



Samson & Delilah

Samson was a man of great size and strength.



His strength came from his uncut hair.



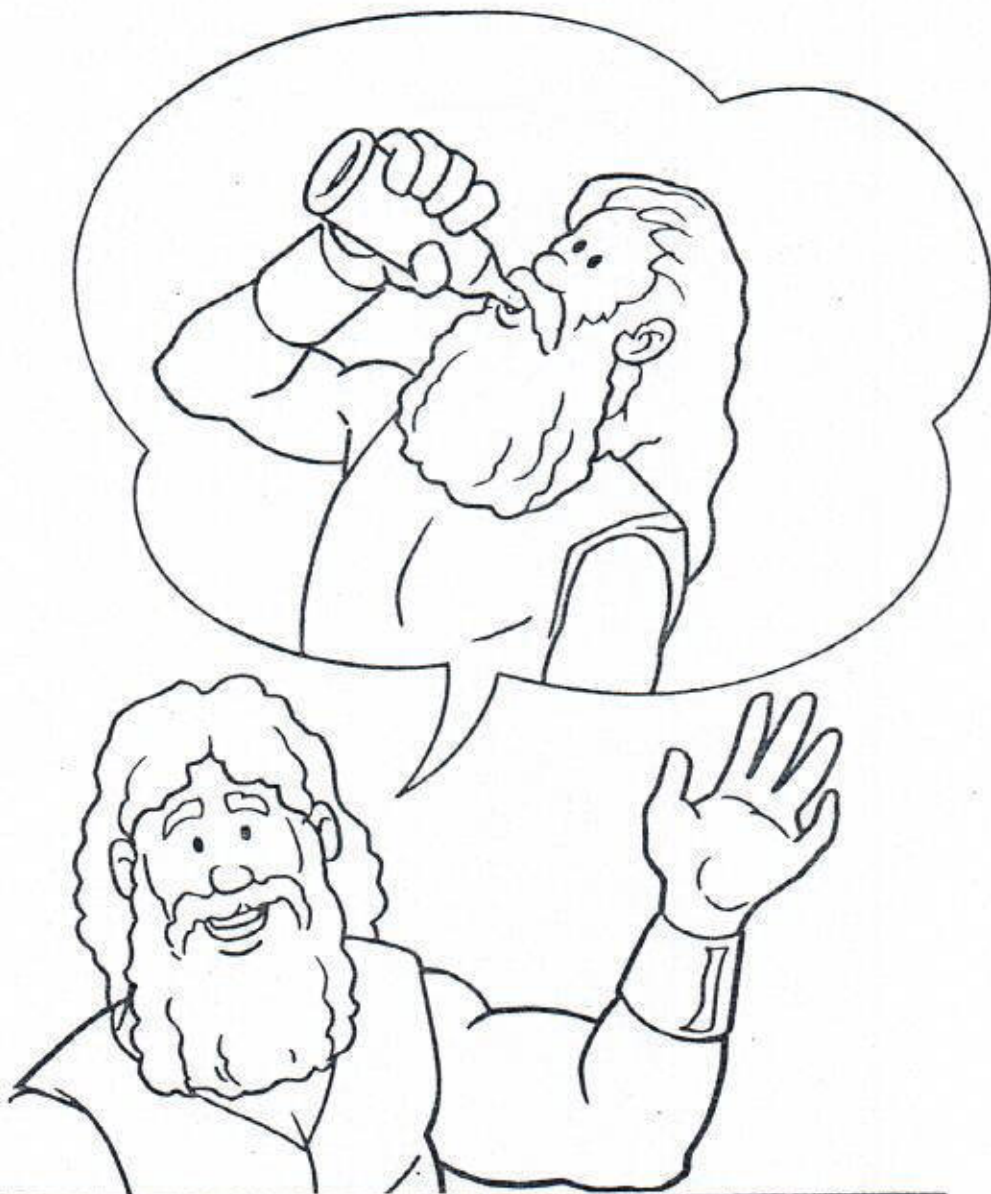
Samson loved a woman named Delilah.



The leaders of the Philistines asked her to find out what gave Samson his great strength.



In exchange for the secret, all of the leaders of the Philistines promised to give Delilah eleven hundred pieces of silver.



Samson told Delilah several stories about his strength, but they were always lies.



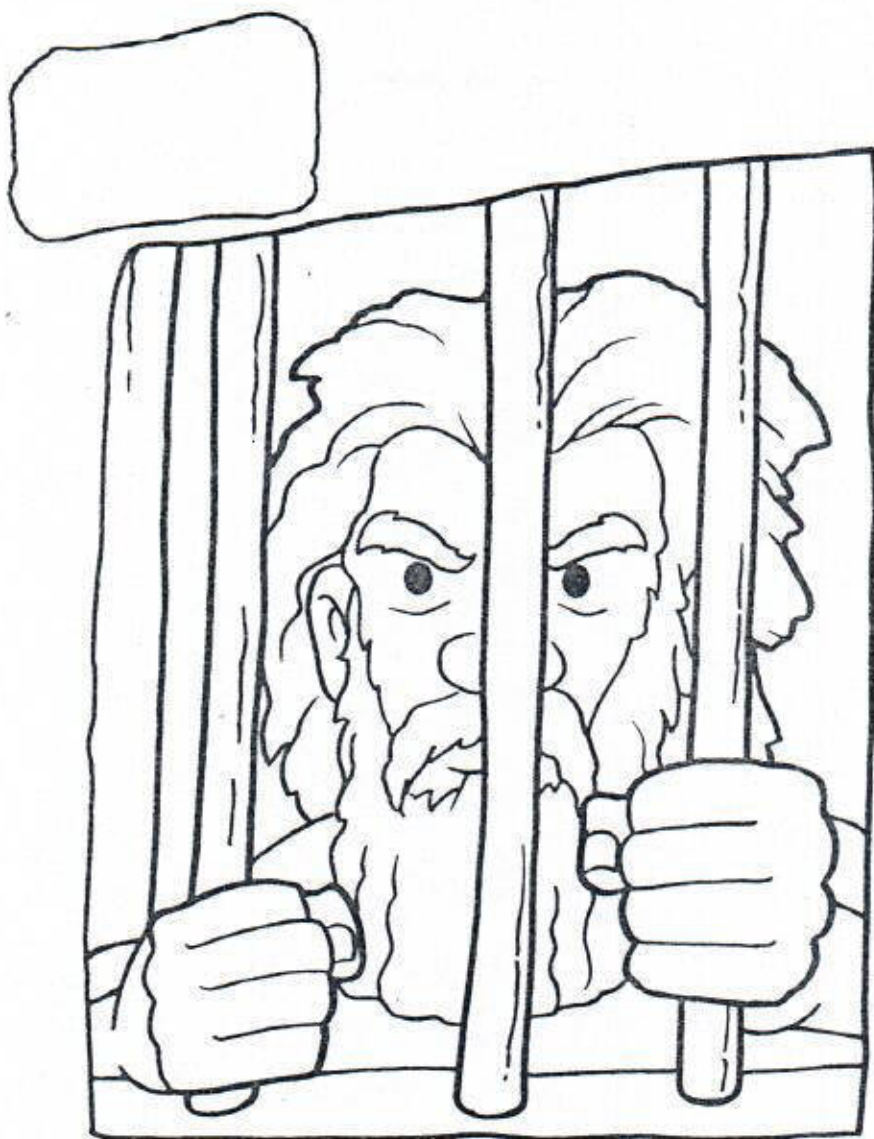
Delilah kept begging Samson to tell her his secret.
Finally Samson told her that his strength was in his hair.



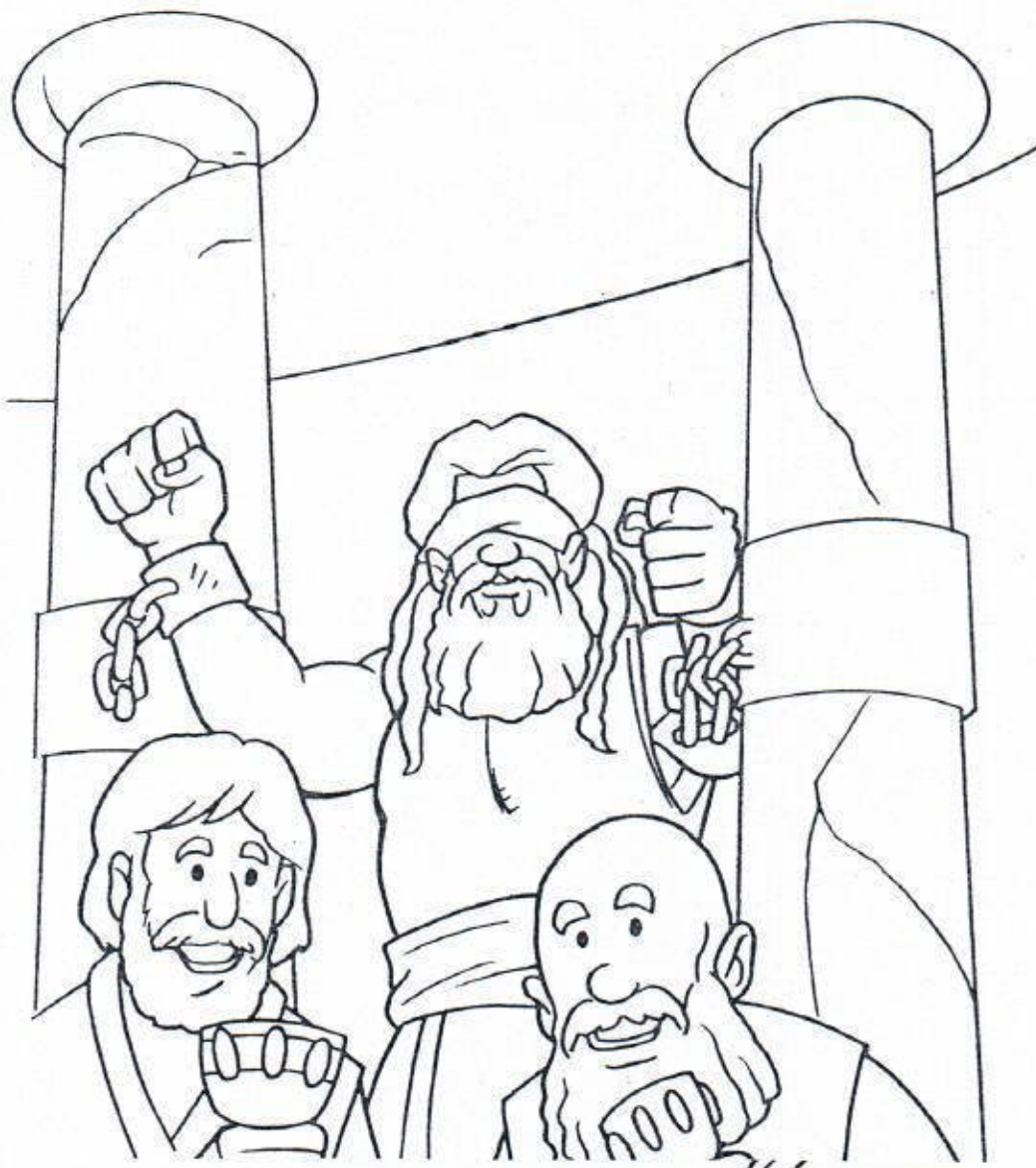
Delilah betrayed Samson and told the
Philistines the secret.



Samson fell asleep and Delilah had one of the
Philistines come and cut Samson's hair.



Because Samson lost his strength, they were able to capture him and put him in prison. After a while in prison, Samson's hair grew and so did his strength.



The Philistines brought Samson to their temple.



He stood between some pillars and was so strong again that he was able to pull the pillars down and destroy the temple along with many Philistines.

The Strongman Samson

Judges 13:2-14:4

In time, Israel began to worship idols again. So God gave them to their enemies. These enemies were the Philistines. They worshiped an idol called Dagon. This god had a fish's head on a man's body.

The Philistines took all the Israelites' swords and spears. Then they couldn't fight. They robbed Israel of their crops, so they starved. The people cried to God, and God heard them.

Among the tribe of Dan lived a man named Manoah. An angel came to Manoah's wife and said, "You will have a son. When he grows up he will save Israel from the Philistines. But your son must never drink any wine. His hair must grow long—he'll be a Nazarite priest."

The child was born and named Samson. He became the strongest man mentioned in the Bible. He didn't lead an army in war like Gideon. The things he did to set his people free, he did alone.

Samson met a Philistine woman in Timnah. "I want her for my wife," he told his father. This didn't make Samson's parents happy. But they didn't know God would use this marriage. It would help free Israel from the Philistines.

Questions: What was different about Samson? Why were his parents unhappy about his choice for a wife?

The Riddle at the Wedding

Judges 14:10-20

Samson's wedding feast lasted a whole week. There, the young Philistines enjoyed telling riddles. "I have a riddle," said Samson. "If you answer it, I'll give you thirty suits of clothing. If not, you give me thirty suits of clothing."

They agreed. "Tell us your riddle."

Samson told them this riddle:

Out of the eater came something to eat.

Out of the strong came something sweet.

The Philistines didn't know the answer. At last, they went to Samson's wife. "Learn from Samson the riddle's answer. If you don't, we'll burn you up in your family's house."

"Samson, if you love me you'll explain the riddle," his wife pleaded and cried. Because she nagged him, he told her about a lion he had killed, bare-handed, which later became a home to honeybees. Samson's wife told the Philistines. Samson had to bring them thirty suits of clothes.

The Lord's Spirit came upon Samson. He killed thirty Philistines and took their clothes. Samson was so angry that he left his wife and came home to live.

Questions: How did the Philistines learn the answer to Samson's riddle? How did Samson get the clothes to give to the Philistines?

A Thousand Killed with a Jawbone

Judges 15:9-16:5

Soon Samson went to live under a split rock called Etam.

The Philistine army attacked the tribe of Judah. "What do you want from us?" Judah asked.

"We have come to bind and kill Samson," they answered.

Then 3,000 men of Judah went to see Samson. "Why do you kill the Philistines?" they asked. "We suffer for what you do." So, tying Samson with new ropes they took him away. The Philistines shouted joyfully when they saw Samson brought to them. But they didn't know what he was about to do. Samson broke the new ropes as if they were string. He grabbed a mule's jawbone and started swinging. That day, Samson killed a thousand Philistines. Afterwards, he was so thirsty he was about to die. He called out to God and water sprang up from the ground.

Samson fell in love with another Philistine woman. The name of this woman was Delilah. The Philistine rulers wanted to stop Samson more than ever. They came to Delilah, "Find out what makes Samson so strong. If you help us we'll give you 1,100 pieces of silver."

Questions: Why did the Philistines attack Judah? Who was the woman Samson fell in love with?

Samson's Strength Is Lost

Judges 16:16-22

Samson was tired of Delilah's pleading and nagging. Day after day, she begged him for the secret of his strength. So he finally told her the mystery. "My hair has never been cut," he said. "I've been a Nazarite priest for God since my birth. If my hair were cut, my Nazarite vow would be broken. God would leave me and so would my great strength."

Delilah smiled. At last she had the secret. The Philistine chiefs came with money in their hands. That night Samson slept with his head in her lap. He was sound asleep. The Philistines quietly cut off Samson's long hair. He began to weaken and all his strength left. Then Delilah shouted, "Wake up, Samson. The Philistines are after you."

Samson jumped up thinking, "This is like the other times. I'll shake them off." He didn't know that the Lord had left him. His hair was cut and his vow was broken. The Philistines easily took Samson prisoner and gouged out his eyes.

They took him down to Gaza. Locked in bronze shackles, Samson turned the grindstone in their mill. But slowly his hair began to grow long again.

Questions: What was the secret of Samson's strength—his long hair or his vow to God? What did the Philistines do to Samson?



The Death of Samson

Judges 16:23-31

Our god, Dagon, has given us Samson!" The Philistines shouted and feasted. Dagon's temple was filled with 3,000 men women and children. "Bring in Samson to entertain us," they laughed.

Samson came, performed, and rested against the temple's pillars. There he prayed: "O God, remember me and strengthen me. Let me pay them back for my eyes." He then leaned his weight against the pillars. "Let me die with the Philistines," he said and pushed powerfully. The temple fell on the feasting Philistines.

Samson killed more Philistines in his death than he had in all his life.

Questions: Who did the Philistines think had given them Samson? Did God answer Samson's prayer?

Sunday after Theophany

We have heard St. John the Baptist preaching in the desert about repentance for sin. He spoke of the preparation of the narrow and difficult paths of our hearts for the Kingdom of Heaven and Jesus Christ our king and our God. Today we hear the Saviour himself repeating the same message, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." This plainly means the only way to heaven is by placing some controls on our conduct, on our behavior and subjecting all we do to the grace of God. That is the way of penance.

There are some who ask, how is it possible that God, who loves us so much as to permit his only begotten Son to endure terrible suffering and shameful death to save us from the bitterness of hell, asks us to choose a most difficult path towards him. Since we are now accustomed to judge everything according to our own nature, it is hard for us to understand how someone can love another, and at the same time permit that person to carry a heavy burden of suffering and crosses. It is incompatible with our imperfect and sin-damaged nature, but not with the infinitely perfect God. God loves infinitely and at the same time can expect a great deal from us because He is mild and merciful.

In order to understand more fully how our God can love and at the same time expect us to change from our sin – filled selves, we may consider a few all too true facts in our own lives. We often seek assistance from a physician, submit ourselves or our children to necessary treatment surgery wherein we and our children must suffer. Perhaps the suffering lasts for many days, months or even years. Nevertheless, no one calls doctors evil people because at times, or for a time, they afflict some pain on us, or those we love. On the contrary, we praise their efforts. We are aware they do not intend to inflict the suffering, but their objective is to secure health for us. But when it comes to our Creator God, we criticize when He, as the wisest physician permits pain to afflict man, not for the purpose of tormenting us, but to cure us from the sinfulness, even wickedness of our souls. As physicians offer medicine or submit us to surgery in order to save our bodies, from destruction, so also does God send us discomfort that through it we may be cured of dangerous illness to our souls, which is damnable sin.

Our soul is exposed to three kinds of enemies. The first and most dangerous is our own weakened body, or the desires of the flesh and their inordinate tendencies, which are the effects of our fall from perfection in Eden. This is our most dangerous enemy because we cannot hide from ourselves, neither can we flee from or defend ourselves. It

remains for us to subject the desires of our nature to obedience of the Commandments of God. We must subject ourselves to the grace of God, to his strength in us. We must expose our physical self to God's mercy and strength. The second enemy of our soul is the world and its alluring wealth, temptations and tendencies which are so dear to our spoiled nature. We know how we would like to be rich in perishable physical things, to enjoy power and splendor, to indulge our weak desires and impress everyone around us. It is difficult to renounce all these things the world wishes to gift us with. It hopes to place at our disposal, our inordinate enjoyment so many perishable unnecessary things. The most powerful enemy, the third we must also consider is the devil. He knows all our weaknesses and how to use them against us. He is also the greatest enemy of our Creator God. Knowing that he cannot harm the all-powerful God, he tries to destroy us who are created in his name and likeness which is the immortal soul within the human body. The devil attempts to ruin, to destroy, to destroy the plans of God concerning the salvation and remuneration of man.

The incarnate Son of God took upon himself the fight against this powerful enemy, the devil. By his suffering and death upon the cross and his subsequent triumphal Resurrection from the grave, Christ destroys the power of the devil. The devil cannot harm us unless we permit him to harm us by exposing ourselves to his temptation. God also helps us to fight against the other enemies which includes the temptation of this earth. Every sin, even the smallest besides a drop of inordinate pleasure contains a chalice full of suffering and bitterness. In this way our heavenly Father constantly reminds us that the pleasures of this life and earthly goods are not at all our aim. It is not for this we have been placed on earth. It is not for this that we have been gifted with life. They do not represent the purpose of our daily living. Our ideal is far beyond this earth and its pensive pleasures. It remains in and with God our Father in heaven. We may compare earthly wealth to a path with bushes and roses on either side. These roses may be compared to earthly goods whose purpose is to remind us of the presence of God and of his goodness towards us, who are the greatest of his creation. Thus constantly reminded, we are led closer to him and are more aware of his gracious presence. However, if we stop by the bushes and attempt to pick or hold even a few roses, we quickly feel the pain of their thorns. Since the prick of these thorns hurts, in the future, we will hasten our steps when walking along the rose walk and not stop for their sake. Hence, the plain purpose of suffering in this life, which by the way, we chose to introduce into man's existence by our willing subjection to sin, is to remind us that our home is in paradise, our future is in heaven, not at all here and now.

Against the enemy of our own body, we must always fight its laziness, so that we work and serve our God and respect our own dignity. Penance is the only way to overcome

the obstacles of the flesh which are so appealing in our imagination. Christ exhorts us to tread the path of penance not only in words, but by his own example. He did not have to suffer, but He chose subjection to penance so we would readily believe his words. Since He carried the heavy cross first, let us respond positively to him who invites us, "If anyone would like to be my follower, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow after me" Matthew 16:24; Mark 8: 34.