

SAMSON IS TAKEN PRISONER

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Reading: Judges 16:1-22

The Philistines tried to capture Samson many times. Once, they thought they had caught him in a walled city. He went into the city in the early evening. They said, "Surely he cannot escape us here. The gates are now closed and chained until morning." So they waited until it was daylight so they could see him and capture him. But he had slept only until midnight. Then he got up and walked to the gates of the city. He pulled out the gateposts with the great doors and bars, picked them all up, and walked with them for twenty miles. He went up on a hill near Hebron, and he threw them on the ground there.

No ordinary man could do these things, but Samson was no ordinary man. He had been a Nazirite, promised to the Lord from his birth. As a sign that he served the Lord, his hair had not been cut from the time he was born. It was now very long, and it gave Samson power from the Lord as long as he kept his vow.

After a time Samson fell in love with a woman of the Philistines named Delilah. He would go to see her and talk to her. She came to know him very well. Because of this the Philistine nobles came to her and said, "If you will find out what will make Samson weak, so that we may capture him, we will give you a great sum of money." Delilah wanted the money. She began to tease Samson to find out what it was that made him strong. But Samson teased her, too. He told her things that were not true. First he said, "If you tie me with seven bow strings that have not yet been stretched, then I shall be as weak as a child." So she made him fall asleep, and she tied him with seven bow strings. Then she shouted all of a sudden, "Samson! The Philistines have come!" Samson jumped up and shook himself and the bow strings fell from him, and he walked away.

When he came back Delilah said, "You do not love me. You told me a lie. What is it that will take away your strength?" He answered, "Tie me with new ropes, very strong ropes, then I shall be powerless." Again she made him fall asleep and tied him with ropes. When he was thoroughly tied, she said, "Samson! The Philistines have come!" He awoke and stretched his muscles, and shook himself, and ran away. The ropes could not hold him.

Again she teased him and said, "What is it that will take away your strength?" Now Delilah was a weaver. She made fine cloth on a heavy loom in her home. The loom was made of heavy timbers and it had a large round beam on which the cloth was rolled as it was finished. Samson said, "If you weave my hair into this cloth and wrap it around the beam then I shall be very weak like other men." Delilah did this, and again she awakened him and said, "The Philistines

have come.” And Samson rose up and ran away, the weaver’s beam hanging from his hair.

Delilah was very upset. She wanted to get all that money, so she coaxed Samson over and over again to tell her what would make him weak. Finally, Samson forgot his vows and told her the truth. He said, “If my hair is shaved then I will lose my strength, because I have promised the Lord that my hair should never be cut all through my life.”

That night, when Samson was asleep, Delilah called a man to shave his head. After this was done she called to the Philistine nobles, and they came with soldiers and stood outside of the door. Then she called once more, “Samson! The Philistines have come.” He jumped up and tried to shake himself as he had done before and run away. But he was no longer a strong man. He shook himself, but his strength did not return. So the Philistines captured him, and put out his eyes, and took him to prison. There they made him grind corn for them.

Samson lost his strength because he had disobeyed the Lord and allowed his head to be shaved. How easy it is for all of us to forget a promise when we are urged by others not to keep it. When we are teased to do something that we had agreed not to do, we can become blind to our spiritual duty and be captured by our false loves. So Samson was taken to the prison. But there he thought of the foolish and evil things that he had done. He remembered also how the Lord had helped him to rule Israel when he was obedient and good.

Then he prayed that the Lord would be with him again, for he was sorry for his evils. Day by day he prayed for forgiveness, and his hair began to grow again, and his strength began to return. The Lord never forsakes anyone. If we try to overcome our bad habits and foolish or evil acts, and try day by day to do better, then the Lord will give us spiritual strength and courage so that we may overcome our faults.