

Chat with Children - telling the story

- Samson was different from all the other boys...
 - his hair was never cut! (image)
 - long!
 - and the other thing that made Samson different - he was strong!
- It was God who made Samson strong
 - God had been specially involved in Samson's birth
 - and his parents had promised to devote the boy to God
 - as a sign of which they never cut his hair
 - and it was because he was God's person that Samson was strong!
- One day when Samson was out he heard a great roar
 - it was a lion! (image)
 - a fierce, wild lion - not trained like the ones in the circus
 - when Samson found the lion, he killed it with his own two hands!
 - God had made him so strong!
- At the time Samson lived, God's people were in trouble
 - the Philistines were making God's people very unhappy
 - they were good fighters, and came and took things from God's people
 - so God's people said to God, "HELP!"
 - now God's people hadn't been very good at following God
 - they'd been ignoring him...
 - so God said to them: "What about your promise to love me and live as I want? You've broken that promise. Yet now you are in trouble, you want me to come and help?"
 - but God also said, "Even though you don't deserve it, because I love you, I will come and help!"
- And this is where Samson came in!
 - he was all grown up now, and very strong (image)
 - and his hair had still never been cut - it was very long
 - God used him to make trouble for the Philistines - he wasn't a bit afraid of them!
- Samson was so strong that when they tied him up, he broke the ropes
 - when they shut him in, he tore down the doors and carried them off! (image)
 - Samson made BIG trouble for the Philistines
- "What makes you so strong?" asked beautiful Delilah one day
 - she was a Philistine, but Samson really liked her...
 - she said she wouldn't tell anyone
 - at first Samson didn't tell her....
 - but she kept asking and asking and nagging...
 - until Samson eventually said, "I won't be strong if my hair is cut"
 - (and the promise to God was broken)
- But Delilah told the Philistines, and they came and cut off Samson's hair and took him a prisoner (image)
 - he was not strong any more... and he'd forgotten about being God's man
- But Samson told God how sorry he was
 - and God made Samson strong again as his hair grew long again while he was in prison
 - one last time Samson made trouble for the Philistines!
 - BIG, BIG trouble! (image)
 - he pulled a huge temple down on top of himself and on top of all the people inside
 - and the Philistines didn't give God's people so much trouble again

Introduction

- Last of the major judges
 - we've spiralled down a long way!
 - Samson seems a most unlikely hero!
 - there is very little turning to God here in these chapters!
 - the people seem to have accepted their oppressors (15:11) - they've forgotten their true identity as God's people
 - not a hopeful scenario for learning about God's activity - and yet here, in these verses, **he most definitely reveals himself!**

Structure

- Want to talk about the structure to get us going!
 - events surrounding birth in chapter 13:1-24;
 - then whole of his childhood skipped over in one verse (13:25)
 - adult life through rest of 14-16
 - the telling of his adult life is divided into, probably, two sections: 14/15 and 16
 - in each Samson goes somewhere; in each he meets an attractive woman; in each there is something of a riddle (in 16 riddle is of his strength); in each he is betrayed by a woman for money and handed over to his enemies; in each, at the critical moment, the Spirit comes upon him and he has a great victory
 - and, at the end of each section, **Samson calls on God (Israel, tellingly, does not call on God!)**
- Structure of the narrative, some pointers to features of the text
 - point is it is carefully constructed that we might learn from it!
 - this is a theologian reflecting carefully on what has happened, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, giving us important lessons!
 - lets pay careful attention to what is happening here - it is most avowedly **not** an accidental collection of gory, morally repugnant tales!

Samson Points up the Problem of Sin

- All the character flaws, the fighting against what he was called to be
 - him not living up to his calling as a Nazirite - indeed, does the whole debate with Delilah reveal him wanting to get free from the constraints of such a calling, to be like other men?
 - he's morally acting just like everyone around him - **15:11b**
 - compared to Othniel, he looks pretty poor material for rescuing Israel!!
- **Samson's sin points to Israel's sin... and to ours**

Samson Points out God's Perseverance

- God didn't give up on Samson; God was able to redeem Samson's most terrible flaws and still bring something of worth out of a situation!
 - we might look at our life and think, what could God make of this?
 - God has a perseverance and a power that is beyond what we can take in!
- **God's perseverance with Samson points to his perseverance with Israel... and with us!**

Samson Points to God's Saving Provision

- Throughout this whole sorry episode God is providing a Saviour for his people, unlooked for, unasked for
 - today's generation has no thought for God, no felt need for a Saviour
 - yet God has provided!
- See parallels with Christ...
 - whole birth narratives parallel

- critically, "The man of God, alone, forsaken, mocked by the crowd, stretches out his arms, defeats the enemy and delivers his people through his own death!"
- God's redeeming of Samson points to his redeeming work in Israel, rescuing her from the trough that is the end of Judges:
 - not just into the glory of the monarchy
 - but most critically to the saving provision he makes in Christ for all people of all times - for us and our generation!

Conclusion

- Samson Points up the Problem of Sin
- Samson Points out God's Perseverance
- Samson Points to God's Saving Provision