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Samson: God's All-American

730-B

Series: God's Living Legends (Part 1)

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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As we journey through the land of the legends, we continue to be amazed at the way God reveals His heart and His plan through a living motion picture projected on the screen of history, using His chosen people as a backdrop. They are the landscape upon which the drama is enacted. And the repetitive responses that flicker on the screen over and over serve to us as not so gentle reminders that life in this twentieth century is really not so different. We have computers, cell phones, CD Roms, and interactive television, but two basic facts emerge:

1- While slingshots have given way to rockets and while cars and computers dot the landscape, still the character of man has not changed. Apart from God, we are as sinful and wretched as man has ever been. Yet, still, in Christ, we are God's potential success stories for our age. You see, we are the Israelites of our generation, possessing the wealth of heaven, yet often living in spiritual poverty because we forget whose children we are. Neither the character of man nor the potential of man has changed.

2- The second truth is this: the character of God hasn't changed either. It cannot change. If it were to change, He would cease to be God. Therefore, as we go through these Living Legends, and we see the power of God revealed, the mercy of God revealed, and the omniscience of God revealed, and as we recently studied, the love of God revealed, we realize that we can become, (in fact we are becoming), Living Legends in our own time. This is because Jesus Christ, alive in us, wants to make of us men and women like Abel and Moses and Noah and Abraham and Sarah and Rebekah and Isaac and Jacob and Joseph and Gideon. He has not changed; therefore, in Him we, too, are still destined for greatness.

It is in the light of that backdrop that our lesson unfolds. Our most recent trip has been a journey through the judges. This lesson will begin by saying a few good mornings to a few relative newcomers and unknowns and then we'll pull up in front of Samson's house. We will spend a week or two observing his life and his God. This lesson is entitled, "Samson: God's All American".

I- JEPHTHAH: GOD HAS NO ILLEGITIMATE CHILDREN

Our story left off in Judges 10:16. The children of Israel had turned back to Jehovah and put away the strange gods they had worshipped. They began to serve the Lord again. There we read that “God’s soul was grieved over the misery of Israel”, which, you may remember, led us into a two-lesson journey into the recesses of the love of God. As we return back to that point in chapter 10, we will remind you that in verses 17 and 18 we are told that the Ammonites were poised around Gilead ready to ambush the now penitent Israelis. The Hebrews in turn called for a summit conference at Mizpah, where it suddenly dawned on them that they were both leaderless and in big trouble. Against this undercurrent of events, chapter 11 begins to unveil for us the Living Legend of Jephthah where we read some astonishing facts about our man.

Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valour,
and he was the son of an harlot: and Gilead begat Jephthah.
(Judges 11:1)

Verse two tells us that his father had a bunch of sons by his real wife. These sons threw Jephthah out on his ear when they grew up. They left him with this sensitive statement,

And Gilead’s wife bare him sons; and his wife’s sons grew
up, and they thrust out Jephthah, and said unto him, Thou
shalt not inherit in our father’s house; for thou art the son
of a strange woman.
(Judges 11:2)

So Jephthah’s legacy was that he was one tough customer. But because of his questionable birth, he was not welcomed in his father’s house. Once more, it was a bad beginning. Born of a harlot, rejected by his own family, and the next verse adds,

Then Jephthah fled from his brethren, and dwelt in the land
of Tob: and there were gathered vain men to Jephthah, and
went out with him.
(Judges 11:3)

So his rejection led him down the road to wrong friendships, as it often does. Everyone wants to find someone who accepts them as they are. If they don’t find it in their family, they usually look in the wrong places. So, as with Joseph, Jephthah would have been written off as one of society’s bad beginnings. With peer rejection and wrong influences, he was destined for the scrap heap of society. Ah, but it is of such beginnings as these that spiritual giants are made, for our God has no illegitimate children. Every

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circumstance, from birth forward, fits into God's grand design for His own. And often those who have no acceptable roots on this earth are first to find their roots in heaven. Often those who seem rejected by their earthly families seem to find their acceptance in the family of God. Often those who thus rebel and find their friendships with the world, find no solutions in the world and turn in desperation to a God who cares. These were God's kind of circumstances and this was God's kind of man. Jephthah was a man of valor. He probably had to be to survive. So we read,

And it came to pass in the process of time, that the children of Ammon made war against Israel. (Judges 11:4)

Remember that phrase, in the process of time. It means "when God was good and ready". When the Ammonites made war against Israel, we come full circle back to chapter 10:18. Yes, they were leaderless. Guess who they went to get for a leader.

And it was so, that when the children of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob:

And they said unto Jephthah, Come, and be our captain, that we may fight with the children of Ammon.

And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, Did not ye hate me, and expel me out of my father's house? and why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress?

And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, Therefore we turn again to thee now, that thou mayest go with us, and fight against the children of Ammon, and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead. (Judges 11:5-8)

When society needs a man, his poor beginnings become of no concern. They asked Jephthah to lead them into battle. He would become their new commander-in-chief. So Jephthah consented, and his God soundly defeated the Ammonites. He then became a Living Legend. If you are concerned about your questionable beginnings, don't be. Don't get caught up with wrestling with your roots. You have been adopted into the family of God. You are an heir of the King, a joint heir with Christ. He has clothed you from before the foundation of the world, in robes of royalty. Often, the less you have to boast of on this earth, the more you are a candidate for the grace of God. It was so with Jephthah. It is so with you. God has no illegitimate children.

II- THE EPHRAIMITES: GOD NEEDS NO ILL-TEMPERED CHILDREN

God needs no ill-tempered children either. Chapter 12 now begins once again with the envious Ephraimites on stage. You remember them, don't you, from chapter 8? These were the guys who challenged Gideon because they were jealous of his success. They never seem to be available when you need them. They only seem to be around to mess up your victory celebration. You have heard of these kinds of guys. They can't stand the sweet smell of success unless the aroma comes from them. So chapter 12 begins,

And the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and went northward, and said unto Jephthah, Wherefore passedst thou over to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go with thee? we will burn thine house upon thee with fire.
(Judges 12:1)

These were a neat bunch of guys, don't you think? They had cornered Jephthah and they were going to huff and puff and burn his house down. They were going to do this because once again they didn't get to share in the action and share in the glory. You have met these guys in your business. They never quite have their heart in their job until somebody makes the big sale and then they claim they made the initial contact and want credit for the deal. You know who they are. You know these guys at church, too. They never quite make the business meetings, but are always complaining about what went on. They always surface when something good happens and then act as though it happened to be their idea. You have met them at PTA meetings, too. In fact, maybe you have even met them in your own home. Maybe in your own mirror. Envious Ephraimites, sowers of seeds of discontentment.

This story is one of the more humorous ones in scripture. Gideon just flattered these guys until they left him alone. Not Jephthah. He was not that charitable. He says, "If you want a fight, you got a fight." He seizes the passages of the Jordan and he intercepts everyone who tries to pass over. As the Ephraimites tried to escape, he quietly put an end to their existence through a process called "Ephraimatic Extermination". Now that is not so funny, but the humorous part is found in verse 6. It seems that the Ephraimites had a speech deficiency or a dialect problem. They could not pronounce the "sh" sound. It always came out "s". It sounded like this: They put on their "soes" when they went to the "sow", but they took off their "soes" when they took a "sower". If they "sot" somebody the "seriff" had to "suve" them into jail before

someone else “sot” them first.

You get the picture. Anyway, verse 6 says that everyone trying to escape was stopped at the border and asked if he was an Ephraimite or not. If he said, “Nay,” he was asked to say the password. The password just happened to be Shibboleth. This means a stream in the flood. If he said, “Shibboleth”, they let him go. If he said, “Sibboleth”, he got “sot”. In this way, 42,000 arrogant Ephraimites bit the dust. What John Wayne could have done with that. How he missed it, I’ll never know. Thus, the power of a whole tribe of God’s people came to nothing because they could not enjoy the success of their brothers in the faith. Such so often is the fate today of those who limit God’s successes to their own.

Then Jephthah died and on came Ibzan. You remember Ibzan, he was the guy who designed the alligator for us. No, that was Izod. Anyway, you remember Ibzan. After Ibzan came Elon. He was a well-known character. After Elon came Abdon. These were real heroes who came and went and nothing is said of their lives or their reigns as judges. But it all turns around again in chapter 13, verse 1, where we take up reading. I think most of you have memorized the phrase by now, so say it with me,

And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years. (Judges 13:1)

III- SAMSON: GOD’S STRENGTH IS FOR ALL HIS CHILDREN

This time they were delivered for 40 years, the longest time of servitude during this season of the judges. But now once again there unfolds a beautiful story of God’s preparation to deliver His people. Let’s continue with verse 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.

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.

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

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.

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Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible: but I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name:

(Judges 13:1)

The stage is now set for God's next Living Legend to appear on screen. God's people had been in bondage for 40 years. Once again, God uses a barren woman as a vessel through which to bring a miracle into the world. If only every parent understood from the beginning these three truths.

1- Only God can give you a child. The keys to the womb belong to Him.

2- Only God can own that child. The title to that life is His.

3- Only God can transform a child. The power to do so is His.

Manoah and his wife were not to take this child lightly, because like Isaac and Jacob and Joseph, like Samuel and John the Baptist and like Jesus Himself, this child was a miracle. So are yours. So are mine, because only God can give them to us and only God can own their lives. He alone can make them become what He wants them to be. Once again, it is "the angel of the Lord" who makes this dramatic appearance and the startling announcement. But as is often the case in Scripture where children are concerned, the angel appears first to the woman. The woman is God's chosen vessel to carry and to deliver a child into the world. She is the one with a special sensitivity to the child's needs. I believe God also often endows the woman in a marriage with a special awareness of the child's personality. She, in turn, has the responsibility to communicate to the husband, and he, in turn, has a responsibility to listen to her. They are to train them up in the way they should go (in the manner in which the bow is bent), each child, according to their own personality. It is the wife who often has the sensitivity to know what that personality is.

At any rate, the angel first appears to the woman, who immediately runs to her husband in verses 6 and 7 to tell him what has happened. Now Manoah wasn't satisfied. He wanted to see this guy for himself. Josephus indicates that Manoah was jealous and questioning, but the Scripture doesn't really substantiate that. At any rate, Manoah prays and asks God for a re-run for this angelic appearance. Let's continue,

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Then Manoah entreated the LORD, and said, O my Lord, let the man of God which thou didst send come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born.

And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah; and the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field: but Manoah her husband was not with her.

And the woman made haste, and ran, and showed her husband, and said unto him, Behold, the man hath appeared unto me, that came unto me the other day.

And Manoah arose, and went after his wife, and came to the man, and said unto him, Art thou the man that spakest unto the woman? And he said, I am.

And Manoah said, Now let thy words come to pass. How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?

And the angel of the LORD said unto Manoah, Of all that I said unto the woman let her beware.

She may not eat of any thing that cometh of the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing: all that I commanded her let her observe.

(Judges 13:8-14)

Notice quickly several things about this second angelic visit.

1- This is a direct answer to prayer. In verse 8, Manoah entreated the Lord, and God hearkened to his voice. We will see that it was an unnecessary request; nevertheless, God answered it and honored it.

2- The next thing we need to see is that the angel appeared a second time again to the wife even though it was the husband who asked him to.

3- We need to recognize that Manoah wanted to know in advance what to do with the boy, how to order his life, how to raise him. He asked the angel for a copy of James Dobson's latest book. He wanted anything that might show him all the answers in advance. Wouldn't that be nice? Not necessarily.

4- Notice how the angel told the man nothing new. He refers to his earlier conversation and says, "I have given you a word from God, do what I said." In other words, he wanted him to do what he knew to do and follow the Spirit's leading one day at a time. "There are no 12 steps to successful parenthood," the angel said, "I have already told your wife. This is a special child and she must set herself apart even now." In other words, parents, it all begins with

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us. “The child is to be a Nazarite from birth,” the angel reminded them. He gives them God’s first prenatal care clinic as he tells her not to drink wine or strong drink or food that comes from the vine or unclean foods. God is telling them that He would like this child to be special and He would like it to begin with special parents. How often we keep crying to God, “Make my child someone special. Tell me what I need to do.” How often God tells us, “I already told you what to do. Set yourselves apart as parents.” Don’t ask God for something that you are not available to become. I don’t mean set apart unto Christian activity. I mean set apart unto holiness, set apart unto God.

When Manoah and his wife had heard all God had to say, they begged the angel to stay for supper. They offered anything they could to keep him there. The angel agreed that he would stay, but he refused to eat. This was not a commentary on Manoah’s wife’s kitchen creativity, but instead the angel urges Manoah to make an offering to God. Manoah responds in verse 17 by asking the angel for his name so that he can send him a card when the baby is born. The angel says, “No I cannot tell you my name because my name is Wonderful.”

You have heard that name before, haven’t you? “Wonderful, Counselor, Almighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace”. This was THE angel of God Himself. This was Jesus speaking. Now Manoah takes a meat offering and sets it on a rock. He then sets fire to it and as the flame blazes upward the angel ascends in the flames back to heaven. They realize at last that they had been with the angel of the Lord. Manoah in verse 22 expected to die because he had seen God. But listen to his wife,

But his wife said unto him, If the LORD were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have showed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these. (Judges 13:23)

Oh, the wisdom of a woman. Manoah knew the *word* of God: if you see God, you die. His wife knew the *ways* of God: that God does not come to us to tease us or harm us. God comes to us to bless us. She knew that. Manoah’s wife encouraged her frightened husband, “God wouldn’t give us a promise only to destroy us and leave the promise unfulfilled.” She was right. Now in verse 24 we read,

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And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson:
and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him.

And the spirit of the LORD began to move him at times in
the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

(Judges 13:24,25)

God had a plan for this lad's life. He had called him and set him apart. He wouldn't be able to do some of the things his friends were able to do. His calling affected what he could eat. His calling affected what he could drink. His calling affected whether he could ever go to the Zorah barber shop or not. It would affect his whole life. He would be a man of incredible strength, but his strength would be totally intertwined with his relationship to God.

The name "Samson" literally means "little sun or miniature sun or sun-like, like the source of all energy". He was to be a type of Christ who is the "Sun of righteousness". He was to be the reflection of Psalm 19:5,6 where the sun is described as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber and as a strong man running a race. He was to be a man whose going forth was to the end of heaven and from whose strength nothing or no one is hidden. Samson was to be in the flesh a picture of strength. He was to be "God's All-American". He was to be the first round draft pick of the Zorah Zebras, but they never let him handle the ball. He crushed it every time he carried it. In the will of God, there was nothing he could not do.

In the next lesson, we will see how he will take apart a lion, not a Detroit Lion, but one of the real things with his bare hands. We will see him take 300 foxes and tie their tails together with torches and destroy a whole nation's crops. We will see him take the jawbone of a donkey and slay 1,000 men. That is strength. That is power. We will also see that he had a weakness. That weakness was seemingly only a small compromise at the outset but it eroded the base of his commitment to God until eventually it cost him everything.

He lost his strength. He lost his vision. He lost his ministry. He lost all of this because he gradually forgot where his strength came from. It is an exciting story. I look forward to sharing it with you, but before we can appreciate its meaning, we have to come to understand its message. Thus we will see how every move that Samson makes will then speak volumes of spiritual truth to us. So let's conclude this lesson by looking at the strength Samson had when God had Samson. We will ask ourselves, "What is the

strength of God and just how strong are we in Christ?" It is to that subject that we address ourselves in closing. What is strength? What is power? You can't know it or know you have it unless you know what it is. So let's define it.

Strength: "endurance under attack". It is "the ability to stand against the enemy." Paul illustrates it best in Ephesians 6:10 where he says,

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.
(Ephesians 6:10-13)

So the question God asks each of us today is, "How strong are you? What kind of endurance do you have when the heat of the battle becomes intense?" It isn't how aggressive you are against the enemy, it is how firmly do you stand without giving an inch when Satan launches a major offensive in your life? You know when those offensives are. The question is: at what point, if any, do we turn and run? Or worse still, at what point do we hoist the white flag of compromise and surrender, to be taken captive for a season until, like the Israelites, we get sick of being a King's child living in a spiritual ghetto. When we call upon the King, He always delivers us. Strength: endurance under attack.

What is power, then? Power is the authority to control. We will talk about power in the next lesson. The issue in this lesson is strength. Samson was one of the strongest men who ever lived. His life, as it unfolds in the next lesson, will paint for us a vivid, color picture of the spiritual strength that God has given to you and to me to live this Christian life. We need that kind of strength. We need it for several reasons, but I believe that every Christian needs that kind of strength because we are constantly under attack in at least five ways. There are basically five sources of spiritual conflict in the Christian life. As the enemy attacks us, the strength with which we withstand his attack will determine the course of our life in Jesus Christ.

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1- The first source is the circumstances of life, both the constant irritations and the occasional traumas that Satan designs to ruin us, but which God designs or allows to bless us. The circumstances of life come into our life suddenly or they come into our life in waves until no longer can we handle them unless we are strong in the Lord.

2- Temptations are the second area. These fall into three basic categories: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. The Scripture says that these are not of the Father, but of the world; and the world passes away along with the lust thereof. These are the things that Satan dangles before us, begging us to give in. Too often we do give in. How long it takes us or whether or not we give in depends upon how strong we are.

3- The stirring of inner conflict is an area of attack. These are strongholds and places where Satan has gained access into our lives, which he then uses to rob us of our strength. He hides in unseen corners of our lives, and at the wrong time, which he calls the right time, he rises up and begins to attack us. One such stronghold is insecurity. One is hostility. One is a bitter spirit. One is a spirit of discontentment. One is immorality. There are many more. They are strongholds, and they rob us of our strength.

4- The next area is apathy. I believe this is Satan's most subtle form. This is the absence of motivation, brought about by the presence of unconfessed sin in our lives. Our guard goes down and he creeps in and takes control.

5- The last area is easier to understand, yet we are less likely to admit it. It is the area of sowing and reaping. It is the natural result of choices we have already made. Satan's desire is that we blame God or others. God's desire is that we see the reaping for what it is.

These are Satan's tools of the trade. How much strength we have under these attacks is the key to living the constant, victorious, Christian life. God intended us to have the kind of strength in our spiritual struggles that Samson had in the physical realm. We need to understand at least five things about spiritual strength and spiritual warfare. If we grasp these, I believe that the story of Samson in the lessons to come will leave an indelible impression on the tablets of our hearts. These are the principles:

Principle 1- To the Christian, everything in life has spiritual significance. Everything. So every choice you make and everything

you do has ramifications on the spiritual battlefields of life. Nothing you do can be separated from God's conflict with Satan for control of your life. You are not wrestling with flesh and blood, you just think you are. You are in hand to hand combat with a spiritual enemy. I am afraid we relegate spiritual truth about spiritual strength to certain religious or theological conflicts. That is simply not true.

You cannot say that your marriage problem is not a spiritual problem. You cannot say that it is a personality conflict. It is a visible, tangible form of spiritual warfare. How you respond is a spiritual matter. You can't say that your conflicts at work are not spiritual problems. The job is incidental. The boss is not the problem. Satan and God are vying for control of your life. Your job is the battlefield. Satan is testing your strength. You can't say that how you spend your money is not a spiritual problem. It is a matter of contentment and priorities and stewardship. It is all locked up in a spiritual struggle to test and prove your strength. Everything in your life and mine is of spiritual significance.

Principle 2- Since these are spiritual struggles, the only source of strength we have is spiritual. Only the Holy Spirit can give us strength. When the phone rings and it is a tragedy, when temptation comes and the battle rages, when conflicts within arise to haunt us, our only source of strength is God.

Ascribe ye strength unto God: his excellency is over Israel,
and his strength is in the clouds.

O God, thou art terrible out of Thy holy places: the God of
Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people.
Blessed be God. (Psalm 68:34,35)

Isaiah says,

And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to
be His servant, to bring Jacob again to Him, Though Israel be
not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD,
and my God shall be my strength. (Isaiah 49:5)

Psalm 71:16 is a good verse to claim,

I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD: I will make mention
of thy righteousness, even of thine only.

Psalm 18 reminds us to pray,

I will love thee, O LORD, my strength.

The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my
God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the
horn of my salvation, and my high tower. (Psalm 18:1,2)

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Paul said, "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." When the heat of the conflict intensifies, it isn't our strength plus His, but all power and all strength belongs to God and to God alone.

Principle 3- This principle is diametrically opposed to the world's philosophy. Spiritual strength seems best appropriated when physical strength is gone. Thus, God must lovingly take from us the crutches of this life that we lean on until in the midst of the fire of the enemy's onslaught, we have nothing and no one to turn to but Him.

There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. (Psalm 33:16)

Psalms 73:26 in the Living Bible says this,

My health fails; my spirits droop, yet God remains! He is the strength of my heart; he is mine forever!

In I Corinthians 1:25 Paul says that God chose weakness through which to reveal His strength for the weakness of God is stronger than men. Job 12:21 says that God weakens the strength of the mighty man. Isaiah 40:28-31 is my favorite. You know it, don't you?

Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of His understanding.

He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength.

Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

(Isaiah 40:28-31)

That is God's kind of strength and He gives it best when we are at our weakest, and have no place else to turn. That is why Paul sealed it in II Corinthians 12:9, when he said that because God's strength is best revealed in our weakness, we need to glory in the things that make us weak; because when we are weak, we know we need His strength.

Principle 4- God will test your strength in degrees. As your

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strength increases, so, in all likelihood, will your confrontations with the enemy.

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

(I Corinthians 10:13)

Memorize Proverbs 24:10. This is a special verse,

If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.

But I think that Jeremiah says it best. It is one of my favorite passages in all of Scripture.

If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?

(Jeremiah 12:5)

There is the test of strength, the swelling of the Jordan: the crucial experiences that stun us. But the Scripture says that, if in the land of peace, in the day-to-day frustrations of life, we have no strength, what will we do in the swelling of the Jordan? What will we do when the floodwaters rise? The key is developing strength in the day-to-day, hand-to-hand combat with the enemy.

Principle 5- This seems academic, but we have all the strength we need; we only need to learn to use it.

The king shall joy in thy strength, O LORD; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice! (Psalm 21:1)

I love this passage,

Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them.

Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools.

They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God. (Psalm 84:5-7)

Thus Paul shouts the final note of triumph in Philippians 4:13,

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

(NKJV)

In the next lesson, we will follow in the footsteps of Samson, God's All American. We will see what real strength is. We will see

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how God's man responds to the enemy through God's strength. But even in this week to come, you and I will be locked in hand-to-hand combat with the enemy. God is our only source of strength. It is all a spiritual battle. We may see every single source of our own strength ripped from us. It will leave us nowhere to turn but to Him. Or we may just see that the conflict seems to be but a meaningless skirmish, but it is basic training for a later time when the Jordan begins to swell in our lives. Paul said,

Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

(I Corinthians 16:13)

God is looking for spiritual Samsons today. These are people who, when the enemy attacks, believe God and stand until the enemy retreats in defeat. God called on Samson to be a man like that. According to my Bible, He has called you and He has called me to the same calling. He doesn't need any more spectators. He doesn't need any more cheerleaders. He needs All Americans. He needs men and women who are strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. He needs men and women who understand the scope of the conflict, the wiles of the enemy, and the strength of their God. By His grace, may we become those men and women.

God's All-American

THE BATTLE

Oh the heat of the battle,
Oh the depth of the fray;
And oh the subtle, sly attacks
Satan sends our way.

We're not watching from life's grandstands,
We're not viewing from afar;
We're engaged in mortal conflict,
We're engaged in brutal war.

All about us, shells are flying,
Bombs are dropping on each side;
Frantic, then we panic, crying
Where's our place to hide?

Battles so intense as this
Call for a victor's song;
With such eternal things at stake,
Must not God's men be strong?

Must not God's men be Samsons,
Fueled with awesome power?
Must not we but learn to stand
In conflict's testing hour?

Yea, the enemy will flail us
With all the powers of hell,
But are not we, in Christ, to stand
When e'er we see the Jordan swell?

Here he comes, Beloved,
Just remember your call.
Clothe yourself in the strength of God,
And do not move at all.

As His strength becomes your strength,
And you, God's Samson be,
Satan has no other choice,
He simply has to flee.

Be strong in the Lord, Beloved,
Clothed in His armor, stand.
Be strong in the Lord, Beloved,
And you WILL possess the land.

God's All-American
For Focus and Application

1- Jephthah's "bad beginning" was a negative from the world's perspective. How did God feel about it? Why do you think so many of God's "legends" seemed to have started out with two strikes against them? Why does the world see this so differently? What Biblical principles do they lack to make it make sense?

2- The Ephraimites had the same problem for the second time in Judges, chapter 12. Was God less tolerant this time around? Why? What was their root problem?

3- What do you think Manoah's problem was in Judges 13? How can this problem cause a marriage to suffer?

4- In Judges 13:23, Manoah understood God's word, but his wife understood His ways. How common do you think that is? How can a couple utilize these two strengths in harmony? How does this affect Bible study and application between men and women?

5- See if you can describe the difference between strength and power. Why is one an offensive weapon, and one a defensive one? What is common between them for believers?

6- On pages 10 and 11, there are five battlefields where Satan attacks and we are admonished to be strong. Look at them one at a time and see if you can test your "strength" in the Lord in each area:

- a- The circumstances of life that do not "go our way".
- b- The temptations of life that suddenly appear to test us.
- c- The inner conflicts that arise from hidden strongholds.
- d- The apathy that lets our guard down when we are not in fellowship.
- e- The sowing that is the natural result of reaping.

7- Five principles are given on pages 11-14 for us to consider. Ask God to help you this week to better understand that:

- a- Everything to the Christian has spiritual significance.
- b- Our only source of strength in spiritual battles is spiritual strength.
- c- We are strongest when we are weakest.
- d- We will be tested in degrees. God knows what we can handle.
- e- The strength we need is all ours in Christ. Always.

Ask God this week to reveal to you when He is infusing you with strength. Stop to praise Him each time He does. It is a miracle, and He is to be praised.

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