

which betrayed him to lust; and now they are first pulled out." **To Gaza.** The southernmost city of Palestine, near the Mediterranean Sea, then the capital of the Philistine league; still a flourishing place containing fifteen thousand inhabitants, called *Azzah*. **Fetters of brass.** Literally, "brasses," as we say "irons." **Did grind.** By moving the upper millstone around the lower with a handle. This was an additional disgrace, because the labor when light was done by women, when heavy by asses. (2) *Sin has a harder service than righteousness.* (3) *None is so lost as he who has lost God's favor.*

22. The hair of his head. The long hair was a token of his Nazirite vow, and pledge on God's part of divine power. When it was lost by his own folly the vow was broken and the power gone. **Began to grow.** And with its growth there may have been in the champion's heart a renewal of his vow of consecration as a Nazirite, or one set apart to God's service. (4) *See a token of God's infinite mercy in forgiveness.*

23. The lords of the Philistines. At this time the Philistines were governed by five chiefs in joint sovereignty. Afterward the king of Gath became the Philistine over-lord or chief ruler. See 1 Sam. 37: 2; 29: 1-11. **To offer a great sacrifice.** The heathen sacrifices were generally accompanied with abominable scenes of debauchery and wickedness, for idolatry is apt to be a defilement of human lust and passion. **Dagon their god.** The national divinity of the Philistines, named from *dag*, "a fish." It symbolized the life-giving forces dwelling in the sea, and was generally represented with the head of a man on the body and tail of a fish. **Our god hath delivered.** Though they had made Samson prisoner by treachery, they looked upon the victory as given by their god, and showing the superiority of Dagon over Jehovah. (5) *Shall heathen see a divine power in the affairs of men and Christians fail to see it?*

24. When the people saw him. Brought from prison to be mocked by the crowd. **They praised their god.** As Kittó says on this passage: "The question was now put upon a different ground. It was no longer a matter between Samson and the Philistines, but between Dagon and Jehovah." **The destroyer of our country.** Some of Samson's mighty acts are corded in the history, but doubtless many more were wrought. But they appear to have been done more in sport or in personal vengeance than in behalf of his people. (6) *The true hero is the man whose deeds are done for his fellow-men.*

25. When their hearts were merry. Among heathen nations a great feast accompanied every public sacrifice. **Make us sport.** By rough gambols and feats of strength, amid the mockery of the spectators. (7) *The backslidden follower of God becomes an object of derision to the world.* **Between the pillars.** Perhaps upon a stage against the two main pillars of the building; or it may have been that he retired there to rest after his exhibition.

26. Unto the lad. Some think that this may have been an Israelite boy, in the secret of the plot, and forewarned in time to escape. **That I may feel the pil-**

lars. The best explanation of the event is that Samson performed upon a platform before the front of the building, in full view of the crowd within and on the roof; and then left the platform, and rested against the front pillars of the temple, out of sight from those overhead.

27. The lords of the Philistines. All the chiefs of the five confederated cities, with their families, and the nobles of the tribe, were with him in the temple feasting. **Upon the roof about three thousand.** These were the common multitudes, unable to find place inside the temple.

28. Samson called unto the Lord. In his darkness he sees God as he never saw him in the light, and he calls upon God for help in his need as he never called on him in his prosperity. (8) *How often does sorrow bring hearts into communion with God!* **Lord God.** He invokes the high name Jehovah, as well as the common name God, showing by his use of the words some conception of spiritual truth. **Remember me.** As if feeling that he had long forgotten in his blindness. (9) *How easy to think that God does not see us when we fall to see him! Strengthen me.* He now felt his dependence, not on self, but on Omnipotence. (10) *Blessed is that trouble which teaches us to trust in God. Only this once.* Since in that once is to be his last effort. **Avenged of the Philistines.** His prayer breathes the spirit of Old Testament religion, rather than of New, for it sought judgment and not mercy. Yet it was in accord with the age, and with the character of the hero. **My two eyes.** Literally, "for one of my two eyes," as if no vengeance could compensate him for both.

29. Took hold of the two middle pillars. The roof was undoubtedly flat, following the Egyptian architecture, and the temple may have stood upon a declivity, as the topography of Gaza indicates; so when the two pillars in the middle were taken out the entire building would fall in destruction.

30. Let me die with the Philistines. This was not suicide, because his purpose was to kill his country's enemies, and his own death was accepted as necessary to the slaughter. **The house fell upon the lords.** These are especially mentioned, because their death robbed the Philistines of their leaders, and thus broke the power of their domination. **Upon all the people.** Those upon the roof falling with it upon those within, and all slain together. **The dead which he slew.** Not less than five or six thousand people perished in this overthrow, a far greater number than is mentioned as slain during Samson's life-time.

31. His brethren. His fellow Danites, taking advantage of the terror among the Philistines. **Took him.** Found his dead body among the ruins. **Between Zorah and Eshtaoel.** Two towns in the Shefelah, or foot-hills between Judah and Philistia. **Burying-place.** Probably a cave. **Manoah his father.** For an account of him, see Judg. 13. **Twenty years.** He probably exercised rule on the frontiers, at the same time while Eli was directing affairs in the center of the land.

TIME.—1190 B. C.

PLACE.—Gaza, in south-western Palestine.

DOCTRINAL SUGGESTION.—The fear of God.

QUESTIONS FOR SENIOR STUDENTS.

1. Blind.

Who was made blind by the Philistines?
Who was he? what had he done? why was he made blind?
How had he come into the power of the Philistines?
How was he regarded by the Philistines?
Under what vow had he been born?
Find his long hair any thing to do with his strength?
What was the secret of his gigantic might?

2. Mocked.

Where had Samson been confined?
What occasion gave them opportunity to mock and deride him?
What was the character of the gathering? vers. 25, 27.
What inference do you draw as to the size of the town of Gaza at this time?
How could people be on the roof of a house and see what went on inside?
How could Samson "make sport" when blind?
What can you find explaining this scene?

HOME READINGS.

M. Death of Samson. Judg. 16. 21-31.

Tu. Samson's strength. Judg. 14. 1-9.

W. Prayer and answer. Jer. 15. 15-21.

Th. Judgment from God. Psa. 9. 1-10.

F. Strength in weakness. 1 Cor. 1. 20-31.

S. Alliance with evil. 2 Cor. 6. 11-18.

S. Spiritual strength. Eph. 3. 14-21.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Great men are not always wise. Job. 32. 9.

LESSON HYMNS.

No. 114, Dominion Hymnal.

Holy Spirit, faithful Guide,
Ever near the Christian's side.

No. 86, Dominion Hymnal.

I am thine, O Lord, I have heard thy voice,
And it told thy love to me.

No. 35, Dominion Hymnal.

Take the name of Jesus with you,
Child of sorrow and of woe.