



COVENANT: THE EXAMPLE OF SAMSON

by Captain Michael Ramsay



COVENANTS are very important to the Lord. In his *Officer* article 'Till I Die' (November/December 2008), Captain Stephen Court made a very important point about our soldier's covenant when he pointed out that it does not come with an expiry date. This is significant. We can't simply declare that we no longer feel called to be a soldier or that we no longer agree with every aspect of the covenant, then pick and choose which parts we adhere to and which we disregard.

I'm reminded of Samson. Samson was bound by a covenant without an expiry date (Judges 13:7), a covenant that he didn't even willingly enter into (Judges 13, cf 1 Samuel 1, Luke 1, Leviticus 27:28, 29), a covenant that he either didn't like to obey or at the very least struggled to keep.

Samson, like a Salvation Army soldier, was not to drink nor was he to defile himself. He was a liar at times (Judges 16:7ff). He was a killer (see Judges 14:19), he visited prostitutes (Judges 16:1), he put himself and others ahead of God at times (Judges 14:17), he disobeyed his vows. Samson transgressed his covenant with God. But the Lord

did not forsake him (see Judges 16:22, Romans 3:3, 4). At some times in his life Samson, like many of us, was better at following the Lord's direction than at others. At times he was greatly used by God. At times he experienced the great blessings that accompanied his covenant. At times Samson drew on the strength of the Lord and was used greatly by God to accomplish his purposes. At other times Samson sinned.

Every time in his life that Samson turned to and drew on the strength of the Lord, the Lord delivered him. No matter what Samson did, the Lord did not leave him. He still reaped the benefits of his covenant with the Lord until one very significant day.

I'm sure it was a surprise to Samson, who had lied, visited prostitutes, sinned and transgressed his covenant in his life, that one day after the covenant made on his behalf by someone else had been violated (by someone else, see Judges 16:18), the Lord's strength of his covenant was not available to him (Judges 16:20).

Samson disobeyed his covenant and finally – after being given many chances – the Lord allowed him to experience the natural and logical consequences of disobeying his covenant. Samson was blinded, bound and imprisoned (Judges 16:21).

But the story does not end there. This is significant. Samson did not fulfil his vow. Samson sinned. Samson disregarded his covenant. Because he did this, he suffered natural and logical consequences, but the Lord did not release him from his covenant (see Judges 16:22).

God is faithful even when we are faithless. God did not forsake Samson. When Samson repented, turned to the Lord and drew on the strength of the Lord that was provided through his covenant, the Lord used Samson to save his people and Samson is now forever remembered as a hero of the faith (Hebrews 11).

This is important for Salvation Army soldiers and officers. We, like Samson, are bound to God through a covenant that does not have an expiry date before we die (Romans 7:2, 3). As such, if we do not live up to our covenant, like Samson, we will find that we are not as effective as we could be and we will find that we will suffer the natural and logical consequences of disrespecting our covenants.

However, no matter what we have done, no matter how far we have strayed, no matter how many times we have fallen short of our covenantal promises, while we are still alive there is still the opportunity to turn to the Lord (repent) and draw on our covenant and his strength.

This is one of the many benefits of covenant. We are bound to God until we die. As this is the case, rather than suffering the natural consequences of struggling against our vows, let us defend them with zeal and continue to draw on the strength of the Lord. Then, like Samson, we will surely see many people saved.

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