

A Hero Will Rise

The Book of Judges

Text

Judges 15:1-20

Topic

With a sudden spectacular use of force,
Samson kills one thousand Philistine soldiers
using only the jawbone of a donkey

Title

“Shock & Jaw”

- In *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*, once the adamantium is in him, Logan easily breaks free from his restraints and wreaks havoc on his captors as he makes his escape.
- Arnold Schwarzenegger's character in *Total Recall* breaks through metal shackles... twice.
- In *Man of Steel*, when Superman is in military custody, he effortlessly breaks the handcuffs they put on him to show that they couldn't control him.
- Top of my list - In *The Muppet Movie*, Miss Piggy snaps her bonds to save her frog.

Movie heroes love to show off their power by busting out of chains, ropes, or similar restraints.

I say it originated with Israel's hero, Samson. Early and later in his career, he was bound, only to easily break his restraints.

The first of those episodes is in chapter fifteen. His own people bound him, to turn him over to the Philistines:

Jdg 15:13 ... “we will tie you securely and deliver you into their hand; but we will surely not kill you.” And they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock.

Jdg 15:14 When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting against him. Then the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him; and the ropes that *were* on his arms became like flax that is burned with fire, and his bonds broke loose from his hands.

It’s a great story, with lots of intrigue. **It’s also an illustration:**

- God was trying to show the Israelites that, like Samson, they had yielded themselves to be bound. God warned them that if they chose to worship the gods of the surrounding nations, He would deliver them to their oppression. They did, and in that sense, they had yielded themselves to being bound by them.
- But also like Samson, the Israelites could easily, at any time, break their bondage and overcome the Philistines, by humbly returning to God.

It’s a picture for us, too. **A Christian can be bound by yielding himself or herself over to sin, or you can break free by yielding yourself to the power of the Holy Spirit.**

Here is how the apostle Paul explained it:

Rom 6:13 (KJV) Neither yield ye your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God.

We have a choice. We can walk in the freedom of serving Jesus by yielding ourselves to Him. Or we can yield ourselves to sin and return to its bondage.

The same Holy Spirit Who empowered Samson *physically* can empower you *spiritually*. There are, therefore, no bonds that can possibly hold you, unless you voluntarily yield yourself to sin.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Quit Yielding Yourself To Be Bound By Sin, and #2 Keep Yielding Yourself To Be Unbound By The Spirit.

#1 Quit Yielding Yourself To Be Bound By Sin

(v1-13)

I know a lot of you enjoyed the recent version of *Beauty and the Beast* with live actors, but for my tastes, the animated version is superior. I especially like Gaston. The song sung by Lefou about him perfectly captures his self-absorbed nature:

[ALL]

*No one hits like Gaston
Matches wits like Gaston*

[LEFOU]

In a spitting match, nobody spits like Gaston

[GASTON]

I'm especially good at expectorating!

[spits]

I don't want to suggest Samson was like Gaston in terms of his physique. Samson was average, at best - otherwise why would the Philistines wonder where his strength came from?

When we left Samson, he had killed thirty Philistines to pay his gambling debt. He had lost the bet because the Philistines pressured his betrothed wife to discover the answer to Samson's riddle.

Angered, Samson left his betrothed wife at the proverbial altar.

Jdg 15:1 After a while, in the time of wheat harvest, it happened that Samson visited his wife with a young goat. And he said, "Let me go in to my wife, into *her* room." But her father would not permit him to go in.

In chapter fourteen, Samson had referred to his betrothed as a "heifer." He abandoned her; we're not sure how long, but it seems a significant period of time.

The fix, in his mind, was to bring her... A goat.

Some commentators try to argue that a young goat was their version of a box of chocolates. *I'm not buying it.* It was Gaston-like.

She was betrothed to Samson, by the legal arrangement of the parents. The marriage feast had been thrown, but Samson left before the marriage was consummated.

Because everything was about him, he assumed that the jilted bride would be waiting expectantly for him. He was in for a rude awakening.

Jdg 15:2 Her father said, "I really thought that you thoroughly hated her; therefore I gave her to your companion. *Is not her younger sister better than she? Please, take her instead.*"

Samson may have abandoned the wedding feast, but this Philistine father of the bride was not about to lose his deposit. They went ahead with the marriage without the groom, giving the daughter to a Philistine who was standing in as best man.

To resolve the matter, he offered Samson his younger daughter. What's with these Old Testament fathers, always offering up their daughters to be abused?

Jdg 15:3 And Samson said to them, "This time I shall be blameless regarding the Philistines if I harm them!"

Jdg 15:4 Then Samson went and caught three hundred foxes; and he took torches, turned *the foxes* tail to tail, and put a torch between each pair of tails.

Jdg 15:5 When he had set the torches on fire, he let *the foxes* go into the standing grain of the Philistines, and burned up both the shocks and the standing grain, as well as the vineyards *and* olive groves.

This capture required some supernatural help. I find it hard to catch my cat inside the house.

Samson was not a member of PETA, that's for sure. I doubt the foxes survived.

Overlooking that fact, I have to say that this was a brilliant strategy. It allowed one man to destroy the entire agrarian economy of that region in one day.

Jdg 15:6 Then the Philistines said, "Who has done this?" And they answered, "Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he has taken his wife and given her to his companion." So the Philistines came up and burned her and her father with fire.

The father of the bride had done nothing wrong - except get involved with Samson in the first place. Let's hope our involvement with nonbelievers leads to greater spiritual life for them.

I hear they are remaking *Death Wish*. Bruce Willis is going to be the vigilante that Charles Bronson made famous in the original.

It's doubtful that Samson was too torn-up emotionally, but it offered him the opportunity to do some damage to the Philistines.

Jdg 15:7 Samson said to them, "Since you would do a thing like this, I will surely take revenge on you, and after that I will cease."

Jdg 15:8 So he attacked them hip and thigh with a great slaughter; then he went down and dwelt in the cleft of the rock of Etam.

No one is quite sure exactly the derivation of the phrase, "smote them hip and thigh." I think our equivalent would be, "tore them limb from limb." In chapter fourteen Samson had been attacked by an Asiatic lion in its prime. He "tore the lion apart."

I think, quite literally, Samson tore the limbs off of these Philistines in a massacre. We aren't told how many he killed, but it was a significant enough number to be called "a great slaughter."

Samson thought he'd kill a few guys, then "after that I will cease." He wanted to even the score; or, at least, have the last word. He didn't have any sense that he was supposed to be Israel's hero.

Jdg 15:9 Now the Philistines went up, encamped in Judah, and deployed themselves against Lehi.

Jdg 15:10 And the men of Judah said, "Why have you come up against us?" So they answered, "We have come up to arrest Samson, to do to him as he has done to us."

Jdg 15:11 Then three thousand men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam, and said to Samson, "Do you not know that the Philistines rule over us? What *is* this you have done to us?" And he said to them, "As they did to me, so I have done to them."

Three thousand men - to appeal to one man? The men of Judah were afraid.

Too bad they had no fear of God:

- Had they feared God, they would not be subject to the Philistines, but instead would be ruling over them.
- Had they feared God, they would not have been afraid of the man God was using against their enemy.
- Had they feared God, they would be volunteering to become Samson's army.

Jdg 15:12 But they said to him, "We have come down to arrest you, that we may deliver you into the hand of the Philistines." Then Samson said to them, "Swear to me that you will not kill me yourselves."

Surely, someone among the men of Judah must have known the story of the Angel of the Lord visiting Mr. And Mrs. Manoah, promising them a child who would grow up to be Israel's next hero. Somewhere stories must have been told of him being a Nazirite from the womb.

Now here he was, clearly able to deal death blows to the Philistines. Sure, he was a little rough around the edges; but this was their hero, and he was bonafide.

Instead of rallying, they arrested him. Luckily for them, Samson agreed to be arrested.

Jdg 15:13 So they spoke to him, saying, "No, but we will tie you securely and deliver you into their hand; but we will surely not kill you." And they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock.

In the scene I alluded to earlier, in *The Man of Steel*, when Superman consents to be handcuffed, there is a veritable army standing by, with things like tranquilizer guns. We all know that it's useless against him - that he is submitting because it will get him to the real fight.

Still, the men of Judah go down to Lowe's and get "two new ropes," thinking they will hold Samson secure.

The men of Judah don't see it. They don't see what is being illustrated right before their eyes. By worshipping the gods of the Philistines, which they were forewarned by God to not do, they had voluntarily given themselves over to be in bondage to a fierce enemy.

Sure, it was God Who delivered them to the Philistines, by withdrawing His protection. But it was their choice to go that route.

In front of them was an average looking Jew who had extraordinary supernatural enabling from God. That, too, could be them. It should be them.

Even though it was a time in which God was raising up judges, I submit that any devout Jew could have defeated the Philistines. I base that on the fact that some years later, just as the time of the judges was ending, giving way to the kings, a teenaged shepherd boy was amazed that not a single Israelite accepted the challenge of the giant, Goliath. David knew that any Jew could take him in a fight, because it wasn't a fair fight with God on your side.

What about us? After we are saved, we are to yield our members - our bodies and our minds - over to God, to serve Him. But we find left within our unredeemed, mortal bodies, the flesh - a propensity to give ourselves over to sin; to use our bodies and our minds to serve ourselves, rather than God.

When we yield to sin, it's as if we ask to be bound by the very things we've been delivered from. Then we act like it's not our fault, and that there's not much we can do about it.

The idea of being able to immediately break the bindings has become foreign to us. We believe that weeks or months or years or a lifetime is needed to say "No" to sin.

Notwithstanding that we will struggle against our flesh until we are immortal, **we are to believe we can have immediate victory.**

The apostle Paul bemoaned the fact that there is a struggle within against the flesh. He even sounded desperate when he declared, “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Romans 7:24).

He quickly answered himself, saying, “I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord...” (7:25). Then he spent an entire chapter describing the Spirit’s power in our lives.

We quoted Paul earlier regarding yielding to the Spirit, not the flesh. Let me expand with the verses preceding what I quoted:

Rom 6:11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Rom 6:12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.

Rom 6:13 And do not [yield] your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but [yield] yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God.

If you are bound by some sin, it’s because you have yielded to your flesh. You can break the bondage *right now* by instead yielding to God. Since it’s not by your power or will power, that bindings are broken, but by God’s supernatural enabling, then your sin is like new ropes that will easily fall away as you turn to Jesus.

#2 Keep Yielding Yourself To Be Unbound By The Spirit

(v14-20)

Both Steve Rogers and Tony Stark think that capturing Loki was a little too easy. They find out why: It was Loki's plan all along to be captured, so he could do real damage to the Avengers and to SHIELD.

The Philistines must not have seen very many movies.

Jdg 15:14 When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting against him. Then the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him; and the ropes that *were* on his arms became like flax that is burned with fire, and his bonds broke loose from his hands.

OK, maybe the men of Judah were no good with knots. Still it was at least one thousand armed soldiers against one seemingly unarmed, unassuming looking Jew.

They were about to discover that "the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him."

The result of the Spirit coming upon Samson was, initially, the breaking of the ropes. It wasn't much, but it was a visible sign He was at work.

The Spirit's work in our lives doesn't have to always be spectacular, but there should be visible signs. We should seem free, and full of joy, worry-less, just to name a few.

I think it's sad when nonbelievers think it is somehow a bondage to walk with Jesus.

They see us under legalism, loaded down with mostly things we can't do, and are glad for what they see as freedom.

Jdg 15:15 He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, reached out his hand and took it, and killed a thousand men with it.

An old jawbone just would not do; too brittle.

Talk about God providing, just right and right on time. This is a tiny thing, but I'll share it as an example.

Every year we are required to have the back-flow valve for our plumbing here at the building inspected. We had a certified tester come out on Tuesday. On Wednesday, because the valve is right outside my window, I noticed it dripping ever so slightly. I decided to what a day; you call it procrastination, while I call it faith.

Well, Thursday I had forgotten about it. After I'd been in the office for a few hours, I looked up and it was still wet under the valve. I went outside, lifted the cover, and was looking at it... When just at that moment, Michael Guy - a plumber most of us know and love - was driving by. He stopped and had it repaired in like two minutes.

It was a minor miracle of timing. I think the Lord did it just to remind me that His provision is always right, and right on time.

Don't you love it when heroes improvise weapons? As Jaws is approaching him, Chief Brody notices that the shark is gnawing on a scuba tank. Brody takes aim, eventually hits the tank, and Jaws is blown to shark-ereens.

(Too bad that has been debunked by *Mythbusters*. Scuba tanks won't explode like bombs if shot).

Jdg 15:16 Then Samson said: "With the jawbone of a donkey,
Heaps upon heaps, With the jawbone of a donkey I have slain a
thousand men!"

This might be the Bible's first rap. There's a play on words here that gets lost in the translation. The Hebrew word for "heaps" can also mean "donkey." Samson was rapping that with the jawbone of a donkey, he had made donkeys out of the Philistines.

One thousand Philistines, slain one at a time, with an improvised weapon. And remember, these were trained soldiers, with weapons. Is there anything like it in the annals of hand-to-hand conflict?

Jdg 15:17 And so it was, when he had finished speaking, that he threw the jawbone from his hand, and called that place Ramath Lehi.

Speaking to who? It might be that the men of Judah who had extradited Samson were witnesses to the massacre. If so, how very sad that they stood there as spectators. Samson didn't need the help, but it would have been a blessing for them to join in.

And it might have been just what was needed to rally all of Israel to throw off the Philistine oppression.

"Ramath Lehi" would be like us calling it, "Jawbone Hill."
Hamburger Hill... Hacksaw Ridge... Jawbone Hill. That's the idea.

It would be a great name for the second movie in a trilogy about Samson.

He “threw the jawbone from his hand.” If there was an audience, this was Samson’s mic-drop.

Jdg 15:18 Then he became very thirsty; so he cried out to the LORD and said, "You have given this great deliverance by the hand of Your servant; and now shall I die of thirst and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?"

Even though it was the Spirit’s empowering upon Samson that gave him victory over one thousand enemies, he still got thirsty.

Or maybe he was made thirsty by God? He wasn’t out of breath, even though his work had been rigorous. No, in fact he had so much breath that he could sing.

But God let him be thirsty. Why? Well, for sure to show Samson that he needed the Lord for his daily, moment-by-moment existence. Samson could be empowered to do incredible things, but he ought to remain humble.

Of course, his thirst has a spiritual lesson, which we will get to in just a moment.

Jdg 15:19 So God split the hollow place that *is* in Lehi, and water came out, and he drank; and his spirit returned, and he revived. Therefore he called its name En Hakkore, which is in Lehi to this day.

“En Hakkor” means *Spring of the Caller*. Samson called and God answered by springing-up a well from a rock.

God didn't take Samson's thirst away. He met it with His provision of water from the rock.

Is there something you want God to take away? To remove? To reverse? He can. If He doesn't, He will meet it with a different kind of provision. He will meet it with the sufficiency of His grace.

Jdg 15:20 And he judged Israel twenty years in the days of the Philistines.

It almost sounds like the writer (whom we believe is Samuel) is done with the Chronicles of Samson. He isn't. The most infamous of his exploits is yet to come.

It's a statement to remind us that even though Samson had broken two of the Nazirite restrictions, and would break the third, God was still using him as His hero. God won't ever give up on you.

I think we'd all say that Samson wasn't the hero he could have been. But God refused to abandon him.

Let's return to "The Spring of the Caller." With reverence, I think that would be a great name for God the Holy Spirit. We call out to Him, and His spring of living water is available to us, thanks to our Rock, Jesus.

In the Gospel of John, we read,

Joh 7:37 On the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.

Joh 7:38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

Joh 7:39 But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

In John chapter four Jesus said, "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life" (4:14).

The Bible ends on this same note:

Rev 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

In Ecclesiastes God reveals that He has placed eternity in human hearts. There is a longing for Him that nothing else can satisfy. It can honestly be called a thirst. We go through life trying to quench it; but, sadly, we often drink from the impure reservoirs of the world, rather than the springs of life.

The world's religions, and its philosophies, are sources of nasty, diseased water. God extends grace from the Cross to everyone in order that they might turn to Him and "take the water of life freely."

After you are saved, you struggle against the flesh. The solve is to keep appealing to The Spring of the Caller - to the pure water provided only by, but abundantly by, the Holy Spirit.