

The Savior Nobody Asked For

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- [0 : 0 0] The opening statement here of this new and actually final cycle of Israel's book of deliverers, it begins with a familiar pattern.
- Israel's idolatry, they have again done what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and that was followed by God's discipline. Now, nothing distinct is said about Israel's evil deeds.
- If we're following the context of the book, it has something to do with idolatry, no doubt. Everything else always did. It's not explicitly stated, but that's probably what's happening.
- But God does identify the instrument of his judgment, and it was the nation of Philistia, or the Philistines. And the length of time which they ruled over Israel, at least in terms of this story, was 40 years.
- Now, if you've studied much at all of King David's life, you'll understand and immediately recognize the Philistines, and the fact that they continued to be a thorn in Israel's side, far beyond Samson's life, far beyond the book of Judges.
- [1 : 0 9] Decades later, they are still afflicting Israel until God uses David to subdue them. But it doesn't tell us so much about that now.
- Now, this narrative doesn't take us to the end of Philistine oppression. It just records simply God's first stage in his plan of defeating them and delivering his people from them.
- So that's the familiar pattern right from the very beginning. Israel is idolatrous. They've sinned against the Lord, and God has disciplined. And this time, he's disciplining them with the Philistines over the course of 40 years.
- But that familiar pattern that we've come to expect is broken at that point. Notably missing is any mention of Israel crying out to the Lord for help.
- Every other time we get to these judge cycles in the book of Judges, God judges his people. He disciplines them with one enemy or another.
- [2 : 1 0] And at some point, they come and they cry out to God. It was never really a cry of repentance. We've established that up to this point. But it was at least a cry for help. It was a, Lord, we're miserable.
- Lord, we need you. Lord, help us out of this mess that we're in. But now, suddenly, they don't do that anymore. We get to this final cycle, and they're not even asking for help any longer.
- And we need to take a moment and consider why they didn't. Why did they not seek the Lord's salvation? And I think there's a couple of things at work here. First, we must reflect back on chapter 10.
- Remember that whole exchange between God and Israel at the start of the Jephthah cycle. And perhaps at this point, Israel had just accepted their fate as if God was determined not to deliver them.
- Perhaps they thought, God's not going to save us. What's the point in even asking now? We might as well just get used to Philistine control.

[3 : 17] Which, it's not very uncommon for us to treat God with that kind of contempt. Things don't go our way. We don't like what he says. We don't like what he's doing in our lives.

And eventually, we just kind of give up on the whole thing altogether. But there's some things we need to remember about that exchange. First, Israel's display of repentance in chapter 10 was not genuine repentance.

They weren't turning to God. Remember? They were just using religious rituals to try to manipulate God. That's what they were doing. They had taken just this kind of formula of sacrifice and prayer and gathering together, hoping that that was enough to bring about God's deliverance.

It wasn't true repentance. God saw through the ruse. And remember, God confronted them in that. But we need to at least remember from the very beginning that they weren't actually turning to God.

They were trying to manipulate him as if religious works is what's enough for salvation. But it's not. God made that clear. Second, we need to remember that God wasn't just being stubborn or unfair.

[4 : 31] He'd actually been abundantly patient with them. But there eventually does come a time for God's discipline to be active.

God eventually does discipline his people, allowing the consequences of their sins to run their course. And that's exactly what he was doing with Israel at that point in the story.

But when God disciplines his people, remember, it's always for their good. It's never for their destruction. And God was going through that process with Israel, declaring that he would not completely deliver them again in order that they might turn to him, not that they might hold him in contempt and turn away from him.

That's what the discipline's about. Those of you who are parents understand that. The discipline that you give out to your kids, the discipline is not there to anger them. If it is, then you're not disciplining right. The discipline is there to help them.

It's to build them up. It's to teach them what's right. It's to set them back on a right path. So is God's discipline. That's what he was doing with Israel. But they didn't respond the way that they should have responded.

[5 : 41] The final thing that we have to remember with that, too, is that though he was silent, God was still working for the good of Israel. His love and his mercy back in that story still abounded.

He still saved them from the Ammonites, who were the enemies they were dealing with at that point. The lesson was this. God saves not because of who we are, not because we follow the proper religious procedures, but because he himself is merciful.

That's the lesson in that whole story. And had Israel paid attention to it, they would have seen God's mercy as an essential part of his nature.

And when we see God's mercy as an essential part of his nature, that becomes the true motivation for and the true hope that we have in salvation.

Does it not? Israel gets this backwards, and we often do, too. We often think that our salvation is all about us living up to a particular standard or doing all the things the right way, going to all the church services, checking off the list, just making sure, ticking the box, make sure we do the stuff we're supposed to do so God doesn't get angry at us.

[7 : 03] And we think that somehow delivers us. No, that's not how it works. No, it's God's mercy. When we see that, we see his mercy, we see his grace as essential features of his character, then we're motivated to run to him.

Because we'll always fail. And if we're trusting in our patterns, if we're trusting in our procedures, it's going to tank every time. But when we see that our salvation doesn't actually rest on us, it rests on him and who he is, we'll run to him every time, won't we?

Because he is sure and he's steadfast. That was the lesson he was teaching Israel. They completely missed it. And now here we are. They've done what is evil in the sight of the Lord again.

He's disciplining them again, this time with the Philistines, but now they don't turn to him at all. If they had just paid attention before, he would have been the first one they ran to.

But they don't do it. Beyond that, it appears that the people didn't cry out for God's help because they might have been content with the way things were.

[8 : 17] Nothing is said about the nature of the Philistine rule, but there's no statement of misery on the part of Israel either. Perhaps they've gotten to a point in their life where they've generally given up on dreams of being a, quote, kingdom of priests to God and a holy nation.

Perhaps at this point they didn't care anymore about being a united nation that dwells in the land of the promise and has Yahweh as their God. They've just kind of given up on all of that.

They don't really care about that anymore. Maybe they rather liked the way of life that was presented by the Philistines.

Maybe they're just not interested in doing things God's way anymore. They like where they're at. They're not really that opposed to Philistine rule. What if the promises given to the Joshua generation in the previous book just didn't matter to the Samson generation?

I think that's the picture we get here. Not only have they missed the point of God's mercy and run away from him, but I think they just kind of like life the way that it is.

[9 : 32] They're content for things to remain the same. And it's not really any surprise that it would come to this. This whole book is about a downward spiral of apostasy.

But that downward spiral, it has to end somewhere. And the place where it ends is always utter abandonment of God, abandonment of his law, even abandonment of his promises, and hope for his blessings.

Israel was clearly at this point tiptoeing that line. And maybe you are too. Maybe the way of this world is far more attractive to you than the way of God at this point in your life.

Perhaps you're on your own spiritual spiral downward, and you're nearing the bottom, what many call deconstruction. You're on the verge of abandoning the faith altogether.

You may not necessarily be on the verge of being vehemently opposed to it. You just don't care anymore. You don't care. Who cares about all this stuff? I don't even know if it's real. Who cares about God's promised blessings?

[10 : 48] I don't even know if that's any real anymore. I kind of like my life the way that it is. I kind of like the life that's represented by the world around me now. I think I'm just going to stick with it.

Why cry out to God for help? I kind of like what I have. Samson was the Savior that nobody asked for.

That's the point. He's the Savior nobody asked for. And probably in some cases, he's the Savior that nobody wanted anyways. And yet, here he is.

Samson's existence and his usefulness, they have nothing to do with Israel's desire for help because they didn't ask for it. Neither do they have to do with Samson's determination to be God's instrument of salvation.

As you will find as we journey through this story next Sunday in particular, Samson quite enjoyed the Philistine life. The entire Samson narrative is not about those things.

[12 : 03] It is about God's relentless grace and mercy. That's what this story is about. Israel may not have been concerned about God's promises being fulfilled, but the Lord was determined to fulfill them.

Samson was utterly unworthy of use in God's plan. That much is clear. But the Lord was still determined to use him.

Why? It doesn't mean that it's okay for us to be apathetic, and it doesn't mean that it's okay for us to be unfaithful. But it does mean that neither our apathy, neither our unfaithfulness can thwart God's saving purpose.

Nothing. Nothing. In fact, as we'll see in these chapters, God is glorified even in our sinfulness to use it to affect his saving purpose.

It's actually quite unbelievable. Well, it all begins with Samson's birth story, which is unique to the book of Judges.

[13 : 23] No other judge has a narrative like this. He's the only one who we're told about anything related to his birth. And the author's aim for that is simple.

He's showing us that Samson was God's man and God's plan from the very beginning. Sometimes we get this idea that when these stories unfold in the Bible, whether it's in Judges or in another place, sometimes there is a theory that even looks at Jesus this way, that what happens when God works is kind of like divine crisis management, that the Lord kind of lets us off on a leash, and when things get really bad, he just kind of has to reel us back in, and he has to come up with some kind of way in that moment to figure things out and help us.

That is not at all the way that God works. Samson proves it. Before Samson ever had a moment to disobey the vow, before he ever had a moment to sin against the Lord and prove his unfaithfulness, God was determined to use him.

He was God's man. He was God's plan from the beginning. And I want you to think about that as we look ahead to Jesus. Like I said, there's this notion out there right now that Jesus was, he just kind of lost control there for a little bit.

That's why he was crucified. That he just kind of lost control, and the Father had to come in and kind of do a little crisis management and raise him from the dead. That's not at all what happened.

[14 : 56] Jesus was God's plan from the very beginning, before the foundations of the world. That was his plan to provide salvation for us. Samson shows us this pattern that God is in control.

They are part of a biblical pattern of salvation. It uses weak, sinful instruments to display the glory of God's sovereignty, the mystery of his providence, and the wonder of his saving grace.

So what are we to see in Judges chapter 13? It's clear. What we are to see here is God. If you grew up in Sunday school classes like I did, maybe you remember a lesson in your Sunday school class as a kid with the flannel graph where you had Samson carrying the massive gates from the one thing.

And what you knew of Samson was these massive feats of strength. I always imagined him like my favorite WCW wrestler, like Hulk Hogan or whatever. That's how we think of Samson. This story's not about Samson.

It's not what it's about. It's not about Manoah and his wife, as wonderful as they were. It's not about them. This is all about God. The attention constantly is meant to set our eyes and our focus on who God is and his grace at work in this story.

[16 : 16] So I just want to work through it quickly, okay? I want to work through it quickly. I want to point out four things in the narrative that keep our eyes on God as the essential character here, okay? The first thing is this.

God announced Samson's birth. God announced Samson's birth. We read that in verses two through seven. I'm not going to read them again right now, but just note there that this is verses two through seven where we see it.

Now, you remember the exchange between Manoah and his wife after the angel of the Lord appears to her and gives her this message. This messenger from God comes and says, you're going to have a son.

And she runs to Manoah to tell him the message that she heard. Have you ever been so excited about a particular piece of news that you didn't think to ask for any clarifying questions from the person who told you?

He just immediately got excited and started spreading the news. You ever done that? I can just imagine how this conversation took place between Manoah and his wife. The angel of the Lord appears to her, gives her this awesome news.

[17 : 22] She has no questions. She just runs to Manoah. He says, you're not going to believe this. This man appeared to me and he said that I'm going to have a son. And Manoah may be a bit confused by that news.

She'd been barren her whole life. Confused and he says, well, who was he? Well, I didn't ask. I didn't ask. What was his name?

I didn't ask what his name was. Well, where was he from? Was he from the tabernacle in Shiloh? Was this like a priest or a prophet from God? Where was he from? Well, I didn't think to ask that either.

But you should have seen the way he looked. I mean, he's like four. He looked amazing. He was awesome. He looked like an angel. How could I not trust somebody like that?

Like you can just see the way that this conversation goes. She's excited about what she's experienced. She's confident in the messenger and in the message. And she's excitedly running to her husband to share the news.

[18 : 21] And he's asking all these questions. She's like, I don't know. I just know what he said. And it's amazing. God did that. We aren't told how Manoah's wife knew that the message came from a servant of God.

But the author lets us know that it came directly from the angel of the Lord, whom we've encountered several times in the book. Manoah and his wife don't quite realize that yet.

But the author makes us privy to it. And the reason he makes us privy to it at this point is so that we might clearly understand what's happening here. This message is not just from Job Lowe walking down the road.

This message comes from God. God is announcing the birth of Samson at this point. And the message was straightforward. It had two primary components. First, God announced to the woman that he would open her womb to conceive a son.

And significant to that was the fact that she'd been unable to have children to that point in her life. Which, for some people today, isn't that big of a deal.

[19 : 28] A lot of people elect not to have children now. That wouldn't have been the case in their day. Children were not only a blessing from the Lord, they were a blessing to the family. That was the way that the family not only perpetuated its name, but it's the way that they had workers that could help put food on the table.

Life was very different. Manoah's wife would have wanted children, but she's been able to have them. I wonder how many tears she cried through the years, praying for God to bless her with a child.

Lord, would you just give me a son? Lord, just a son that we could raise and love. What a comfort it must have been to this woman who seems to have been a faithful follower of God.

What a comfort it must have been that even her childlessness had a distinct purpose in God's plan. Is that not helpful for us to recognize here?

Her barrenness was a struggle. Wouldn't have been an easy thing. And yet now in this moment, she can see that there was a purpose to it.

[20 : 46] Because had she not been barren, we wouldn't have been able to see quite so clearly that this child was from God. Of course, God is involved in every creation of life.

But there's a uniqueness to this, isn't it? There's a way that God has ordered her life in order that he might be glorified most. And maybe this is a sidetrack for just a moment.

But perhaps you're at a point in your life where you've got something, maybe it's not childlessness, but it's something. And you just, you don't understand why God hasn't given you what he seems to give everybody else.

Why has he not blessed me with the kids? Why has he not given me the marriage? Why has he not given me the job? Why has he not given me the friendships or whatever it is that you'll long to have good things?

Does it come as any comfort to you to see that in his sovereign, providential care, God has a distinct purpose, even in the things that are hard for us to bear.

[21 : 52] But it was necessary for her to glorify the Lord. That's the first component of the message. She would bear a child. The second component of the message was that the child would be a Nazarite from birth until death.

Now, a Nazarite was a particular vow that someone would take. The details of it are recorded in Numbers chapter 6, if you want to read about them later. Numbers chapter 6.

Let me just explain the major features here. There were three of them. For the duration of a vow, a Nazarite could have nothing from a vine.

They couldn't drink wine or strong drink. They couldn't eat grapes. They couldn't have vinegar. Anything that was related to a vine they couldn't have. They couldn't come in contact with anything dead.

Even if suddenly, in the midst of their vow, suddenly someone they loved very much died, it was inappropriate for them to come into contact with the corpse.

[22 : 55] And the third thing is that they could not cut their hair. Now, God considered it a sin to violate any of those demands during the time of the vow.

And if someone did, there was a specific cleansing ritual, a sacrifice of atonement that had to be made, even if it was accidentally broken.

And all of that is spelled out for us in Numbers chapter 6. Now, Nazarite vows lasted a limited amount of time. These weren't lifelong vows. They were very short periods of time.

And their purpose was for a person to show a particular consecration to God in a particular season of their life. That's what they were for.

That's why someone would have taken one on. Now, the facet of this announcement is crucial to Samson's story. What we see unfolding in the following chapters, really at the heart of it, is this vow.

[23 : 57] But his is a little different. His was not a temporary vow. It was for his whole life. His was not a voluntary vow.

He didn't choose it. God gave it to him through his mother at his conception. It was a command from God. It was to last until the day of his death.

We see that in verse 7, Samson's life as a Nazarite was to identify him as the one God had chosen to begin the fight against the Philistines.

He was to be a man devoted to God. That's what the vow was about. Now, before we move on, consider for a moment why God announced Samson's birth, but not any of the other judges.

Why would he do this? Everything about this announcement reveals that God was graciously working out his saving plan for the people of Israel, who neither asked nor seemed to care.

[25 : 12] That's why. From the very beginning, even when they weren't asking, even when they didn't want it, even when God was the firstest things from their mind, God was still working for their good. He was still working out his saving plan.

And Samson himself is going to go on to willingly violate every feature of the Nazarite vow. He's going to violate them all. And yet God will still use him.

Because the story isn't about feats of strength. It's about God's glory and salvation from beginning to end. That's why we have the announcement of Samson's birth. All right. Number two, God confirmed Samson's purpose.

God confirmed Samson's purpose. Look with me at verse eight. Let's read it. Then Manoah prayed to the Lord and said, Oh Lord, please let the man of God whom you sent come again to us and teach us what we are to do with the child who will be born.

And God listened to the voice of Manoah. The angel of God came again to the woman as she sat in the field. But Manoah, her husband, was not with her. So the woman ran quickly and told her husband, Behold, the man who came to me the other days appeared to me.

[26 : 20] Manoah rose and went after his wife and came to the man and said to him, Are you the man who spoke to this woman? And he said, I am. And Manoah said, Now when your words come true, What is to be the child's manner of life?

What is his mission? And the angel of the Lord said to Manoah, Of all that I said to the woman, let her be careful. She may not eat of anything that comes from the vine, Neither let her drink wine or strong drink or eat any unclean thing.

All that I commanded her, let her observe. Now, Manoah is undoubtedly excited at the news that his wife brought. But like most of us men, he would have liked to hear it himself.

He wanted some clarity, didn't he? But it's interesting. One of the amazing things about him and his wife is that there's never any hint of doubt in their minds about this.

He even straightforwardly says, When your words come true. He does it twice. The first time is in verse 12. When your words come true. He's assuming that this is a messenger from God.

[27 : 27] That this is indeed going to happen. He didn't seek to hear from God because he doubted the announcement. He sought to hear from God because he wanted clarity How he could best serve the Lord as the father of the child.

That's amazing. We haven't seen that anywhere in Judges. Think about that. We're getting close to the end. We're almost at King Saul now as far as the timeline of Israel's history is concerned.

And all through the book of Judges, We've seen nothing but doubt and sin and evil and frustration. But now we finally find this couple. And they don't have to be persuaded at all.

They have really quite amazing faith. They were the perfect parents for Samson. Because it's going to require faith on Samson's part to do the things that he did. Manoah doesn't ask for God to send the messenger back because he doubted it.

He wanted to know how he could best serve the Lord. But the most encouraging thing here is not their faith. Though that is wonderfully encouraging. It's that God graciously heard and answered his prayer.

[28 : 37] That's the most amazing thing here. Can we just stop for a moment and think about that? Rejoice in the fact that God hears us.

That he often sees fit to answer us when we call on him. He's not a distant force. He's a personal God.

He loves to hear and answer the prayers of his people. We get that from Manoah. Well, God answered him. And he sent his messenger again to confirm the original announcement.

But did you notice as we read it that the messenger didn't give any more information? He didn't elaborate at all. That's what Manoah had asked him to do, right?

Like, can you give me some clarity on what the child's mission will be? And how we must help him in that mission. But the messenger from God doesn't do that. He only confirms what he already said.

[29 : 37] God is gracious to reveal his will to us. He does that through his word.

He does that through the work of his Holy Spirit. But he doesn't fill us in on everything we want to know in the process. Bummer, right? God deals in promises, not explanations.

And our job is to trust him. Our goal is to obey him by faith in everything that he's planned, even when we don't quite comprehend what that plan is.

Now, let the hearer hear. God confirmed his message to Manoah. But it was necessary that Manoah just simply trust him and obey him in the process.

Number three. God revealed his personal presence. God revealed his personal presence. Stay with me. We're almost there, okay?

[30 : 51] Look at verse 15. Manoah said to the angel of the Lord, Please let us detain you and prepare a young goat for you. And the angel of the Lord said to Manoah, If you detain me, I will not eat of your food.

But if you prepare it for an offering, then offer it to the Lord. You see what he's doing? He's intentionally turning the focus of Manoah and his wife away from himself and to worship. Manoah did not know that he was the angel of the Lord.

And Manoah said to the angel, What is your name? So that when your words come true, we may honor you. But he's not interested in honoring himself. He turns the attention back to God, right? In worship. And the angel of the Lord said to him, Why do you ask my name?

Seeing it's too wonderful. So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering. And he offered it on the rock to the Lord. And this statement here, this is not Manoah saying this.

This is inserted here by the author, which is so helpful. Manoah offers it on the rock to the Lord, to the one who works wonders. To the one who works wonders.

[31 : 57] Who blesses barren women with children. And who's about to perform another wonderful work in the presence of his people in the midst of their worship. And Manoah and his wife were watching.

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 I don't know what this would have been like. I don't know how to construct this in my mind. But it must have been an awesome sight.

Because now Manoah and his wife were watching. And they immediately fell on their faces to the ground when it happened. The angel of the Lord appeared no more to Manoah and to his wife.

Manoah knew that it was the angel of the Lord. That's when he realized. And Manoah said to his wife, We shall surely die. For we've seen God. But his wife said to him, If the Lord had meant to kill us, He would not have offered a burnt sacrifice and a grain offering at our hands.

Or shown us all these things. And announced to us such things as thee. This section is very much like what happened with Gideon. If you can remember back that far.

[33 : 01] Back in chapter 6. Out of respect, They offer to prepare the messenger of God a meal. But he instructs them to prepare an offering to the Lord instead.

It's exactly what happens with Gideon. And upon preparing that offering, The angel of the Lord performed a miracle. Revealing the nature of his relationship with God. Same thing happens with Gideon in chapter 6.

Now remember, at this point, The author reminds us, Because it's important. Remember, Manoah and his wife believe he's a prophet from God. They don't yet realize that he's a heavenly visitor.

Representing the very presence of God. They don't realize that yet. But all of that changed when the messenger ascended to God in the flame.

At that moment, They realized they'd been in the unique presence of God. And it produced in them The most genuine moment of worship of their life.

[34 : 00] Both of them fell on their faces to the ground, Trembling at what they had just witnessed. God had revealed himself to them in their sacrifice.

Just another confirmation that he was actively working through them To bring about Israel's salvation. Now there's something to be said here about their reactions.

Because they had two different ones. Like Gideon, Manoah feared for his life. He looks at his wife, He says, Sweetheart, We're gonna die.

He'd been in the unique presence of God. He had experienced something that he had never experienced before in his life. And the only thing he could think is, God is holy? And I just experienced his presence?

Surely all that can mean for me is judgment in death. He realizes in that moment his own sinfulness, His unworthiness, His unfaithfulness compared to God's holiness.

[35 : 13] To understand God's holiness And then to sense his personal presence Should lead to a display of proper fear.

A casual approach to God indicates that one has not truly come to recognize the truth of God. Now Manoah may have been wrong in his inference.

And his wife helpfully corrects that. But he was right in his instinct. Spurning the idea that the presence of God is not dangerous.

It is. He is holy. He is holy. He is awesome. And he is awesome. And that demands our fear and reverence and respect.

You know, I need to think about this in terms of our weekly worship Or even your personal private worship. Do you realize that when we come together, The believers that have gathered here today, When we come together Sunday by Sunday, We are here to meet with God.

[36 : 24] We are not here to hear from me. We are here to sing our praises to the God who alone is worthy of worship. We are here to offer our prayers to the only one to which we should pray.

Whether it's a prayer of praise at the beginning of our worship, Or a prayer of confession thereafter, Or a prayer of petition like we had over Carson and over Chelsea, Or if it's a prayer of blessing at the end, They're prayers to God.

It is corporate worship. All of the attention focused on God. And when we hear from the word, You're not here to hear from me. You are here to hear from God's word.

I'm just an instrument. We are here to meet with God. And the fact that we are here to meet with God Should bring along with it the context of fear and reverence.

We should recognize what we are doing as we sing. Never, never should we get to the end of a song or a prayer With that feeling of, What did I just say?

[37 : 34] Or what did I just do? We ought not approach God casually. One man wrote, If during worship we feel no need to laud God as holy And lament our condition as rebellious, We do well to ask if we've really met with God at all.

So we see in Manoah's response here, The wrong inference, for sure. The right instinct. He's met with God. And he's overwhelmed.

Like Isaiah, who said, Woe is me, For I am a man undone. I am a man of unclean lips. And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. On the other hand, We have Manoah's wife With the equally proper reaction That recognized God's grace in the whole ordeal.

Yes, she fell on her face before the Lord too. Who wouldn't in that moment? But she also realized That their experience of God's presence Was a sign of his mercy, Not his judgment.

He wasn't there to condemn them. He was there to give them grace and mercy. And she realized that. Dale Ralph Davis wrote about it this way, Some can shudder, But never smile before God.

[38 : 53] Some of us have reverence Without assurance. Others can so focus on God's nearness That they risk turning warm intimacy Into cheap familiarity.

But the Bible keeps us in bounds. Psalm 211, Rejoice with trembling. That's so wonderfully helpful, isn't it? True worship must involve a sense of fear That displays humility and contrition before God.

But our brokenness in that moment Must be countered By the joy of having recognized The grace of God In the gospel of Jesus. When we see his holiness And our sinfulness is exposed, We look to the cross Where Jesus has taken our place.

Where he has redeemed us from our sins. So now when we look to God with reverence, We look with joy. Not being afraid that we will be cast Into eternal hell.

But knowing that in Christ We have eternal life. She recognizes his grace here. So when we come Sunday by Sunday Or day by day As you spend your time with the Lord.

[40 : 05] Yes, humble contrition. Yes, prayers of confession. Yes, fear. Awe. Wonder. Yes, but also joy.

Celebration. Excitement. Because Jesus has done for us What no one else could do. And the experience of contrition Is lifted By the knowledge and belief In the gospel.

Finally, number four. God fulfilled his promises. Now remember what we're doing here. Maybe I've gotten off track. But we're looking at God As the central character of this chapter.

It's God who announces the birth. It's God who confirms the purpose. It's God who reveals his personal presence. And then it's God Who actually fulfills the promises.

Look at verse 24. The woman bore a son And called his name Samson. And the young man grew And the Lord blessed him. And the spirit of the Lord Began to stir him In Mahanedan Between Zorah and Eshterah.

[41 : 14] The last point's very simple. We know that Samson was God's man From the very beginning Because God did everything He told Manoah and his wife He was going to do.

She did conceive a son. She called his name Samson. God blessed him. And he grew. And he became a young man. And as we've seen So many other times in Judges The spirit of God Began to prepare him For the task at hand.

And Lord willing Next Sunday We're going to get into How all that worked out. But for now We must simply acknowledge That God was doing his work In Samson Even when no one Was asking for him to do it.

What does that tell us? He had a plan all along. And neither Israel's apathy Nor Samson's sin Would thwart that purpose.

And when all of it is said and done Because of how things unfolded In chapter 13 There would be no question That this was all God's doing.

[42 : 25] It's all God's doing. It's a part of this tapestry of grace That we find Woven throughout the pages of the Bible.

This story Is just another example Of the pattern of grace That culminates In the crucifixion And resurrection of Jesus. Samson was the savior Nobody asked for.

So was Jesus. But God's relentless Grace and mercy Still raised them up To bring salvation For his people.

It was always God's plan To use Samson To help defeat the Philistines. And it was always God's plan To use his only begotten son To defeat sin And Satan And death.

It was his eternal plan. Peter makes it clear In the sermon On the day of Pentecost In Acts chapter 2 He says men of Israel Hear these words Jesus of Nazareth A man attested to you By God With mighty works And wonders and signs That God did through him In your midst.

[43 : 35] This Jesus Was delivered up According to the definite plan And foreknowledge of God. In other words Peter is saying This was God's plan From the beginning.

But he used your sin To do it. You crucified And killed By the hands Of lawless men. Now we're going to see That with Samson too.

It was always God's plan To use Samson. God even uses Samson's sin To do it. God raised him up Peter says Loosing the pangs of death Because it was not possible For him to be held by it.

The difference between Samson and Jesus One of the differences Is that Jesus had no sin. He's the eternal son of God. Death could not hold him.

It had no claim on him. Which meant his death Was not for his own sin. It was for the sins of others. The sins of those who believe. It's all eventually Getting us to the cross.

[44 : 38] And I'm convinced That God includes stories Like Samson's in the Bible. So that when we finally get To the glorious gospel of Jesus It will not come As a surprise to us.

Because this is how God Always works. We always see his grace Towards sinners. And when we think That the gospel message Is too good to be true Which could be Your predicament now.

We only need to read The scriptures to find that Abundant grace and mercy Is always how God acts. Yes there is judgment For unbelievers.

But it should come As no surprise to us That there is wonderful Mercy And grace For all who will come To him in faith. And the salvation He's provided in Jesus Is yours.

If You will just turn and believe. The primary takeaway Of this passage Sometimes what's hard About these narratives Is we want so badly To get to the end of him And we want to have Like some kind of Practical thing That we can take And say Well Manoaah did this So I should do this And we can discern Some of those Practical instructions here.

[45 : 54] Hopefully we've done that. But the primary takeaway Here in this passage Is not something For you to do. The primary takeaway For you in this passage Is something for you To believe.

And the demands We believe That God is a gracious God Who has provided True and eternal Salvation In Jesus alone.

That his work Is finished. That's what Chelsea and Carson Are saying to us today And to the world Whoever may be Gathered around Gathered around At the house In just a few minutes That's what They're declaring to us That they have Come to believe That salvation Can only be found In Christ And that they are Trusting in him Alone for it And following him As Lord Won't you do that As well?

Can you come up With a good reason Why you wouldn't? Why would you Turn away From such wonderful Love and grace? Why? There's no hope For you if you don't There's only death And judgment And condemnation And it's totally Unnecessary Because Jesus Has done What Samson And no other person Could do He's paid the price Just come and Receive it Believe And turn And he will save you Well!