

Samson

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[0 : 00] If you would open up your Bibles to Judges chapter 13, 14, 15, and 16. It's on page 251 of your Pew Bible.

And as you're turning there, I just want to remind you, last spring, 2023, Lake Mead in Nevada, the water levels dropped to an all-time low.

And it was a result of this long, intense drought. And as those life-giving waters receded, skeletons got exposed.

Dead bodies started showing up. There was a gruesomeness to that drought. Now, the book of Judges is like a long, intense, spiritual drought.

God's people, Israel, chronically, repeatedly rejecting God for the gods and values of the Canaanite nations they were living among.

[1 : 14] And as a result, the reservoir of holiness among this people just started drying up. It started to recede.

And they were becoming more and more like the people that they were living among. Worldliness, Canaanization, is when Christians forget who their Jesus is, and they start living like the non-Christians around them.

Instead of standing out, they blend in. Worldliness is toxic to the church.

It's harmful. It's a spiritual drought. Brothers and sisters, there's no life in becoming like the world. There's no life in that.

It's a spiritual drought. It's a spiritual drought. It's a spiritual drought. The Lord Jesus calls us to be full of grace, self-controlled in this present age.

[2 : 26] And what we see in this passage of Scripture is a man who is impulsive. He sees and takes again and again and again.

It's the M.O. of worldliness. And as the book of Judges, as we've seen it progress, or maybe better said, digress, each judge has represented a new low in Israel's reservoir of holiness.

There to be holy as God is holy. Othniel, Ehud, Barak, Gideon, Abimelech, if you want to name them among the judges. Jephthah.

Jephthah. It's the reservoir of holiness receding and exposing sin.

And now we find ourselves in the last of the judges, the low watermark of the book of Judges.

Samson. Samson. Now, if you grew up in Sunday school, you have learned that Samson is a hero of the faith.

[3 : 40] He is a bulking beast of a man. A hero of the faith. He's in Hebrews 11. He does exercise faith after he's humbled and his eyes are gouged out.

But even then, what you're going to see, it's mixed. It's a mixed thing. It's a mixed thing. What we see in Samson is a deeply flawed, profoundly compromised, and a poster child of Canaanization, of worldliness.

And he represents Israel. Israel has been Canaanized. Their refusal to repent of their sin and continually go back to God, God, or the gods of the nations again and again.

Well, it brought them to a point in this drought that is just difficult to see.

Hey, do you know what it's like to be in a spiritual drought, personally? Maybe you've been Canaanized. Maybe you've bought into the world's thinking and values and ways of being.

[5 : 01] Are you prone to do what's right in your own eyes without reference to God?

This morning, we're going to look at this text. I want to help you to see three major characters in this text.

And then after we walk through it, I want to help you make some connections. I want to highlight some things. And then we're going to apply it to our lives today. Okay. So let's look at this text.

Let's dig into it. What I want to help you understand right out of the gate is that Judges 13, 14, 15, and 16, it rolls out like this. Chapter 13 is about Samson's parents.

Chapter 14, 15, and 16 are the life and times of Samson. And it culminates in this situation with this woman named Delilah. Samson kind of shares his secrets with her.

[6 : 02] She hands him over. He has his hair cut, his eyes gouged out. He ends up in Gaza in the Temple of Dagon. And he has his hands and he brings down the house.

You're going to see it's a big disappointment. Three characters. Character number one is Manoah, Samson's dad, and his unnamed mom.

In chapter 13, verse 1, we are reminded of the cycle. We've seen this again and again. And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of God. They do evil and then God hands them over to an oppressor.

Remember this time in verse 1, it's the Philistines for 40 years. And typically in that cycle, what happens next is God's people will cry out. It doesn't happen in this account.

And then after they cry out, God raises up a deliverer, and that deliverer brings peace to the land.

That doesn't happen in this account. And do you know why it doesn't happen in this account?

Because the cycle is falling apart because Israel is being Canaanized.

[7 : 14] In fact, they're becoming more and more like the people around them. In verses 2 through 25, we're introduced to Samson's parents.

Manoah's dad and his unnamed mom. In 2 through 7, an angel of the Lord, a real personal, physical manifestation of God, shows up to Samson's mom before he's born.

And the angel of the Lord tells her that she's going to have a baby. She's been barren. And that she's going to have to be very careful with what she eats and what she drinks because her boy is going to be a Nazarite.

You see that in verse 5? Now, when you hear Nazarite, don't think Nazareth.

Nazareth is a place. That's where Jesus grew up. A Nazarite is a kind of holiness vow. We can see it in Numbers chapter 6.

[8 : 23] And here's what a Nazarite vow is. It's one of Israel's people, they could make a voluntary Nazarite vow for a season. And what they would do is they were not allowed to drink alcohol.

They couldn't touch corpses. And they couldn't get haircuts. And so those three things are what comprised a Nazarite vow. The design for it was so that there would be a consecrated season of holiness.

And so a Nazarite would be like holy of holy among God's people for a season. And so what's going on here is that the angel of the Lord is telling Samson's wife, you got a holy one coming.

And it builds our expectations. Well, Samson's mom tells Samson's dad, Manoah, what the angel of the Lord tells her.

And what I want you to see is their response. In verses 8 through 23, we see the response of this couple to this angel of the Lord.

[9 : 36] Look at verse 8. Look at verse 8. Then Manoah prayed to the Lord. So Manoah's wife tells Manoah what has happened, this angel of the Lord.

And Manoah, his first response is prayer. This is a welcomed, welcomed kind of event in the book of Judges. And look what he prays.

Oh, Lord, please let the man of God whom you sent come again to us and teach us. Not only is he praying, but he's asking that the angel of the Lord would come back and teach them.

Oh, this is good. This is kind of a posture of humility, a posture towards God, a wanting to understand things. And it doesn't stop there.

The angel of the Lord does come back. And Manoah, look what he says to him. Verse 12. Now, when your words come true.

[10 : 39] Now, when we have this baby boy. When your words come true. Do you see what's happening there? This angel of the Lord is speaking. And Manoah and his wife are believing.

We see it again in verse 17. Manoah doesn't recognize the angel of the Lord. So he says, what is your name? So that when your words come true, we may honor you.

So there's this posture of prayer, of being willing to be taught, of wanting to be taught, of believing in God's word, of wanting to honor this one with this news.

This is looking good. This is kind of like we haven't really seen this recently in the book of Judges. So, this Canaanized land, maybe there is some reservoir of holiness.

In verse 16, Manoah and his wife are like, hey, come eat with us. And the angel of the Lord is like, I don't eat your food. Offer it up as an offering to the Lord.

[11:43] And when they offer up this meal to the Lord, they light it up. There's this flame. In verse 20, look what happens. And when the flame went up toward heaven from the altar, the angel of the Lord went up in the flame of the altar.

Now Manoah and his wife were watching. They were watching. And they fell on their faces to the ground. Awe. Reverence. Amazement.

Worship. This is good. This parents of Samson. He's going to have this wonder child. This miracle baby.

They seem to be tender towards the Lord. But it's not all perfect because in verse 16, Manoah doesn't seem to recognize the angel of the Lord. So, that kind of gets at this kind of like dullness, spiritual dullness.

And they actually name him Samson, which most scholars think is a reference to a sun god. S-U-N, God. So, there's still kind of like this Canaanized dimension to it.

[12:46] But by and large, they are responding in humility and godwardness to the angel of the Lord. And we're left thinking that Samson's mom was obedient.

She didn't eat things or drink things inappropriate to having this child. It's an instructive for us because God delights in humility. This is the one to whom I will look.

He was humble, contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word. And we're seeing that in Samson's parents. So, what about this wonder boy?

So, Manoah, his parents, that's kind of character. Character's one. The second character we get to see now is Samson himself. And of all the judges, Samson is the most profoundly self-centered.

Hey, ladies! He's a womanizer. Chapter 14, 1 through 3.

[13:58] He goes down to Timnah in Philistia. He sees this Philistine babe. And he demands his parents hook him up. I'm marrying her.

I'm marrying her. She was right in his eyes, verse 3. Verse 7, 14. She was right in Samson's eyes. So, he demands it.

And then, in chapter 16, verses 1 through 3, 1 through 4, Samson's back in Philistia, in Gaza. And he sees a Philistine prostitute and goes into her.

Again, man, what is up with this Nazarite? And if that's not enough, as you kind of work through chapter 16, he falls in love with this woman from the valley of Sorek.

Again, Philistia. Delilah. Falls head over and heels with her. This man is, what we're seeing is ruled by his desires.

[15:06] Unrestrained. He's a womanizer. And not just a womanizer. He's breaking God's law multiple ways.

Because in Deuteronomy 7, 1 through 4, God forbids the parents of Israel from giving their sons and daughters in marriage to the sons and daughters of the nations around them.

Because they will turn their hearts away from them. What we see here in Samson is he doesn't care. He sees and he takes. And he's objectifying these women.

He sees them. He wants them. He has them. This isn't humble. This isn't God word.

This is prideful. This is selfish. This is disobedient. And this is Samson.

[16:07] But it doesn't stop there. We see in chapter 14, verse 5, there's this episode of Samson's heading back to Timnah to meet his Philistine babe.

He's attacked by a lion. Rips the lion apart. It's probably, at that moment, he's touching a corpse and he's been defiled. Well, later he goes back to the corpse.

And you know what's happened in the corpse since he's been there? Honey bees. They've made a hive with honey. He dips into that, starts eating it.

And if he wasn't defiled before, he is defiled now. Because Nazarites aren't supposed to catch corpses. He defiles himself. He doesn't care.

Honey, me want, me take. He's lacking self-control. And he's disobedient to his parents. When he first expressed interest in this Philistine girl in Timnah, his dad is like, Hey, how about one of the young ladies from Israel?

[17:15] Not one of these uncircumcised Philistines. He's like, I don't care. Get her to me. He disregards his parents. In verses 14, chapter 14, 6 and 9, after he kills the lion and eats of the honey and then gives his parents some of that honey, he doesn't tell them.

Again, he's not honoring his parents. This holy man, this Nazarite, is anything but holy. He doesn't care about people.

He objectifies women. He disregards his parents. There's this whole incident where he puts this riddle to a bunch of these 30 Philistine guys about kind of the honey in the lion.

And they figure it out because they objectify his wife and force her to tell them what's going on. But Samson had bet on it.

Bet 30 changes of clothes. And so when he loses, he goes to Ashkelon and he kills 30 Philistines, grabs their clothes, brings them back, and gives them to those 30 dudes. He doesn't care.

[18:28] There are a number of other accounts in 14, 15, and 16 in the life and times of Samson.

It's striking. I mean, there's this incident where he kills a thousand Philistines, this chapter 15, with a jawbone of a donkey. In verse 18, what we see is this.

And I quote. Samson was very thirsty and he called upon the Lord and said, You have granted this great salvation by the hand of your servant.

And shall now I die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised? Grumble. Doubt. You know who's self-centered?

Samson. There's this other accounts of his just doing incredibly selfish things.

[19:37] But even in his death. He's been handed over by Delilah to the lords of the Philistines. He has had his hair cut.

By the way, in Numbers chapter 6, if someone breaks a Nazarite vow, they are to shave their heads. So it's a picture of humiliation. Repentance. He's got his eyes gouged out.

They bring him to the house of Dagon, the god of the Philistines. And they are just celebrating the Philistines, the victory Dagon has won over Samson and Samson's god.

And when Samson comes out to this house where there's 3,000 Philistines, and he puts his hands on the pillars of this house, he prays.

In verse 28. O Lord God. Chapter 16, 28. Please remember me.

[20:50] And please strengthen me only this once, O God, that I may be the avenger, that Israel may be avenged, and that you would be glorified among all the nations.

That I'd be avenged for my eyes. Even in his death. Can't see. But his eyes are on himself.

There's a deliverance. There's a measure of faith. But you can't help but say, wait, wait, isn't he a, isn't he a Nazarite?

Didn't God call him to deliver? Why am I disappointed? Because he's Canaanized. He's selfish. He's prideful. He's the low watermark of the judges in the book of Judges. Even in his death.

[21:58] Aren't you glad that our perfect Savior, who's accomplished a permanent salvation, that when he went to his death, that he wasn't self-focused.

He was selfless. For you and for me. When he cried out to Talistai, it is finished. It was for us.

Which brings me to the third character of the Samson account. God. In chapter 13, the angel of the Lord, this physical manifestation of God himself, he's referenced 13 times in chapter 13.

And this angel of the Lord is God's manifest presence and he's appearing to Manoah and his wife. And can I just remind you of something?

That's not because Israel asked. It's not because they cried out. It's because God is gracious. God sent the angel of the Lord to work a deliverance for his people.

[23:19] This is a picture of God's unmerited favor. Of his grace. And then there are these references to the Spirit of the Lord throughout this account.

In chapter 13, 25, the Spirit of the Lord starts to stir in a young Samson. In chapter 14, verse 6, the Spirit of the Lord rushes upon Samson and he kills that lion.

In 14, 19, the Spirit of the Lord rushes upon Samson and he kills those 30 guys from Ashkelon. In chapter 15, verse 14, the Spirit of the Lord rushes upon Samson and he kills those 1,000 Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey.

and even implied in chapter 16, the empowering of Samson to take down the house, killing 3,000. the Spirit of the Lord is at work in the midst of a spiritual drought. Despite Samson working to bring about his purposes.

[24:32] And then there are the answered prayers. God answering the prayer of Manoah, he heard him in chapter 13, verse 9.

Even Samson, when he's whining and grumbling, I need something to drink after killing people. God opens up a rock. When Samson prays, probably the first real prayer of his life, of anything close to

humility.

In chapter 16, 28, God again hears and answers Samson. What we see throughout these chapters is that God is at work.

Despite the spiritual drought, despite the worldliness of God's people, God is still at work. Chapter 14, verse 4.

Samson has just gone down to Timnah and he has demanded that his parents make this Philistine woman his wife because she's right in his eyes.

[25 : 40] And in verse 4, chapter 14, verse 4, we read this. His father and mother did not know that it was from the Lord. For he, the Lord, was seeking an opportunity against the Philistines.

God is sovereign over all things. God is providentially at work accomplishing his purpose. It is mysterious. It is amazing. And it should make you have this sense of our God is something else. God is so grateful that my Savior is not an imperfect, selfish Savior, but a perfect, selfless Savior. What's going on in Judges 13 through 16 is that we have Israel getting to be at its worst in the lowest recessions.

It's even going to get lower. Spiritual drought. Samson, the poster child of Canaanization. And yet God is still at work.

[26 : 55] Do you know what kind of God this is? You want to know his name? Manoah asks for his name.

In verse, let me find it for you. 13, 18. And the angel of the Lord said to him, why do you ask my name?

Seeing it is wonderful. Wonderful. A God who works like this, despite the worldliness of his people, carrying out his purposes, is a wonderful God, selflessly at work.

You know, there's some things, having seen these three characters, Manoah, Samson's parents, Samson himself. We've seen God at work in this four chapters.

Let me kind of highlight some things for you. First, there's the contrast between Samson's parents and Samson. Samson's parents are humble.

[28 : 16] They're not perfect. They're Godward. They're obedient. Samson's mom evidently did what God required. But Samson, he's not humble.

He's prideful. He insists on his own way. He's not Godward. He's selfish. Disobedient.

Again and again and again. This contrast gets something done. And here's what it gets done. It helps us to see how far Samson has gone.

Where this leader is. that he's the low watermark of the nation representing the nation. It's sobering. The second highlight is something I just mentioned. God is at work even in spiritual drought.

[29 : 16] Isn't he wonderful? Are you in a spiritual drought? Are you shooting up prayers that you don't think are going through the ceiling? God's at work. He's bigger than that.

But what I want you to see are the eyes. The eyes. It starts off in chapter 13.1.

And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord in God's eyes. In 13.20.

We read of Manoah and his wife's response when they see the angel of the Lord go into the flame and go up. When they see that they were watching they fall on their faces.

The Philistines in the house of Dagon. They see this humiliated hero brought out changed and bound head shaved off eyes gouged out and they think they won.

[30 : 25] They think they won. They think they won. But God was up to something much different.

They don't see what God's doing. Samson's eyes. Chapter 14.3. He did what was right in his eyes. His own eyes. Chapter 7. Samson did what was right in his eyes. Do you know what happens after this in chapter 17 through 21? Do you know what gets repeated in the book of Judges?

There was no king in the land and they did what was right in their own eyes. It starts with the Samson account. And if you turn to the very last verse of the book of Judges, you will read this.

In those days, there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in their own eyes. That, doing what is right in your own eyes, is the MO, the modus operandi of worldliness, of canonization.

[31 : 33] It's living life without any reference to God and not caring. So you know what the point of this is? Don't do what's right in your own eyes, brothers and sisters.

Don't do what's right in your own eyes. Do what's right in the eyes of your Lord. Do what's right in His eyes. And it really begs the question, how do you do that?

This is how you do that. You fix your eyes upon Jesus. And when you fix your eyes upon Jesus, your heart will change.

Your want muscle will shift from wanting what you want according to what you think is right to wanting what God wants and what He's revealed in the Scriptures.

Fix your eyes upon Jesus. Don't do what's right in your own eyes, Samson. Do what's right in the eyes of the Lord by first fixing your eyes on Jesus.

[32 : 44] And now let's apply this. members of Christ the King Church. When you see a leader like Samson doing what's right in his own eyes and you realize what's possible of leaders of God's people, it should sober us but it makes us resolve as well.

Here's what we need to commit to Christ the King Church. when it comes to leaders in our church whether they be elders or deacons, aspiring elders, life group leaders, ministry directors, let's insist by faith that the leaders of Christ the King Church fix their eyes on Jesus.

That they don't do what's right in their own eyes, that they seek to do what's right in the Lord's eyes. Let's insist upon that as a membership of this church.

It's a way of talking about humility. It's a way of recognizing men and women who aren't in it for themselves but are in it for the Lord Jesus Christ. That's who we want in leadership positions of our church.

Do you know why? Why? It'll protect us against spiritual drought. It'll lead us into the presence of our Lord, not away from it.

[34 : 25] We need to insist in our nomination process as we're identifying potential leaders being God raised up that they're more interested in God's plan, God's purposes than their own.

The second way to apply this is by talking about self-control. Samson was anything but self-control. He was such the impulsive, irreverent man, the poster child of impulsiveness, again and again and again.

He did what was right in his own eyes. He lacked self-control. What is self-control? Self-control is the ability to say no to something now and to say yes to something later.

It's a delayed gratification. It's the ability to say no to something now, to say yes to something later, and the difference between worldly self-control and biblical, godly self-control is this.

[35 : 42] It's who you do it for. Worldly self-control is a dependence on yourself and you're saying no to something now to say yes to something later for your own sake, according to your own eyes.

Biblical, godly self-control is when you say no to something now and to say yes to something later for the glory of your god because of his eyes for his name's sake not your own.

This has bearing in things like sexual desires, entertainment choices, how you speak, how you manage your anger, your eating, your driving, your sleeping, your kind of workaholicism or your thoughtfulness.

It has bearing with it all. In fact, in the book of Titus, one of the qualifications for an elder, chapter 1, verse 8, is to be self-controlled.

A man who demonstrates this. And then in chapter 2, verses 1 through 6, the whole church is called to it. Would you turn in your Bibles to Titus chapter 2?

[36 : 52] I want you to see this. Paul is writing to Titus who is planting this church in Crete and he tells Titus when it comes to the older men of the church, they're to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled among other things.

Chapter 3, he says, instruct the older women likewise to be a number of different things. They are to teach the younger women and one of the things they're to teach the younger women is to be self-controlled.

So not only younger women to be self-controlled, but the older women must be self-controlled to teach them to be self-controlled. So right now, we've got older men to be self-controlled, older women to be self-controlled, younger women to be self-controlled, and then we land in verse 6.

The only thing he says to younger men is that they need to be self-controlled. unto the glory of Jesus. Not doing what's right in their own eyes, doing what's right in the eyes of the Lord.

Being able to say no to sin now or to lesser things now in order to say yes to the glory of Jesus then.

[38 : 16] A church full. And then we see in 2.11 how for the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation for all people training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in the present age.

Brothers and sisters, we're to be self-controlled. You know what that does? It's a preventative against worldliness.

Of not becoming like the world. When we are trusting God's grace and God's grace is training us to say no to ungodliness and to say yes to Jesus.

There's another application of this for men in the room. Stop objectifying women.

Stop. Stop. Stop making women, whether physically or digitally, the objects of your lust.

[39 : 24] You need to say no to that. And say yes to better things.

God has grace for you, brothers. And when we start treating women with dignity, we start creating a culture more and more in our church where both men and women thrive.

The final application is fix your eyes on Jesus, brothers and sisters. Fix your eyes on Jesus. I've been singing a song this morning. Turn your eyes upon Jesus.

Look full in His wonderful face. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.

worldliness is a spiritual drought that evaporates godliness among God's people.

[40 : 42] We see it in Samson. Are you in a spiritual drought? Because of your own worldliness, God is at work.

God's bigger than your worldliness. God is at work. God is at work. God is at work. Turn your eyes to Him. Stop doing what's right in your own eyes.

Start doing what's right in His eyes. So if you are a Christian and you are experiencing the drought of worldliness, fix your eyes upon Jesus and find a wellspring of life for your soul.

Fill the reservoir. And if you're a non-Christian in the room, you're brittle, you're empty, Jesus will make you full and resilient.

The world can't give you life, but Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. Do you know what?

There's another way you can talk about. Stop doing what's right in your own eyes and start doing what's right in the Lord's eyes.

[41 : 53] There's another way to say it. Do you know how it goes? Walk by faith, not by sight.

Fix your eyes on Jesus. Let's pray. God in heaven, Father, would you pour out your Spirit upon us? Move upon us thank you for your Holy Spirit.

And God, would you make us self-controlled, upright in this present age? Not doing what's right in our own eyes, but striving more and more to do what's right in your eyes because you are so worth it.

And it's your name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.