

EXPOSITION OF JUDGES

Message #19

Judges 13:1-25

There is a statement made by the Apostle Paul about the grace of God that says “where sin abounds, grace abounds more” (Romans 5:20). The grace of God delights in saving and using depraved, vile, perverted, flesh controlled sinners. The grace of God loves to take someone that causes the religious world to scratch their heads and transforming them into become His grace leader and hero. He did it with John Newton. He did it with John Bunyan. He did it with C.I. Scofield. He did it with Hal Lindsey. He did it with Samson.

We come now to the most controversial judge in this entire book of Judges. Even though, as one writer said, this man looks like an “oversexed buffoon,” he is a man who will be remarkably used by God to do some amazing things that will actually put him in the faith hero chapter of Hebrews 11. He may have his share of flaws, but God will use him as a faith hero in a time when faith heroes were rare.

What makes Samson such an enigma is that his life is so bizarre. This man is so controversial that Cecil B. DeMille made a Hollywood film about him. It is a life that contains violence, romance, sex and murder. He is a man beset with fleshly sins and fleshly weaknesses, and yet he is God’s choice man and God will empower him to do some incredible things. He was a man of faith. He was a man used by God in a dark hour of Israel’s history.

Samson would be raised up by God to single-handedly deliver Israel and take on the Philistines in a Rambo loner-type fashion. The reason why God would use Samson is because it would illustrate more and more of his amazing grace in all of this. Samson did not seem to have the character you would look for in a leader. So God raised up Samson.

OUT OF HIS PURE GRACE, GOD BEGINS THE PROCESS OF DELIVERING HIS PEOPLE BY SOVEREIGNLY ORDAINING THE CONCEPTION AND BIRTH, THE LIFE AND THE DEATH OF HIS UNUSUAL GRACE CHOICE DELIVERER.

When you come to the life of Samson, you come to the story of a man who is connected to four women: 1) His mother, who is the most godly and faithful person in the entire Samson narrative (**13:3ff.**); 2) His wife, a Philistine from Timnah (14:2); 3) A prostitute who was from Gaza (16:2); 4) Delilah, a Philistine woman from Sorek (16:4).

There are ten historical facts revealed to us by God:

HISTORICAL FACT #1 – Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD. **13:1**

Now the background setting for the life of Samson is what we have seen over and over again in Judges. **Judges 13:1** says, the sons of Israel again were doing evil and so God gave them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years. I like what Duane Lindsey said, this is a “monotonous downward spiral” (*Judges*, p. 403).

Two major enemies of Israel were used by God to discipline Israel: the Ammonites, which had been demolished by Jephthah on the east side of the Jordan, and the Philistines on the west side (10:7). Samson would be raised up by God to “begin” (13:5) the delivering process that would not be actually completed until the days of King David. We may recall that along the Mediterranean coast there were five main cities controlled by five Philistine lords (Judges 3:3). The five cities formed a pentapolis and they were Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gath and Ekron.

Now what is so odd about Judges 13:1 is that there **is no mention that Israel cried out to the Lord for help**. The formula that we typically see in Judges is that she does evil, gets in trouble, and cries to the Lord for help. **Israel is being dominated by the Philistines and they seem to have a total lack of interest in the things of God**. Israel is not crying out to God. Israel is not repenting or confessing. They are just accepting the fact that they are being dominated by the Philistines (Judges 15:11). They are so worldly they don’t even care that they aren’t right with God, or that they are missing God’s blessings.

In this case, it is God who decides to deliver her in His pure grace . God’s grace does it all. Israel does not deserve to be delivered. She does not merit this; this is God’s pure grace.

HISTORICAL FACT #2 – There was a man married to a woman who had no children . 13:2

The man’s name is Manoah. For some reason he was named after “Noah,” but he didn’t act like Noah. He came from a city named Zorah, located about fifteen miles west of Jerusalem, near the Philistine border and he was of the tribe of Dan, the tribe that was supposed to have Philistine cities on the Mediterranean coast (Josh. 19:40-48).

HISTORICAL FACT #3 – The angel of the LORD (Jesus Christ) appears to the woman .
13:3-5

The real emphasis of this chapter is on a woman we know as Manoah’s wife and Samson’s mother. Michael Wilcock observed that she is referred to some nineteen times in chapters 13 and 14 (*The Message of Judges*, p. 130). The fact is we don’t even know her name. She was a woman who revered God and she is undoubtedly the godliest woman in the entire life of Samson.

But this appearance of this angel shows us how special Samson will be. The angel of the LORD will specifically show up twice; he will be given a special Nazirite vow, and as soon as he starts growing God will bless him.

This is a pure grace story. So the angel appears to a woman who has no hope in and of herself of having a baby. She was barren. **What is truly emphasized here is her human inability .** God is choosing to use a powerless, helpless and hopeless woman, because **God wants people to realize that any deliverance we have is solely by His grace .**

Now the angel of the LORD singles out this woman and tells her that she will have a son and He places on her a very unusual Nazirite vow. A Nazirite vow was a vow someone took for a period of time in order to set oneself apart as separated and consecrated as holy unto God in some form of special dedication to God for some sacred purpose.

The Nazirite vow is found in Numbers 6:2-8. There were nine qualifications for this vow:

- 1) Do not drink wine. Numbers 6:3a
- 2) Do not drink strong drink. Numbers 6:3b
- 3) Do not drink vinegar. Numbers 6:3c
- 4) Do not drink grape juice. Numbers 6:3d
- 5) Do not eat any grapes or raisins. Numbers 6:3e
- 6) Do not eat anything produced by the grape vine or even the seeds from the skins. Numbers 6:4
- 7) The vow was for a few days. Numbers 6:5a
- 8) Do not cut your hair at all. Numbers 6:5b
- 9) Do not go near a dead person even if it were a family member. Numbers 6:6-7

The vow was basically a “say no” lifestyle: 1) Say no to certain drinks; 2) Say no to certain food; 3) Say no to a haircut; 4) Say no to a dead carcass. In other words, it meant to deny oneself for a period of time in order to dedicate oneself to God.

Now the Nazirite vow given to Samson’s mother is somewhat modified:

- 1) She was not to drink wine - **Judges 13:4a**
- 2) She was not to drink strong drink - **Judges 13:4b**
- 3) She was not to eat any unclean thing - **Judges 13:4c**
- 4) She was not to cut Samson’s hair - **Judges 13:5**

Perhaps there should have been another restriction that said you ought to keep your son away from women. But that doesn’t show up.

There are four things extremely unusual about this particular vow:

- 1) It was given to the mother. She herself would be under this vow until the baby was born.
By virtue of the fact that the angel demands that this mother follow this vow during her pregnancy proves that the conceived baby is a real person from the moment of conception. One who aborts a baby commits murder against a real person.
- 2) It was a vow apparently given to Samson for life and not for a few days (**Judges 13:7**).
In the Bible there are only three life-long Nazirites: Samson; Samuel (I Sam. 1:11); and John the Baptist (Luke 1:15). There were four unnamed believers in Acts who took some temporary Nazirite vow (Acts 21:23-24), and also Paul (Acts 18:18). Jesus was not a Nazirite and did not ever put Himself under this type of vow (Matt. 11:18-19). Samson’s vow was supposed to be for life.
- 3) Samson’s job will be to make dead corpses. His job will be to produce Philistine corpses (**Judges 13:5**). Samson will be touching many dead bodies because he will be producing dead bodies. The normal Nazirite vow stayed away from dead bodies; Samson won’t.
- 4) Samson’s vow was not voluntary; it was forced upon him by his mother. Most vows were voluntary (Num. 6: 2, 5).

Two times in these verses the angel of the LORD tells the woman she will have a son (13:3, 5) and his specific job will be to start delivering Israel from the Philistines.

HISTORICAL FACT #4 – The woman reports what happened to her husband. **13:6-7**

Manoah's wife went to her husband and reported what happened and she brings out three unusual things:

- 1) The angel of God appeared as a man of God (13:6a).
- 2) She did not ask him where he came from or his name (13:6b).
She didn't question the man, she believed him. She believed he was a man of God who was a Divine presence. She did not need to see proof, He was the proof.
- 3) The boy will be under a Nazirite vow from the day of his birth until the day of his death (13:7). She appears to be a little confused here, because the angel never said until the day of his death. This could be a right assumption, but the angel did not say it. One of the things that should have never happened was he should have never cut his hair, because that would end the consecration and God knew what would happen.

HISTORICAL FACT #5 – Manoah asks God to have the man return again to reveal more. **13:8**

Manoah seemed to be somewhat skeptical about all of this so he prays to have the angel return so he could tell them what they should do for the boy. Obviously, the Word of God was not enough, so Manoah wanted to get this first hand.

HISTORICAL FACT #6 – The angel of the LORD returns so the woman runs and gets her husband. **13:9-10**

Samson's mother is actually the theologian of the family. This woman has some real spiritual wits to her. She ran to her husband and said, "The same guy is here again."

HISTORICAL FACT #7 – Manoah follows his wife to meet and talk with the angel. **13:11-18**

Now Manoah shows he is not the sharpest pencil in the drawer when he says first to the angel "Are you the man who spoke to the woman?" His wife just told him that this was the same man. Notice his answer "I AM."

Then Manoah in typical stupid form wants to know what his son's life and vocation would be like (13:12) when he is done with this assignment. Every dad wants to know what his son will grow up to be and do. The angel of the LORD basically told Manoah that your job is to obey God in what we have told you about the Nazirite vow. Your responsibility is to raise this boy obeying the specific commandments we have given to you and your wife (13:13-14).

Here is God who could have told Manoah everything Samson would do when he grew up, but He doesn't tell him. Sometimes when people say they know exactly what they will do in life they really don't know what they are talking about.

In **verse 15**, Manoah wants to detain his guest by preparing a meal. He wants to try to get more information. But the angel of the LORD would not eat his food, nor could He be manipulated. He advised him to prepare a burnt offering. Manoah could have reasoned- who is one who can tell us to offer a burnt offering here when we are not at the Tabernacle? Manoah had no idea he was talking to God. This person looked like a man. He was the God/man. Now in **verse 17**, Manoah wants to know the name of the individual talking to him. The name is too "wonderful" for you to know. It is far beyond your understanding. According to Isaiah 9:6, one would be born who would rule the world and His name would be "wonderful" counselor, the mighty God. This One is Jesus Christ.

HISTORICAL FACT #8 – Manoah offers a burnt offering to God and realizes the angel of the LORD is God. **13:19-22**

When the offering was offered, the angel of the LORD performed wonders which the "for" of **verse 20** explains it. He ascended up to heaven in the offering. As the flame rose up toward heaven, this Divine Person went up in the flame and at that moment Manoah realized this Person he had been speaking to was God.

Why would Manoah say "we have seen God and we will surely die?" Because when one is in the presence of God one is completely aware of sin, guilt, unworthiness and one realizes according to the O.T. Law all of us deserve to be dead.

HISTORICAL FACT #9 – The woman theologically calms her husband down. **13:23**

Manoah's wife had good spiritual and mental grace wits to her. She is very logical and in this case appears to be less emotional than Manoah. She says – why would God reveal all of this to us if He intended to kill us. The husband may be the head of the home, but the wife has more brains in her head. Why would God reveal His Grace to us if He wanted to condemn us?

Women of God need to be proactive in understanding God's Word and not passive.

HISTORICAL FACT #10 – The woman gave birth to Samson and he grew and was blessed by God. **13:24**

Notice it is the woman who names the boy Samson and in amazing grace he grew and was blessed by God. What you will see in the life of Samson is that truly the keys of life and death are in the hands of God.

PARTING QUESTIONS:

- 1) When we find ourselves surrounded by worldly enemies, have we become so dull that we don't even cry out to God for help?**
- 2) Do we have a desire to obey God's Word, or do we seek something additional for verification?**
- 3) Do we realize that the key to us having or doing anything is God's grace blessings?**