

“God’s Secret Will”
Judges 14
(Preached at Trinity, July 5, 2015)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we come to **Chapter 14** we jump ahead from Samson’s birth to his adulthood. In the previous chapter Manoah enquired of God how they were to raise up their son. In answer Manoah was shown a manifestation of the glory of God. The Angel revealed His name, My name is Wonderful, and then He ascended up to heaven in the fire of the sacrifice. The answer to Manoah was train up this child in a manner that reflected the glory of God. This is the charge to each of us.
2. Manoah knew very well that he had just seen God in the flesh.
Judges 13:22 NAU - "So Manoah said to his wife, "We will surely die, for we have seen God."
3. Sadly, in what we see in the adult Samson, his parents came short in expressing to him the character of God. Or perhaps, his parents did well, yet Samson failed to comprehend the full nature of his Nazirite consecration nor of the holiness of God.
4. As we enter **Chapter 14** we find Samson as a young, self-willed man. A Philistine girl has attracted his attention. It was purely a physical attraction. A young man with wisdom and piety has learned the virtue of self-control. He will also value sound counsel, particularly from his parents. We see neither in Samson.
 - a. He does nothing to guard his heart against a relationship with a foreign girl which God forbids.
Judges 14:3 NAU - "Get her for me, for she looks good to me."
 - b. His heart was consistent with all of the people of Israel in his day. Everyone was doing whatever pleased their hearts—doing evil in God’s eyes because it was right in their own eyes.
Judges 21:25 NAU - "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes."
 - c. Samson also resisted the counsel of his parents. He really bears the marks of an incorrigible child.
Judges 14:3 NAU - "Then his father and his mother said to him, "Is there no woman among the daughters of your relatives, or among all our people, that you go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?"
His only response was by way of an imperative – “Get her for me!”
5. Everything about this passage displays the sinfulness of it—a strong-willed young man seeking only the desires of his flesh to the great grief of his parents. But then we read a the confusing words of **Verse 4**
Judges 14:4 NAU - " However, his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD, for He was seeking an occasion against the Philistines. Now at that time the Philistines were ruling over Israel."

- a. Some interpret the verse in such a way as to make it appear that Samson was seeking the opportunity against the Philistines—that he is showing affection for this Philistine girl so he can find an opportunity to attack the Philistines. This isn't likely.
 - b. The only reasonable interpretation is to apply this to God. But this presents questions for us. Would God lead Samson into sin so that it might provide an opportunity for Him to bring judgment upon the Philistines.
6. This passage sets before us the mystery of God's sovereign purpose. Tonight I want us to explore this subject. I'll set it before you under three heads:
- I. God has a purpose
 - II. God often works through second causes or the use of means
 - III. God's sovereign will is often hid from our eyes
- I. God has a purpose that He is working out according to His sovereign will
- A. God has decreed all things in eternity
 1. LBC – (Trinity Hymnal, 672) - Chapter 3:1
“God hath decreed in himself, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably, all things, whatsoever comes to pass . . .”
 2. God formed all things according to His good pleasure
 - a. There was a time when there was only God and all of creation existed only in His infinite mind
 - b. God created according to His divine good pleasure
Psalm 135:6 – “Whatsoever the LORD pleased, *that* did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.”
Psalm 115:3 – “But our God *is* in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.”
 3. God governs every aspect of the universe. Not a pebble moves upon the farthest planet that God has not ordained
 - B. God exercises sovereign dominion over all the inhabitants of the earth.
Daniel 4:35 NAU - "All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And *among* the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, 'What have You done?'"
 1. LBC – (Trinity Hymnal, 673 - Chapter 5:1)
God the good Creator of all things, in his infinite power and wisdom, doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures and things,¹ from the greatest even to the least,² by his most wise and holy providence, to the end for the which they were created, according unto his infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of his own will; to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, infinite goodness, and mercy.³
 2. Every action of every man is beneath the control of God – This is the clear teaching of Scripture
Acts 17:28 – “In Him we live and move and have our being”
 3. We awakened this morning by God's sovereign decree. You are sitting where you are and listening to his sermon by God's sovereign decree.

4. We've seen thus far that Samson's birth was by Divine design. God appeared to this barren woman declaring to her that she would conceive and bear a son. Samson was consecrated from the womb to be used of God in the deliverance of His people.
Judges 13:5 NAU - "For behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines."

II. God often works through second causes or the use of means

- A. By this we mean the countless events and circumstances that God orders to bring about His ultimate end
 1. **Verse 4** tells us that God had ordered this circumstance in carrying out His judgment upon the Philistines
Judges 14:4 NAU - "However, his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD, for He was seeking an occasion against the Philistines"
 2. God is not limited to the use of means. He can work through them, above them, or without them.
 LBC – (Trinity Hymnal, 672) - Chapter 3:1
 “God hath decreed in himself, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably, all things, whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby god neither is the author of sin nor hath fellowship with any therein; nor is violence offered to the will of the creature, nor yet is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established; in which appears His wisdom in disposing all things, and power and faithfulness in accomplishing His decree.”
 3. I often think of the many events that brought about Pat and me meeting and marrying—without which the lives of my children and grandchildren would not exist.
 4. The direct result of Samson's relationship with this girl was Samson taking 300 foxes or jackals and tying torches between their tails causing them to run through the standing grain of the Philistines destroying their crops. Couldn't God have used lightening to accomplish the same? Or just cause it to immediately wilt and die like the fig tree cursed by Christ?
 Yes, but God chose this means for His own glory.
- B. What about the sinfulness of the act? Doesn't this make God the Author of sin?
 1. Sin is always the fruit of the sinful human heart
 LBC – (Trinity Hymnal, 672) - Chapter 3:1
 “God hath decreed in himself, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably, all things, whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby god neither is the author of sin nor hath fellowship with any therein; nor is violence offered to the will of the creature . . .”
 2. God decrees the act while not infringing upon our liberty of will.
 Loraine Boettner – “Adam acted as freely as if there had been no decree, and yet as infallibly as if there had been no liberty”

3. Samson's lust was all his own – and yet he accomplished God's will
Judges 14:3 NAU - "Get her for me, for she looks good to me."
4. God used the sinful Assyrians to bring judgment down upon Israel – and then God judged the Assyrians for their sinfulness.
Isaiah 10:12-13 NAU - "So it will be that when the Lord has completed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, *He will say*, "I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the pomp of his haughtiness." ¹³ For he has said, "By the power of my hand and by my wisdom I did *this*, For I have understanding; And I removed the boundaries of the peoples And plundered their treasures, And like a mighty man I brought down *their* inhabitants,"
5. God rules and overrules the hearts of kings
Proverbs 21:1 – "The king's heart *is* in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will."
6. God raised up Pharaoh and hardened his heart so that He might display His power.
Romans 9:17 NAS - " For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth."
7. God used sinful Judas Iscariot to betray Christ to His crucifixion. Yet, the Bible makes it clear Judas was motivated by his own lust for gain. Not only Judas but also Pilate, Herod and the rest
Acts 4:27-28 NAS - "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸ to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur."
8. Many dispute this and accuse God of injustice. Paul anticipated such charges.
Romans 9:19-21 NAS - "You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" ²⁰ On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? ²¹ Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use, and another for common use?"
9. We always have to remember, God takes the sinful deeds that flow from wicked hearts and uses them to accomplish His righteous purpose. After Joseph's brothers wickedly sold him into captivity Joseph assured them.
Genesis 50:20 NAU - "As for you, you meant evil against me, *but* God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive."
10. God has done this throughout history. The sinful deeds of men have even served to advance and strengthen the church. Persecution reveals God's good purposes.
Charles Hodge – "The acts of the wicked in persecuting the early Church were ordained of God as the means for the wider and more speedy proclamation of the Gospel. The sufferings of the martyrs were the means not only of extending but of purifying the Church."

- III. God's sovereign will is often hid from our eyes
- A. God's sovereign or decretive will is mysterious to us
1. God's revealed will is clear. His revealed will finds its fullness in the Scriptures. We can know God's revealed will. It is not hidden from us.
 2. But God's sovereign will is secret and bound up in His infinite mind. God's revealed will is for us to know, but not His sovereign will
Deuteronomy 29:29 NAU - "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law."
- B. Samson's parents were completely unaware of how God was working in this
Judges 14:4 NAU - " However, his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD, for He was seeking an occasion against the Philistines."
1. We cannot use this to excuse Samson's sin. The narrator is simply telling us that God was going to use Samson's sinful actions in fulfilling His purpose.
 2. This is true of all things. God has ordained all things, even the sinful acts of men and uses every deed for His glory.
 3. We can't always see how the events of today tie into God's purpose. What about all of the suffering? What about the difficult marriage or the troublesome child? What about the sickness or the financial struggles? Do you not know that it is all of the LORD?

Conclusion:

1. God's ultimate purpose is fixed in Christ
Ephesians 1:7-11 NAU - "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace ⁸ which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight ⁹ He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him ¹⁰ with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, *that is*, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him ¹¹ also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will"
2. God uses the means of the preaching of the Gospel to bring about our salvation. But the circumstances surrounding our salvation are many and varied. Who did God bring into your life? What circumstances were used of God?
3. And do you not know that God is using everything in your life today to conform you more and more to the image of Christ?
Romans 8:28-29 NAU - "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. ²⁹ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren"