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SAMSON'S RIDDLE

Judges 14

There is a good human interest story centered in this chapter and it turns really to a marvelous truth when we reach the text I have chosen -

V. 14

Verse (14) Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. A riddle that is not easily solved.

I've read the story of Samson many times. I have heard him mentioned in sermons. I visited the place where Samson met the Philistines.

V-1

Remember the story, Samson fell in love with a Philistine woman. He asked his mother and father to get her for him. For she pleaseth me well. Samson had the blessing - one of the best of all God's blessings, being born in a religious home. The angel of the Lord visited that home, and the mother knew just how to raise that boy - being warned against strong drink. And to bring him up so that he might save Israel from the Philistines.

The name Samson -- means sun or sun hero. His strength lay in the will of God and in his hair. As the sun's strength is in its rays, so here is a man's strength. He was a jolly person. He liked to joke. He was full of wit. And he liked to put riddles to people.

V. (1-2) - He saw a woman at Timmath. He liked her and he wanted to secure her for a wife. His father and mother objected - V. (3) His parents probably knew the truth - but Samson said, get her for me. Samson did not know whether or not she could cook, keep house, whether she was lazy, whether she was musical. He didn't know whether she was a king woman. He didn't know whether she would make

a good wife or not. But he says, get her for me.

They begged him not to marry the woman but to marry one of his own people.
But the whole thing smacks of our modern age. The next sentence tells us that his father and his mother knew not that it was of the Lord. And he sought occasion against the Philistines - V. 4.

V. 5-6

On his way to Timnath where he went to see this woman who pleased him - he came to a grape vineyard and we read, a young lion met him. Samson had no weapon - so he had to fight with his bear hands. Again we remember the sentence so well, the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him. I think the writer wanted us to know that this was part of God's plan. It was not just an accident in the life of Samson. The young lion wanted to kill Samson, but Samson with his strength - he did not know that his mighty hands could kill this lion with his bear hands. V. 5-6. The strong vicious beast - the death of this beast, I imagine Samson looked at his hands and the mighty muscles of his arms - there was no sword, no staff, no knife, no arrow. And Samson said nothing about this. He was not like other men. He didn't go around bragging about it on the street. He did not even tell his family about it. He didn't get a trumpet and blow it.

Come on Kitty, Kitty, Kitty, - Whom - hit Dad & side - had - from Strick Zupper -

V. 8

Several weeks passed, and Samson went by that spot again. In the meantime the beasts of prey had picked clean the bones of the lion, the flesh was gone, and left in the sun to bleach. The carcass had dried out. And Samson turned aside to look at the lion he had killed. And he was delighted - because he found that the bees had made a hive in it, in the rib cage of the lion. And he took some of the honey and ate it as he walked along the way.

Now they tell us that the sun's heat in that desert like country would dry up the moisture even in a man's body or a camel's. And they would remain like mummies - unaltered without offense or smell in the extreme heat. So the body of this carcass

had dried out. And there was the bees that made it a habitation.

V.10-11

The custom of the time, preceding the wedding. Samson had a party for the men. This was a great occasion. He made a bargain with 30 young women who were guests. He told them he had a riddle for them. If they could solve it, he would give to each one of them a change of raiment. If they could not find the answer, they were to give him 30 changes of raiment and 30 sheets.

V.12

V.14

The riddle -- "out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." The party was to last seven days and the riddle was to have been solved in that length of time.

V.15,

V.17

V.18

They spent several days trying to find the answer but failed. On the seventh day they threatened his bride to be. And they said to her, we will burn up your home unless we find the answer. They scared her to death. She finally persuaded Samson to tell her. And when Samson came back with his riddle, "what is sweeter than honey, and what is stronger than a lion." Samson was furious.

V.19

Again the sentence occurs and the "Spirit of the Lord came upon him." He went down to Askelon. V. 19-20 And slew thirty men and took their spoil and gave change of garment unto them which expounded the riddle. His anger was kindled, and he went up to the father's house. But Samson's wife had been given to his companion, whom he had used as his friend.

15:4

But this revenge was not sufficient and a little later at the wheat harvest he caught 300 foxes. And he turned them tail to tail, and put a fire brand in the midst between each pair of tails. And when he had set the brands on fire, he let them go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and burnt up the shocks and the standing corn, with the vineyards and the olives. 15:4-5. Of course this brought about a war and Samson slew a thousand men and became judge over Israel.

V.9 - Lands Valley honey - dripping - shared with ~~Shas~~ -

Now Samson's riddle suggests two or three things, to us. Out of the things that threaten our lives, and happiness comes often some sweet blessings. Out of this vicious lion there had come sweetness.

First, think of the time you have failed. We have things that come to us like a roaring lion. And they seem to destroy us on one hand. And out of that experience there may come something that is sweet.

Henry Ward Beecher it is defeat that turns bone to flint, and gristle to muscle, and makes man invincible and form those heroic natures that are now achieving in the world. Do not then be afraid of defeat. You are never so near to victory as when defeated in a good cause.

Failure in a sense, says Keates the highway to success inasmuch as every discovery of what is false, leads us to seek earnestly after what is true. And every fresh experience points out some form of error which we shall afterwards carefully avoid.

Those two men - Ridley, and Latimer, be of good comfort Master Ridley, and play the man said Latimer. As he stood ready to be burned with his friend at the stake. "We shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England, as thy trust shall never be put out." And every word had more influence than the preaching of a hundred sermons against the intolerance of the age. So in a sense, did the people become, that besides Cramer burned two years later - very few others were sacrificed. And of these it is said, they were secretly tied and burned at night surrounded by soldiers for fear of riot by the people who were enraged at the injustices.

Goldsmith was educated to become a physician. He was a failure - 3 of his patients died. He sat for days in his office and no one wanted his services.

He became despondent. He began to write stories out of his failures as a physician. "The vicar of Wakefield, the deserted village", and of course his name is a well-known name.

A. T. Stewart studied the ministry. But because of his failure as a pulpit speaker, he decided to teach. Here again he failed. Then he drifted by accident into a merchants trade. He had lent money to a friend to open a store. The friend with failure certain insisted that Stewart take over the shop as the only means of securing the money. He became a merchant prince with branch stores in France, Ireland, and England. He saved literally thousands of lives by sending ship loads of food to stricken people in Ireland in 1846.

In the United States, Stewart was appointed Secretary of the Treasury, of the United States, by President Grant. Congress however, never ratified his appointment. Because he was engaged in importing goods from other countries and law prohibited such an appointment. He was of such stature that the President demanded Congress to repeal the law. But Congress refused. Yet out of the failure in preaching and teaching, came one of the strongest business men and one of the sweetest spirits in the business world -- out of the eater came forth sweets.

Peter Marshall wanted to be a sailor but the U. S. Navy refused to accept anyone under 17 years of age. The British Navy would accept him at 16. Marshall was 15. But very tall for his age - he falsified his age.

And he was accepted into the British Navy. They soon discovered the truth. He was dismissed and went back home broken hearted. His life was ruined. This was an hour of despondency. (God layed his hand) on Peter Marshall and led him to the ministry and became famous as Chaplain of the U. S. Senate. Across his life could be written the same riddle here. Out of the eater came forth sweets. And out of his failures came forth sweetness.

Second, out of disaster and hardship often great doors of blessings are opened.

Enterprise, Alabama, for a long time has been the peanut capitol of the world. Now it became the peanut capitol after the boll weevil had eaten up all the cotton in the country. And poverty was everywhere. People were starving, suffering, because of the weevil. But there came a time in Enterprise when they erected a monument to the boll weevil, because it brought a variety of crops.

One of the finest businessmen in Miami said the boll weevil ate up his college education, but he says, I am not complaining because I got an education the hard way. And I found my talents - they lay in the business world. And that man amounts to well over several million in fortune. He said he was thankful and he helped to build the monument at Enterprise.

Another businessman said that he was 21 and his father gave him a small farm. He didn't have enough money to buy cottonseed to plant it so he borrowed the money from his Daddy, and planted the seed, and that fall he picked all the cotton that he could and all that he had and all he had was \$50. He left the farm, went to the city, got into a partnership business and he became very wealthy and a great leader in a Baptist Church. So, out of the eater has come forth some sweet thing.

In the third place, think about our suffering. Often out of this vicious experience of suffering, this lion, there comes some sweets. I say that this is not always the case but sometimes our pain is not wasted. Dr. Joseph Sizoo said, in a message the revolt against pain - it is clear moment that we know that suffering has a purpose. And the purpose is three fold. First, some suffering is punitive - as long as right is right and wrong is wrong, men will suffer. There were three crosses on the hill. Two men were nailed up because of transgressions. One of the thieves turned and said, 'we justly suffer.' We reap what we have sown. We have this suffering. To the

other there came salvation - for Jesus said to him, today thou shalt be with me in Paradise. Out of the eater came forth sweets.

Paul said that whom the Lord loveth he chaseth and often he says that God's still small voice comes to us in the hour of suffering.

In the 14th century (St. Augustine) fell into mental anguish. But through the pain he became a great saint.

(St. Francis) tossed on a bed of illness in the 12th Century cried out against the suffering but through it he turned to God. And with 13 young men he helped to bring Italy to the feet of Jesus.

The 19th Century (Loyola) fell wounded in battle and was tortured with pain. In that hour, he drew from under his pillow a copy of the life of Christ. He was redeemed and he walked out with five brave souls to bring Asia and Europe to the foot of the cross.

The man who asked to be relieved from suffering takes the winter coat out of season. The November winds out of the sky. And rain storms out of the summer. Take away pain and you take the Bedford dungeon from the life of Bunyan, the scars from the face of Lincoln, the loneliness from the soul of Paul, and the cross from the life of Jesus of Nazareth. There can be no great character without suffering. Out of the eater came forth sweets.

2 Some suffering comes to us because of (human relationships). We make sacrifices and suffer for others. Crosses are layed upon our shoulders (because of our love) for others. It may be true that if there were no suffering, there would be no love. We often suffer hardships for those we love. Jesus bore a cross that was layed upon him because he loved others. And without the shedding of blood there is no remission

of sin. In Jesus Christ you have the answer to the riddle of pain. After all these generations we can go to that hill outside of Jerusalem and we can kneel there before it - out of the eater.

The Pharisees, the sinners of the world, and think about the agony of Jesus in the Garden. Out of these came God's great blessings of the world. Redemption and salvation.

The poet said --

I came to the valley of sorrow
And dreary it looked to my view
But Jesus was walking beside me
And sweetly we journeyed through.

And now I look back to that valley
As the fairest that ever I trod
For I learned there the love of my Father
I leaned on the arms of my God.

And if some day the Father should ask me
Which was the best of the paths that I trod
How quickly my heart shall make answer
The valley of sorrow, oh God.

Just a Minute

This story was related by Mrs. Justice C. Anderson, Southern Baptist foreign missionary, in a recent issue of The Commission. A new mission project—Thursday evening Bible studies in a new location—had been begun in Buenos Aires, Argentina. One day one of the missionary housewives was out visiting prospects for the new work. She described what happened in part as follows:

"The last name on the list led me to climb two dark flights of stairs. When I reached the apartment, I clapped at the door. After a short wait, a middle-aged woman opened the door a crack. I told her who I was and that I had come to talk about the new church at the plaza. She replied, 'Yes, I know about that. But I'm sorry, I can't see you. My husband just died.'"

Realizing that the woman was alone, the missionary offered to stay with her. She continued:

"I'll have to confess I was a bit afraid, since the custom here is that the body is prepared at home for burial by the wife before the undertaker arrives. However, the woman soon explained that she was awaiting arrival of her son, who was finishing the legal work in order to bring the body from the hospital. We had about (15 minutes together) before her son returned. I offered to read the Bible to her, and we prayed. It seemed to help her a great deal. (She said she believed in Christ and had faith). 'Before I left, she mentioned how odd it was that I had come just at the time she needed me.'"