

## Judges 15

### Strength & Weakness: *Running On Emotion*

Mark Elliot Zuckerberg turned 28 last week. Zuckerberg was named in 2009 as one of the 100 most influential people of the world, in 2010 as Time magazine's Person of the Year, in 2011 again as one of the 100 most influential people of the world and in 2012 as one of the "The All-Time TIME 100 of All Time."

His personal wealth is estimated to be \$17.5 billion and since his company (which you might have heard of, called "Facebook") had its IPO last Friday it's destined to become worth \$100 billion.

To me, one of the most impressive things about Mark Zuckerberg is his ability to make decisions seemingly totally apart from emotion.

He started Facebook in early 2004 as way to help Harvard college students keep in touch with each other. Today more that 900 million people log in at least once a month.

But 2 years after the founding of Facebook Zuckerberg faced what he describes as his greatest test. In 2006 Facebook had 10 million users and Yahoo was offering to buy the company for \$1 billion!

One year later Microsoft offered \$15 billion. He turned both offers down.

Zuckerberg said the Yahoo offer was the hardest one to turn down even though it was a fraction of the Microsoft offer. Here's why. Facebook wasn't turning a profit. He had no idea what was going to happen in the future. Many of the people who had helped him start the company said, "Sell. You'd be crazy to turn down a billion dollars. We'd all be set for life."

Mark Zuckerberg had the decision of a lifetime to make and he refused to sell. I have to believe that everything within him emotionally was screaming "Sell! Sell!"

But Mark Zuckerberg made the most important financial decision of his life at age 22 based on his vision of what Facebook could become and not his emotions.

What would you have done? I know what I would have done. I would have taken the billion. I just know myself, would have taken the billion.

Emotions are a powerful driving force in our life. Feelings are often the basis for why we do the things we do.

How do you go through life acknowledging feelings (we don't deny them) but at the same time not letting them run your life?

This is week 2 of a 4 week series we're calling "Strength & Weakness" based on the life of the man Samson in the book of Judges. Samson's best known for his run-in with Delilah and we're going to get to their story in a couple of weeks.

But today we're looking at what made a man like Samson, who was so blessed by God, so weak in character.

We began last week by seeing Samson's miraculous birth. His mother was unable to have children, which is a burden for any woman, but especially for a Jewish woman living 3000 years ago. Children were expected. They were the vehicle for carrying on the family name.

A woman without a child would often be looked down on, or even shunned in her village.

But then this woman who seemed to be hopeless was given an amazing promise. Not only would she have a son but he would eventually deliver Israel from the Philistine enemies who had dominated them for 40 years.

So here's a young man who had everything to be thankful for. Not only did he have parents who loved him but God had His hand on Samson's life from before the time he was born. Four times in the 4 chapters that describe Samson's life we're told that the Holy Spirit was upon him.

But, as it turns out, Samson was an incredibly strong man with a dangerously weak will. We looked at his philosophical bases for life and saw that his life was dominated by three attitudes. Lust (I want what I want when I want it), a sense of entitlement (I deserve to have whatever I want), and then pride (I can handle what ever I want even if God said I shouldn't have it.)

Today I want us to see that Samson was driven by emotion. He didn't make decisions based on what was logical and rational. He didn't make decisions based on God's wisdom and direction. He was impelled by emotion.

Just a few comments about emotions before we look at Samson specifically.

First: Emotions are not bad things, God has emotions. You can see it all throughout the scriptures. God's emotions flow from a holy and righteous nature and never keep Him from his purposes.

*Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! (Isaiah 42:1)*

*God is angry with the wicked every day. (Psalm 7:11)*

*Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. (Mark 13:34)*

*And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Ephesians 4:30)*

So God has these and various other emotions.

Second: Our emotions are God given. We're created in the image of God and so we have emotions. But because we're sinners, our emotions no longer are guided by holiness and truth. That's why we have to submit our emotions to God rather than letting them run our life.

But if emotions are God given, then emotions and feelings aren't bad. But they can get out of hand.

A third comment on emotions, they're part of every life. Speaking in very general terms, because we're all individuals and you can't put everyone in a neat little box, men are less emotional and women are more emotional. At least outwardly.

A guy gets married and finds his wife crying. He thinks, "Oh no. Something terrible must have happened." So he asks her why she's crying and she says, "Cause I'm so happy!" And the guy's left absolutely bewildered.

Women may be more emotional, or at least outwardly emotional than men, but we all have emotions and we're all tempted to let them control our lives.

If you don't believe me that guys are emotional, just cut a guy off in traffic sometime. Guys react very emotionally.

We all get ourselves into trouble by doing what we feel like doing rather than what we should be doing. Samson was a prime example of a guy who did what he felt like.

Let's see why, and see what we can learn from his life.

## **Open to Judges chapter 14 page 250**

### *I. It's Possible For A Believer To Be Led By Emotion Instead Of Led By The Spirit*

Last week we saw that, although he didn't act like it most of the time, the Bible says that Samson was a believer. In fact, he's actually included in the Hebrews chapter 11 list of great heroes of the faith.

I believe there's a great misunderstanding about faith and works in a lot of people in our churches today.

Faith is the way of salvation. The Bible clearly says, *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.* (Ephesians 2:8-10)

The way for sinners like us to receive eternal life from God is to acknowledge that we are helpless, turn from our false ideas of salvation to God's way, and then receive His gift of forgiveness through simple faith.

We don't deserve God's forgiveness before we have it, we don't deserve God's forgiveness at the moment we receive it, and we don't deserve God's forgiveness for the rest of eternity. That's why we were saved by grace.

Some people teach that you can tell who's a true Christian or not by looking at a person's life. They take verses like *by their fruits you will know them.* (Matthew 7:20) and *faith without works is dead* (James 2:20) out of context and come to a wrong conclusion.

We can't see another person's heart. We certainly don't see anything in Samson's life that we could define as godly. And yet He was saved. He was saved but he was driven by his emotions.

Last week we saw that Sampson saw a hot looking Philistine woman and tried to marry her. He tried to marry her in direct contradiction to God's command not to be unequally yoked with an unbeliever and in direct contradiction to common sense.

When you're chosen from birth by God to deliver your country from an enemy nation you don't marry someone from that nation. Needless to say that didn't work out so well for Samson. He never did get the girl and he ended up in a big fight with the Philistines.

**Look at the middle of verse 19... *So his anger was aroused, and he went back up to his father's house. And Samson's wife was given to his companion, who had been his best man.***

See the word “anger?” The Hebrew word is *aph*, which literally means “nose.” The word “aroused” is the Hebrew word *charah* which literally means “to be hot, to burn, to be kindled.”

His nose got hot. You know how when a person gets angry their face gets red and it all centers in their nose? To say a guy had a hot nose was the Hebrew way of saying he was really steamed.

Samson was steamed. So he stomped out. This was at his wedding reception. He was so angry he stomped out and went home.

### **Chapter 15:1 Read through “goat.”**

Guys, let me just warn you, if you try to make up with your wife after a fight and you want to bring her a gift, flowers or candy work a whole lot better than a goat.

I don't know about you but I've never had any luck bringing Sandy a goat.

But now look at this... **Read 1b-2**

“Sorry Samson but you stomped out of here in a huff and we didn't see you again so I gave your bride to your best man. He hung around and they hit it off right away.”

There's not one recorded time in the 4 chapters that chronicle Samson's life when it says he stopped to pray and ask God for guidance. But, the Bible does say that the Spirit of the Lord moved on Samson. Obviously having the Holy Spirit empower him was the source of his unique strength.

In the current age, the Holy Spirit indwells and seals every one of God's people. He doesn't come and go. The Bible says...

*In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.*  
(Ephesians 1:13)

*Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? (I Corinthians 6:19)*

The ministry of the Holy Spirit in the OT was different than His ministry to believers after the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

In the OT, the Holy Spirit came upon people for specific tasks. Samson's unusual gifts and abilities were a direct result of the blessing of the Holy Spirit of God.

And Samson knew that -- at least intellectually.

He knew the Holy Spirit of God had set him apart for a divine work. He was to be Israel's deliverer. He knew the Holy Spirit of God had a work to do, both in the nation of Israel, and in the surrounding pagan nations.

But instead of co-operating, instead of yielding to the Spirit of God, so many times Samson grieved the Spirit of God. Instead of accomplishing God's purposes with God's gifts, Samson tried to accomplish his own purposes with God's gifts.

### **Read verse 3**

I'm completely justified in whatever I do.

### **Read verse 4, 5**

The reason he tied their tails together is so that they couldn't all just run back and hide in their foxholes. He wanted to do maximum damage and apparently Samson succeeded.

### **Read verse 6**

Samson's anger kept costing him big time, didn't it. First he loses the girl he tries to marry and then he's basically responsible for her and her whole family getting brutally slaughtered. Anger and uncontrolled emotion exacts a high toll. There's a high cost.

I thought Craig Groeschel was really perceptive when he asks, "What did Samson have to be angry about? He was the one who went and pursued the wrong woman. He was the one who decided to marry her. He is the one who ignored his parent's advice. He is the one who taunted the Philistines with a riddle. He was the only one who knew the secret. He's the one who gave the secret away. He's the one who left his wife at the altar to go kill 30 men, he's the one who burned the villages and crops down with the foxes. In other words, he's mad at the world, but the reality is most of this mess is his own fault. And

that's where so many of us as end up living. We're angry at the world, when in reality is, we're to blame."

And I would add to that, we even get angry at God. We mess up one thing after another and then blame God for the consequences. "I can't believe my life has turned out like this!"

Emotions are fine passengers but they're not good drivers. They're accident prone. When we let our feelings take the wheel it's amazing how quickly we can crash and burn. And then what's doubly amazing is how we get frustrated and angry and disappointed and discouraged and depressed when life doesn't go our way.

Now contrast that with what God wants for us.

*I. It's Possible For A Believer To Be Led By Emotion Instead Of Led By The Spirit*

*II. When We're Led By The Spirit We Will Live Out The Character Of God*

**Turn to Galatians 5 Page 1144**

**Read verse 16**

Let the Holy Spirit have control of your life and you won't do all the foolish stuff.

The word "walk" in the New Testament means live. Here's the key, If we live on the basis of the Holy Spirit and what He teaches and how He directs and empowers, we won't fulfill the desires of the flesh.

Notice it doesn't say, "Stop fulfilling the desires of the flesh and you'll be spiritual." That's the way we want to read it.

Actually it says just the opposite. Now, why is it true that if we live in the power of the Holy Spirit we won't fulfill the desires of the flesh?

**Read verse 17**

Listen closely here because this is where a lot of people get confused.

A person recognizes their own sinfulness and their need of a savior. That's a biblical theme Old Testament and New Testament, God is our Savior.

So they trust God's provision for them in Jesus Christ. They see from the Bible that they're forgiven of their sins. They want to live for God and please Him.

Then low and behold, a few days later they sin grievously. It's like out of nowhere sin jumps out and grabs them. And they wonder, "Where in the world did that come from?"

When Sandy and I were first married and I was brand new in the faith we were in a department store. A sales person was trying to help me with something and I spoke very rudely to her.

Two thoughts immediately rushed into my mind. The first was, "Wow, that was so my dad!" He could be a gruff guy. He would have said something just like that.

You know that scary feeling you get the first time you realize your becoming your parents!

But the second thought which came immediately after the first was this, "Where did that come from? I'm supposed to be a Christian. I can't believe I talked to her like that."

Here's where it's critical to know this truth.

The Bible says we're born with what's called "the flesh." It's the desire and tendency to sin that's been passed down from Adam.

We're born with, and will die with, the flesh.

But we don't just have the flesh. If we're truly a believer in God our savior we also have "the Spirit." I believe that's the person of the Holy Spirit as well as the divine nature or life we receive when we trust Christ.

### **Read verse 17**

What you end up with is two competing natures. There's a war within us. Just because we sin after we receive Christ doesn't mean we must not really be saved. What it means is that the flesh is controlling us instead of the Spirit.

Now listen to this because this is what our life is like if we're driven by emotion. If we just do whatever we happen to feel like doing at the moment here's some characteristics that are going to become evident.



See if you don't recognize Samson as we read through this list.

### **Read verses 19-21**

Look at the things included on this list. You've got the heavies like adultery, fornication, murder and drunkenness.

But you also have contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, envy.

Ever had trouble with any of those things in your life? I have; more than once.

The point is, those are actions that characterize those who aren't going to inherit eternal life. Those are the actions that characterize people who don't even know God. Why would we want those things in our lives?

Samson practiced some of these very things. That's why just reading through Judges you come away thinking he must not be a believer. That's why we had to have the Hebrews passage to confirm to us that he was a child of God. You couldn't tell it by his life.

Who was winning the battle in Samson's life? What was controlling him? Wasn't it his emotions, his feelings, his desires, his passions, his instincts?

See, all of those things are fine when they're submitted to God's Holy Spirit. And when they are here's what our life will look like:

### **Read verses 22 & 23**

Isn't that what we all really want in life? Isn't this what we're seeking for?

When we're led by the Holy Spirit what comes out of our life is God likeness.

*I. It's Possible For A Believer To Be Led By Emotion Instead Of Led By The Spirit*

*II. When We're Led By The Spirit We Will Live Out The Character Of God*

*III. When We're Focused On Self, God Can Still Work But We Miss The Blessing*

### **Back to Judges 15 page 251**

Samson burns the Philistines crops. They come back and murder his "almost" wife so he goes out and retaliates by killing a bunch of them.

## **Read verse 8**

“Attacked them hip and thigh” means he really laid into them. I look at this and I think, God’s purpose for Samson was that he begin to drive the Philistine invaders out of the Promised Land. That was God’s stated purpose for him before he was even conceived.

Israel was God’s chosen people and God was their deliverer. Everything that God did with and for His people was centered around bring glory to Himself. Israel was to be a bright light in the midst of pagan idolatry and debauchery. Samson had a sacred job.

But apparently that’s not the way he saw it. You don’t hear him say, “This is God’s land, these are God’s people and this is God’s glory that I’m fighting for.” Everything he does seems to be all about himself.

## **Read verse 9, 14 & 15**

Samson fought off a thousand Philistines. Each time he gets in a fight the ante goes up. Before he could have thought “I’m such a tough dude. I’m bad. No one can stop me.” He could have thought that he was so tough that he did it all by himself.

But once you get up to a thousand guys, it’s really obvious that God is fighting for you. It’s quite an accomplishment to win the UFC title. But at least you get to fight one guy at a time. A thousand at one shot puts it beyond all human ability.

It’s obvious to me that God was trying to humble Samson. But it doesn’t work. He’s too stubborn. Talk about a pride problem.

## **Read verses 16 & 17**

You know what he was saying by his little song here? “Boy, I sure made a donkey out of them!” (I was going to use a different word but I didn’t want you guys to get all upset with me, but that was the intent).

“I didn’t use a sword. I didn’t use a spear. Those are implements of battle. That would be too good for these Philistines. I’m so bad I used a donkey’s jaw!”

God was at work. In fact God was doing great and mighty things and Samson missed it entirely. It went right over his head. And as we’re going to see in the coming weeks, because he missed God, the rest of his life turned out to be train wreck.

God has something for everyone of us this morning. God has a plan and a purpose for our life that transcends our feelings and emotions. His plan is so grand and so amazing. But we can miss it.

It's obvious, but we can miss it. And if we miss what God wants to do through us we trade off the wonder of the divine for the routine of the ordinary.

And by the way, Mark Zuckerberg is definitely a unique individual. He's got an ability to see into the future with great clarity. He can make decisions without letting his emotions dictate his actions. I'd love to meet him. I'm sure that will never happen, but I'd love to meet him and have a chance to pick his brain.

But at this point in life, from what I read, and that's all I can go on, he's settling for the ordinary. You say, "His life doesn't sound very ordinary to me."

But you know Mark Zuckerberg was brought up in a Jewish home. He had his Bar Mitzvah when he turned 13. But today Mark Zuckerberg is a declared atheist.

I don't know his reasons. I wouldn't even dare to comment on them, but I do know this. You can be the brightest, the most creative, the richest, the most accomplished, person on the planet. But if you don't acknowledge your creator, if you go through life with no relationship with God, in the end you've settled for the mundane. In the end you've traded off the wonder of the divine for hopelessness.