**Old School – Week 4 (Samson – Strength)**

**June 29-30, 2019**

All of us probably have a favorite superhero or (if you’re older) had one when you were growing up. There’s a ton of different superpowers: The Flash is really fast, Superman can fly, Iron Man has a cool suit, Captain American has a sweet shield…the list goes on!

**(Leaders Note: Share about your favorite superhero and why!)**

Superheroes are kind of seen as invincible because they are so strong. It’s interesting how the world defines “strength” or “strong.” We look at people who are “strong” and we usually think of physically strong. We even have titles like “Strongest Man in the World” or even professional bodybuilders…people who dedicate their life to being the most physically strong.

However, I think there are people who are strong emotionally and mentally. Mother Teresa had great emotional strength as she clothed and fed poor people in India. An airplane pilot named Captain Sullenberger (“Sully”) had to be mentally strong because when his airplane malfunctioned, in order to save the people on board, he had to land the plane in the Hudson River. In the water! Both of these people still had great strength, even if it wasn’t physical.

**Today, we are going to talk about a man named Samson. His story comes from the book of Judges, chapters 13-16. His story shows us that even though the world may consider us to be strong, we need to realize where true strength comes from.**

In Judges 13, we learn about a woman who is visited by an angel. Judges 13:3-6 says this: *“The angel of the LORD appeared to her and said, “You are barren and childless, but you are going to become pregnant and give birth to a son. Now see to it that you drink no wine or other fermented drink and that you do not eat anything unclean. You will become pregnant and have a son whose head is never to be touched by a razor because the boy is to be a Nazirite, dedicated to God from the womb. He will take the lead in delivering Israel from the hands of the Philistines.”*

We learn that the boy is given the name Samson. As he grows up, he is blessed with what can only be described as “supernatural physical strength.” I mean…just listen to some of the feats of strength that Samson performed in his life…

-Killed a lion with his bare hands

-Killed 30 men at one time

-Caught 300 foxes at once, tied them up tail by tail, put a torch on each tail, and then released them in a field where every crop was burned to the ground

-Killed 1000 men with only the jawbone of a donkey

Yet, while all of this is happening, Samson is not living up to God’s call. He doesn’t treat his wife with respect, he ridicules people while he’s killing them, he’s a liar, and he breaks God’s commandment for his life. Even though he is showing incredible physical strength in his life, he is not relying on God’s strength for other areas of his life.

Samson meets this woman named Delilah and the enemies of the Israelites, the Philistines, want Delilah to find out what is the source of Samson’s strength. First, Samson says to tie him up with seven fresh bowstrings…but he easily snaps them. Next, he says to tie him up with new ropes that have never been used…and THAT doesn’t work. Finally, he says to weave seven braids of his long hair into the fabric of his bed…still doesn’t work.

Delilah is like, “Why are you lying to me and making me look like a fool? I can’t love you if you won’t tell me the truth.” She began to bother him about it every day. However, Samson knows that he has taken the Nazirite vow and that if people find out where his strength comes from, he might lose it. However, he tells Delilah everything and while he is asleep one night, she cuts off his hair.

Samson is immediately weakened and captured by the Philistines who gouge out his eyes! Crazy! They chain him up to two pillars in the temple where a huge crowd had gathered. We find out what happened in Judges 16:28-30: *“Then Samson prayed to the LORD, “Sovereign LORD, remember me. Please, God, strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes.” Then Samson reached toward the two central pillars on which the temple stood. Bracing himself against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other, Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines!” Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus he killed many more when he died than while he lived.”*

**This is a very dramatic story…lots of good and lots of bad. Actually, it kind of sounds like my life and probably your life, too. Samson had great physical strength yet he was weak in so many areas. However, there is one important part of this story over all of the rest and that’s our THP for today.**

**THP: God’s strength is made perfect in our weakness.**

2 Corinthians 12:9 says: *“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.”* The story of Samson shows us that God can use ANYONE to do His work….even people who are weak. In fact, the story of Samson shows us that we are going to mess up and we are not going to live up to what God wants us to do because we are imperfect…weak.

**However,** **thousands of years after Samson…there was a man named Jesus Christ…who lived up to God’s commandments in every way. He was perfect. However, he experienced physical weakness when he was being killed on the cross. Instead of taking revenge like Samson, he prays for and forgives his enemies…and he sacrifices his own life for us. He relies on God’s strength.**

Are you relying on God’s strength or your own? What are your weaknesses? The good news for all of us is that God uses us in spite of our weaknesses. The reason is because Jesus Christ chose to love us and give his life for us. Guys…when we are weak, He is strong. **Let’s pray.**