in the person, and ways, and work, and glory of Christ. It is no mere external sign for us who know the Lord Jesus. But the secret of the Lord in our case involves that which is most precious to God and man. We are sanctified both by the Father's word and by Christ glorified on high. But we are sanctified by the Spirit unto the obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, and are called to obey, as the wife her husband. Therein are involved thus the very highest and deepest privileges that God could communicate to the souls of men on earth. To Samson, as we see, it was far different. His secret was to keep his hair uncut, with all strength annexed to it. But if it was his hidden power, it acted also as a test; and now the enemy possessed it, disclosed to a harlot, who had wrung it

for gold from his foolish heart. Whatever might have been his low state through unchecked animal nature, whatever his delinquencies before, so long as he kept his secret with God, strength never failed him from God, be the strain what it might. Jehovah at least was — could not but be — true to the secret. But now, as we know, the one whom he had made partner of his sin wheedled it from him that she might sell it to the Philistines. Degraded to the utmost, Samson becomes their sport as well as their slave. But God was about to magnify Himself and His own ways. "And it came to pass when their hearts were merry that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison house; and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars. And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them. Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines were there; and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport. And Samson called unto Jehovah, and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes." Again we see the man, and his character in its weakness is before us, even at that solemn moment. I am far from doubting that God wrought in him whom He had made the champion of His people. Let no man question that Samson was in prison or that he lost his eyes for nothing. I feel pretty assured that he saw clearer morally without them than he had seen in any sense with them. He had far too often made a wretched use of them in times that were past; and even now, in spite of the work of God in his soul, was there nothing weightier, was there nothing deeper, was there nothing to lament over more than the loss of those two eyes? It was Samson feeling for himself, yet not unpitied of the Lord; for there was One above Samson Who heard. And this is the great point for us that we can and ought to count on. Let us not forget that we have got a nature exempt from nothing we deplore in Samson, and the person that does not believe it may live to prove it, especially if a believer, who should know himself better; whilst he who does take it home to his soul is thereby enabled to judge himself by the Spirit before God. But what a God we have to do with, as Samson had! and how He magnified Himself in that hour of supreme chagrin and of his deep agony, when he was made to sport before those uncircumcised haters of Israel, and the witness, as they fondly hoped, of their idol's triumph over Jehovah. Samson felt it easier to die for His name than to live thus in Philistia. But God reserved great things for his death. What a figure of, but contrast with, His death who only pursued to that final point His absolute devotedness to the will of God, not doing it only but suffering it to the uttermost, and

thus righteously by His death securing what no living obedience could have touched! Nevertheless, I have little doubt that, though the dying hour of Samson brought more honour to God than all his life, its manner was in itself a chastening in its character; and in this, too, may one discern a representation of the condition to which Israel had come similar to what was noticed in the life and person of Samson. For what can be more humiliating than that one's death should be more important than one's life? Such was the point to which things had come (an inglorious one it was for those concerned), that the best thing for Israel and Judah, the best thing for God's glory and for Samson himself, was that he should die. "And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life." And his brethren, as we find, came up, took him away, and buried him. "He judged Israel twenty years," is the repetition of the word at this point.