

the Mediterranean; then the capital of the Philistine league; still a flourishing place, called Azazah, and containing 15,000 people. **Fetters of brass.** Literally, "brasses," as we say "irons." **Did grind.** By moving the upper millstone around upon the lower with a handle. This was an additional disgrace, because the labour, when light, was done by women; when heavy, by asses. 1. Sin has a harder service than righteousness. 2. How low are they who have enjoyed and lost God's favour!

22. Hair of his head. The long hair was a token of his Nazarite vow, with its promise 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 Nazarite. 3. 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. **To offer a great sacrifice.** The heathen sacrifices were generally accompanied with abominable scenes of debauchery and wickedness. **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 obtained by treachery, they looked upon the victory as given by their god, and showing the superiority of Dagon over Jehovah. 4. Shall heathen see a divine power in the affairs of man, and Christians fail to see it?

24, 25. Saw him. Brought from prison, to be mocked by the crowd. **Destroyer of our country.** Doubtless Samson wrought many more achievements than the few recorded in the history. **Hearts were merry.** Among heathen nations acts of worship were always connected with a feast. **Make us sport.** By rough gambols, feats of strength, and the mockery of the spectators. The word means to dance, or to play. **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. 5. Every backslidden follower of God becomes an object of derision to the world.

26, 27. The lad. Some think that this may have been an Israelite boy, in the secret of the plot, and forewarned in time to escape. **Feel the pillars.** These may have been in the front of the building, and upholding the roof. Samson perhaps performed upon a platform before the open front, in full view of the crowd within and on the roof, and then rested against the pillars, out of sight from those above. **Lords of the Philistines.** All the leading families of the people, from their five cities.

Upon the roof. These were the common multitudes, unable to find place within.

28. Called upon the Lord. In his darkness he realizes his need of God as he never had realized it in the light. 6. Thus sorrow often brings hearts into knowledge of God. **Lord God.** He invokes the high name Jehovah, as well as the common name God, showing some perception of spiritual truth by his use of the words. **Remember me.** Feeling that he had been forgotten in his blindness. 7. How easy to think that God does not see us, when we fail to see him! **Strengthen me.** He now felt his dependence, not on self, but on Omnipotence. 8. That trouble comes as a blessing which teaches us trust in God. **Only this once.** Since in that once is to be his last effort. **Avenged of the Philistines.** The spirit of Old Testament religion, rather than of New; yet in accord with the age and the character of the hero. **My two eyes.** Literally, "one of my two eyes:" as if no vengeance could compensate him for both.

29, 30. Two middle pillars. We have no knowledge from which to form a conception of the temple and the position of the pillars. **Let me die.** 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. **Fell upon the lords.** These are especially named, since their death broke the power of the Philistine 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 lifetime.

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

GOLDEN TEXT.

The God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people. *Ps. 68. 35.*

OUTLINE.

1. The Humbled Hero, v. 21-25.
2. The Prayer for Power, v. 26-28.
3. The Day of Death, v. 29-31.

HOME READINGS.

- M. The death of Samson. *Judg. 16. 21-31.*
 Tw. The birth of Samson. *Judg. 13. 6-24.*
 W. Samson and the lion. *Judg. 14. 5-19.*
 Th. Samson slaying the Philistines. *Judg. 15. 4-16.*
 F. Samson betrayed. *Judg. 16. 4-20.*
 S. The laughter of fools. *Ecl. 7. 1-12.*
 S. The way of wisdom. *Prov. 4. 1-18.*