

Theme: The world and culture in which we live will always seek to conform God’s people to itself. The call of Christ is ever for us to be sanctified – a people set apart – so that we may proclaim the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into this marvelous light.

Background: The downward spiral of judges continues. From Othniel, a deliverer who brought rest – to Samson, who disturbed the Israelites “rest” among the Philistines.

Introduction: Anticipation and disappointment – It’s nothing new.

I. Seeing the Patterns (14:1-20)

NOTE: We are not disappointed by Samson’s strength – but by his character.

A. Samson’s pattern

1. Ruled by desire (14:2)

a. For women

- I saw a woman! Get her for my wife.
- Most of his dilemmas will be surrounding a woman

ASIDE: Mom and Dad face disappointment and sorrow

b. What was “right in his eyes” (14:3,7)

- Concern for self, not the people of God
- Who doesn’t like a party?

c. Poor judgment

- Antagonizing your “guests”? The riddle (14:14)
- With predictable results

d. Vengeance

- The ‘boys’ solve his riddle – only he knows how they did it.
- In hot anger (14:19)

2. A different “judge”

a. Twenty years (15:20; 16:31)

- Peace?

b. No “model” judge

- No moral or ceremonial purity
- No calling the people to cast off the Philistine rulers

NOTE: We expect a judge “in the Spirit” – mighty and noble. We see one fatally flawed.

- No peace
- No deliverance

c. A personal reflection of Israel

- Set apart for the Lord, but driven by his own desires
- More like the culture around him than a child of the Covenant

B. The Philistines’ pattern

1. Facing a dilemma

a. Losing their shirts over a riddle

- Plow with his heifer – Threaten his bride.

b. Lose their crops and groves

- Retaliation – Kill the woman and her family!

- c. Get Samson out of hiding
 - Threaten the people of Judah if they don't turn him in
- 2. Finding disaster
 - Thirty Philistines die in Ashkelon (14:19)
 - Crops and their olive groves are destroyed (15:5)
 - They are struck "hip and thigh" (15:8)
 - One thousand will die from a jawbone! (15:15)

NOTE: No matter what they do – they lose! (Psalm 2) God gives great hope to His people then and now.

II. Seeing God's Power

A. In the Spirit of the Lord

- 1. The Lord's chosen instrument
 - Before he was born
- 2. An instrument of extraordinary power
 - The Spirit of the Lord *rushed* upon him (14:4,19; 15:14)

B. The Lord's provision

- 1. An answered prayer (15:19)
 - Samson is sustained
 - As in the wilderness (Exodus 17:6; Numbers 20:8)

NOTE: When Samson "falls into the hands of the Philistines", it will not be because of the Lord's failure or lack of provision – it will be a result of his own sin and failing.

APPLICATION: We cannot blame God for not rescuing us from the consequences of foolish, risky and disobedient acts freely made.

- 2. God's patience with Samson

III. Seeing God's Purposes

A. Judging the nations (14:4)

- 1. Israel was to be an instrument of judgment
- 2. God used Samson to that end

B. Preserving His people

- 1. A people in danger of extinction
 - Succumbing to the surrounding culture

APPLICATION: The danger of assimilation/accommodation. The call to sanctification.

- 2. A champion for Israel
- 3. A champion for us

Conclusion: The Lord uses these weak vessels to accomplish his eternal plans. We are called to seek the Lord with heart, soul, and strength. Though we have not attained to such a calling we are still able to serve him as we strive to be made holy.