

HAVE YOU BEEN TO YOUR OWN FUNERAL?

TEXT:

Judges 14:8: And after a time he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion: and, behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion.

Romans 6:6: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

Romans 8:13: For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

God is the master artist at painting word pictures of deep Spiritual truths. He paints pictures so extraordinary that we gaze in wonder, awe, and astonishment.

Men try to imitate the real and make it life-like on canvas. They can paint a home, but cannot paint divine love within that home that holds it together. Man paints fire, but he cannot give it warmth. Only God paints living pictures.

Those of you who are spiritually hungry, I'd like to take you to God's kitchen of glory, where Jesus has especially prepared for you the most flavored dish your appetite can relish. The following summary of a passage of Scripture is bound up within nine little verses. It is the most ridiculous and childish thing a natural man could read from the perspective of man's knowledge. It is as follows:

A young man is on his way to see the girl to whom he is betrothed.

On the way, a lion jumps on him.

He kills the lion.

He goes to take her back home with him to marry her.

He returns and steps aside to see the carcass of the lion.

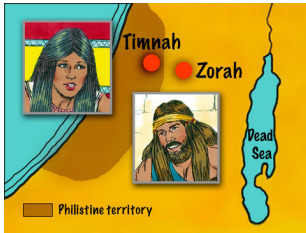
He finds honey inside it.

He eats the honey.

He takes some home to his parents.



Judges 14:1-9:

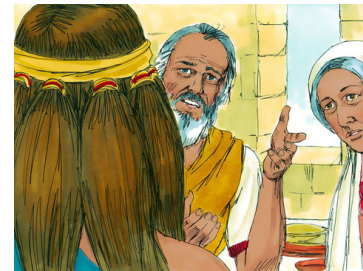


1 And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines.

2 And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife.

3 Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well.

4 But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the LORD, Who he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.



5 Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and, behold, a young lion roared against him.

6 And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done.

7 And he went down, and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well.

8 And after a time he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcase of the lion: and, behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcase of the lion.

9 And he took thereof in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat: but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcase of the lion.

To the spiritually-minded who are taught by the Holy Spirit, this is one of the most striking, vitamin-packed banquet feasts in the Bible. It is one of the most beautifully-described pictures of the life of a saint found anywhere in the Word of God. It is easy to pass hurriedly over this scripture until God quickens it to your heart. It is dripping with sweetness as we view God's hero on a mission of love to the Gentiles, and is opposed by true-hearted national Israel, for **they knew not it was of the Lord (verse 4)**.

Samson wins the admiration of all, for he is a *type* of our Lord Jesus Christ Who conquered the lion — satan — at Calvary in a mighty victory, and comes with hands dripping with heavenly honey to sweeten up all His saints.

Samson goes forth without previous insight of the conflict awaiting him. His heart is beating with love, and he encounters the worst foe of his life. At his wedding feast, Samson told a riddle with the offer of a reward for whoever could solve it, which was customary to do at festive gatherings.

Judges 14:10-14:

10 So his father went down unto the woman: and Samson made there a feast; for so used the young men to do.

11 And it came to pass, when they [the Philistines] saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him.

12 And Samson said unto them, I will now put forth a riddle unto you: if ye can certainly declare it me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty sheets and thirty change of garments:

13 But if ye cannot declare it me, then shall ye give me thirty sheets and thirty change of garments. And they said unto him, Put forth thy riddle, that we may hear it.

14 And he said unto them, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. And they could not in three days expound the riddle.



When the men could not solve the riddle, they approached Samson's wife and threatened to burn her and her father's house if she did not coax her husband into giving her the answer to the riddle.

Judges 14:15-20:



15 And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they said unto Samson's wife, Entice thy husband, that he may declare unto us the riddle, lest we burn thee and thy father's house with fire: have ye called us to take that we have? is it not so?

16 And Samson's wife wept before him, and said, Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not: thou hast put forth a riddle unto the children of my people, and hast not told it me.

And he said unto her, Behold, I have not told it my father nor my

mother, and shall I tell it thee?

17 And she wept before him the seven days, while their feast lasted: and it came to pass on the seventh day, that he told her, because she lay sore upon him: and she told the riddle to the children of her people.



18 And the men of the city said unto him on the seventh day before the sun went down, What is sweeter than honey? and what is stronger than a lion? And he said unto them, If ye had not plowed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle.

19 And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon, and slew thirty men of them, and took their spoil, and gave change of garments unto them which expounded the riddle. And his anger was kindled, and he went up to his father's house.

20 But Samson's wife was given to his companion, whom he had used as his friend.

Samson tried unsuccessfully to get his wife back, but to no avail. To get even with the Philistines, he caught 300 foxes, tied their tails together, fastened a torch to every pair of tails, and loosed them into the fields of the Philistines. The standing grains, vineyards, and olive groves of the Philistines were destroyed. In retaliation, the Philistines burned his wife and her father to death.

Judges 15:3-6:

3 And Samson said concerning them, Now shall I be more blameless than the Philistines, though I do them a displeasure.

4 And Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took firebrands, and turned tail to tail, and put a firebrand in the midst between two tails.



5 And when he had set the brands on fire, he let them go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and burnt up both the shocks, and also the standing corn, with the vineyards and olives.

6 Then the Philistines said, Who hath done this? And they answered, Samson, the son in law of the Timnite, because he had taken

his wife, and given her to his companion. And the Philistines came up, and burnt her and her father with fire.



We like to shout the victory, but do not like the battle. We even shun and run away from battles. We feel it is foolhardy to hunt for battles, but when led by the Spirit, it is foolhardy to avoid them. All we have to do is to trust God to take us through. He is our source of strength and will not fail or forsake us.

We enjoy telling a glowing testimony about the blessing God gave. We like to hear the victory shouts of the saints. But this old flesh draws back from fighting a lion. We do not like the means God uses to bring about the shout. We must wrestle foes that are wretched and fierce. Strangely enough, they are mostly in the battlefield of our own mind and soul.

Two armies in array are the flesh and the Spirit. Test it by the Word of God:

Romans 8:4-8:

4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

The spirit and the flesh are not subject one to another and neither indeed can be. Which side will win depends on which way you are leaning. To which one do you say, "Sic 'em"?

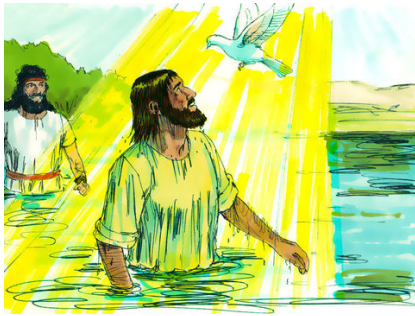
An Indian in northern Minnesota who was a new convert, came to the missionary and told the story of his new experiences as a Christian. *"There are two dogs, one black and one white, and they are fighting all the time. They were never there before I became a Christian. I do not know what it is all about."* The missionary asked him about the dogs: *"Which one wins?"* *"The one to which I say 'sic em'"*, was his reply.

The man who reckons he can glide to Heaven without a struggle is making a great mistake. No Cross — no crown. No sweat — no sweet. No conflict — no conquest.

If you will live godly in Christ Jesus and purpose to yield to the Spirit of God and to follow His directions, He will drive you into the wilderness with Jesus to be tempted of the devil.

Mark 1:10-13:

10 And straightway coming up out of the water, He saw the Heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him:



11 And there came a Voice from heaven, saying, Thou art My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.

12 And immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness.

13 And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the Angels ministered unto Him.

God will have a tested, tried, victorious, overcoming people. The promises and richest rewards are to the overcomer.

There is something to overcome. There must come death to the lion. He comes and roars unexpectedly upon us. We have no thought of fighting, but rather a heart warm with love as we go out to woo and win the lost to Christ. However, we soon come into enemy territory, and the devil will put up a fight to defend his own and destroy us if he can. But, Bless God, he cannot, for:



1 John 4:4b: greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.

Luke 10:19: Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

Judges 14:6b: he had nothing in his hand.

There is no weapon that is successful against the devil in the natural realm. We fight an unseen foe. We often face him unprepared in this conflict, because we are unsuspecting of his onslaughts.

1 Corinthians 10:4: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

The mother of Moses faced a real enemy of her child. She faced, controlled, and overcame that enemy on her knees and by faith in her Lord.

Balaam and Balak were in a spiritual warfare, seeking to call down curses and destruction upon the unsuspecting camp of Israel, but God would not let Balaam call curses down on those He has blessed.¹ Balaam had to say what God puts into his mouth, even against his own will. Israel kept the blood applied and worshipped the Lord Who loves with an Everlasting Love.

I remember my first great encounter with the lion after I met Jesus and was washed in His Blood. God was desirous and seeking by love to draw me closer to Him when I met the roaring lion — old man John Hendricks² (that is John T. Hendricks, please). I nearly quit God over having been used by others to “mop floors”. The next great conflict was going to pray for those who had wronged, hurt, cursed, and done all to mop the floor with me. When "old John T." died — my carnal nature — there came out of the carcass a hive of a living supply of honey. Praise the Lord!



The Spirit of The Lord moved in the camps of Dan on Samson, and soon led him out.

Judges 13:25 : And the Spirit of the LORD began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

It is not always the path of our choosing, and often is the opposite of the intentions of what a Christian would like to do, for we are often guilty of feathering our own nests. He must work the feathers out and let us get hurt on the thorns in His great eagle nest before we will be glad to get on and out for Him. It is a dangerous condition to be in — to live in a smoothly-paved road, for you are likely to slip.

Samson was not looking for lions. He had a more tender business at heart; namely, finding himself a beautiful bride. He had left his father and mother. He was alone and out of the reach of earthly help.

When we lean too much on someone else, we cannot ever become strong warriors for the Lord.

Samson's trial was not only to prove the power of God, but to prove the absolute powerlessness of every earthly crutch. Samson was not just an ordinary man, for he had been separated unto God, and this is not ordinary.

¹ See sermon on Numbers 22 — *Church Traitors*

² The writer of this sermon.

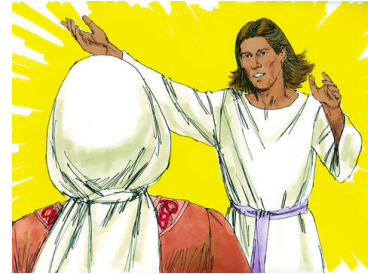
Judges 13:2-5:

2 And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren, and bare not.

3 And the Angel of the LORD appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son.

4 Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing:

5 For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.



Yet Samson was ordinary in that he was a man, but when he was separated to the Lord, he became a riddle and a bewilderment to this world, and to most church members, too.

Too many of us bear the marks of tooth and claw — defeat.

We cannot fight the devil or flesh with moral courage, reasoning, or willpower.

Revelation 12:11: And they overcame him by the Blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

Today, not unlike Samson, we have much in the hand and the head, but little or nothing in the heart. We have popularity, learning, and prepared lessons, but we also have an unprepared heart. It took Moses 40 years to get out of his head what Egyptian training had put into it. Then, God was able to put into his heart the anointing Spirit, and into his hands a worthless rod.



A blacksmith, about eight years after he had given his heart to the Lord Jesus, was asked by an unbeliever: *“Why is it you have so much trouble? I have been watching you since you joined those holy rollers and began to live straight. You seem to have many more trials and accidents than you ever had before. I thought that when a man gave himself to God, his troubles were over. Isn’t that what the preacher tells you?”*

With a thoughtful, glowing face, the blacksmith replied: *“Do you see this piece of iron. It is for the springs of a carriage. I have been tempering it for some time. To do this, I heat it red-hot, then plunge it into a tub of ice-cold water. I do this many times. If I find it taking temper, I heat and hammer it unmercifully. In getting the*

right piece of iron, I have found several that were too brittle, so I threw them into the scrap pile. Those scraps are worth about a penny a pound.”

He paused a minute and then said, “You see, a carriage spring is very valuable. So, God saves us for something more than to have a good time. We have plenty of good times, but it is all because we are not drawing back as God takes us through the tempering process many times. At the same time, God is making us useful for His service. He is giving us something within to bless others. He blesses us as we lean harder upon Him. The truth is, He touches us so we can touch others; He sets us on fire to re-fire others; He fills us to fill others; He blesses us so we can bless others; and He often humbles us to humble others.”

Saints are not always killing lions. They are sometimes eating honey and sharing it with others. Samson discovered a spring of living sweetness, but it only came through death to the lion — the lion of self. Out of death comes glorious heavenly life.



John 12:25: He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto Life Eternal.

Colossians 3:3: For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

Romans 6:11: Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 6:2: God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

Galatians 2:20: I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me.

But before this can happen, there is spiritual warfare with and from the flesh, and God demands that the flesh must die. Flesh wants to live and crowd Jesus out of your life in order to make you lifeless, useless, and helpless for God.

Jesus wants to kill everything in us that the devil ever put in there. God will not bring in His blessed sweetness and fill us with His Spirit's power if we persist in living after the flesh.

Romans 8:13: For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

But if we — through the Spirit — (just like Samson — the Spirit came mightily upon him) mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live.

The big invincible lion you cannot conquer is YOU. That person you see in the mirror when you comb your hair — big — boastful — full of pride — it is in all of us. There is no excusing ourselves.

See how pride manifests itself, and you will know your own blinded-heart's condition. Temper, anger, hate — are all but old self, raising up because it could not have its own way. Something or someone interfered with self GOING where it wanted to go, with DOING what it wanted to do. Jealousy and envy is old self raising up, for someone is crowding old self out of the picture, and beating its time. Self must rule or ruin, so it begins to ROAR. Love of ease and idleness is old self, petting itself since no one else will. That old lion of pride praises itself and brags on its ability. It will glory in fasts, prayers, giving, working —supposedly for Christ — but really for popularity in the church or with the pastor.



Pride works to get a greater attendance at Church Services, to make a big impression at the Annual Conference, to get a better salary . . . preacher, watch out! Old self is at work.

In place of death to self comes a never-ending supply of sweetness — a hive of honey, and bees continually bringing from God's storehouse the sweetness. The bees are working for the man who slays the lion — the lion of self. God will cause all Heaven to move toward you when you die to self.

Samson took the delicacy of sweetness — the honey — which was not man-made. His first thought was his parents — “Pa and Ma”. He wanted to share the sweetness with those closest to him, and he wasn't concerned about etiquette which is somehow insisted upon in the flesh — he didn't serve it on a silver platter. We often see this focus on “etiquette” in the pulpit today, rather than on the Spirit. The main concern seems to be on an educated means of preaching, i.e., speaking in a soft voice, and having a quiet, prepared service. It's like a cemetery — quiet and dead — because it is prepared by the flesh, and it crowds out the Spirit from working.

Some preachers try to make the Gospel of Christ and the fullness of the Spirit so “unoffensive” and tasty to the masses that they have robbed it of its own sweetness and effectiveness. Success is only in the Gospel, proclaimed just like it is.



Make the Gospel simple. Its own sweetness will bless where it drops through the life that tells nothing about the awful conflict with the lion.

“And Samson told them not that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion.” (Judges 14:9b)

Samson did more than merely tell them about the honey. He brought some, and the honey did its own telling. He kept secret what we would have wanted everybody to know: how he killed that lion! *I fasted, I prayed through. I gave to the poor. I spent most of my time working for the church. I . . . I . . . I.* And so the sweetness has been lost because the lion is not dead, and empty hearts go hungry.

Samson gave humbly, for he now had the power to give, for he alone knew the Source of supply of the sweetness.

Do you know where your hive is? It's where that old carcass of self lies dead.

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