

Samson #2 - First Warfare

by Andrew Foster

The sermon explores Samson's life as a demonstration of God's sovereignty and the dangers of worldly desires and improper relationships.

Duration: 1:06:12

Scripture: Exodus 20:8, Judges 14:4-6, Judges 14:19-20, Revelation 1:10

Topics: "Samson"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of not taking sin lightly and avoiding the temptation to pursue revival and deliverance in our own terms. He refers to the story of Samson in the book of Judges as an example of someone who played games with the enemy instead of approaching the work of God with seriousness. The preacher highlights the danger of entertaining sinners in an attempt to convert them, rather than relying on the power of the Holy Spirit. He also warns that even when we have good intentions, we can easily fall into sin, emphasizing the need to be cautious and obedient when serving the Lord.

Transcript

Let's turn again, please, back to the book of Judges, in the chapter 14. Judges chapter 14, and we'll read at the first one, and read down into chapter 15 as well. We will take the time to read the Word of God.

It is important that we do so. And let's just take a moment again to pray, please, to settle our hearts before God's truth, as we come now to read and to study the scriptures together. Let's pray.

Father in heaven, we ask again for thy blessing upon the Word of the living God. We thank thee that this is not the Word of man, it is the Word of the Spirit of truth. The Word of God himself, for holy men of God speak as they were moved by the Spirit of God in old times.

We thank thee, Lord, for thy truth that we have already considered, and we ask that even now again there would be a voice from the Lord, that oh, we would become familiar with the voice of the angel of the Lord, the voice of our mediator, the voice of the great messenger, the one who is the Word, by whom the Father speaks to men. We ask, Lord, that we would hear the voice of Christ just now. Be with us and help us.

Pour out the Holy Ghost upon me for the ministry of thy Word, and upon each of thy people for the hearing of truth, for the believing embrace of that truth, and that we might willingly submit our lives and hearts to it.

We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Judges chapter 14, we'll read at the first verse, please. And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines. And he came up and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines.

Now, therefore, get her for me to wife. Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all thy people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me, for she pleaseth me well. But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the Lord, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines, for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.

Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother to Timnath, and came to the vineyard of Timnath. And, behold, a young lion roared against him, and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid. And he had nothing in his hand, but he told not his father or his mother what he had done.

And he went down and talked with the woman, and she pleased Samson well. And after a time he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion, and, behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion. And he took thereof in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat, but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion.

So his father went down unto the woman, and Samson made there a feast, for so used the young men to do. And it came to pass, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him. And Samson said unto them, I will now put forth a riddle unto you.

If ye can certainly declare it me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty sheets and thirty change of garments. But if ye cannot declare it me, then shall ye give me thirty sheets and thirty change of garments. And they said unto him, Put forth thy riddle, that we may hear it.

And he said unto them, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. And they could not in three days expound the riddle. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they said unto Samson's wife, Entice thy husband, that he may declare unto us the riddle.

Last we burn thee, and thy father's house with fire. Have ye called us to take that we have? Is it not so? And Samson's wife wept before him, and said, Thou dost not hate me, thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not. Thou hast put forth a riddle unto the children of my people, and hast not told it me.

And he said unto her, Behold, I have not told it my father, nor my mother, until I tell it thee. And she wept before him the seven days, while the feast lasted. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that he told her, because she lay sore upon him, and she told the riddle to the children of her people.

And the men of the city said unto him on the seventh day, before the sun went down, What is sweeter than honey, and what is stronger than a lion? And he said unto them, If ye had not ploughed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle. And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon, and slew thirty men of them, and took their spoil, and gave change of garments unto them, which expounded the riddle. And his anger was kindled, and he went up to his father's house.

But Samson's wife was given to his companion, whom he had used as his friend. In this passage we obviously come to consider Samson's first contact with the Philistines, his first contact with the enemy. God's purpose and raising up Samson was that he would begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines.

We have seen that that was the purpose of God, and that purpose was worked out within the environment of Manoah's home. And as they sought the Lord, desiring to do what was right, to order the child according to God's way, God superintended Samson's development, and eventually brought him to the point where he is now about to begin that work of deliverance. Even though he's just a youth, and at most he's under twenty years of age, perhaps just in his late teens, as he begins now to do something under the direct prompting of the Holy Ghost.

Now as we consider Samson's life, there is a very important lesson that we need to bear in mind. This is the lesson of the life of Samson, that the work and deliverance of God's people from their enemies is not simply the action of a man, but it is the sovereign action of God through a man to fulfill his purpose. Now you need to understand that as we come to look at Samson's life, or else his life makes really no sense.

Samson's life is at one and the same time a distressing split image. On one hand we have a man who is listed among the champions of the faith in Hebrews 11, a man who under God saw exploits done in the power of the Holy Ghost, real Holy Spirit power. But there is that distressing contrast where on many other occasions we see a man whose life is marked by carnality and fleshliness and worldly mindedness.

We ask ourselves the question, how can it be? In reality, how can it be otherwise? Every man that God has ever used has been to a degree carnal, sinful, worldly minded. Not one of us is without sin. Not one of us can say that we are in a position to be used by the Holy Ghost and we deserve to be, or we have earned the right to be used by the Holy Ghost.

God, always to accomplish his own purpose, works through his people who are in themselves and of themselves still marked by sin. It is not because of superiority and holiness, nor because of any other qualifying attribute that any man is used by God. Now we have already seen God step in directly, wonderfully, to bring about the circumstances of Samson's birth.

And when we come to consider Samson's life, there is evidence piled upon evidence of what I have just said, that anything that is accomplished by way of deliverance, by way of shaking off the yoke of the Philistines from the people of God on this occasion, anything that is done, is done as the result of God working through the man, not because of what he was, but in spite of what he was. Samson's life is a life that demonstrates God intervening time and time and time again to turn him from his own ways, to turn him from the foolish inclinations of his own heart, and to make him useful for God. And to the degree that Samson accomplished anything for God, it was because God stepped in and overruled his own folly.

And I want you to understand that Samson is not unique in that. We look at the word portrait of the man that's given to us in these chapters and we sometimes are inclined to recoil with horror as if, as if there's nothing of that in us. I say to you that Samson, in the portrait that we have of him in these chapters, did more for God than any Christian today does that would look down their nose at him.

Samson did know the mighty working of God the Holy Ghost, but it wasn't because of what Samson was. It was because God was pleased on those occasions to step in and take a poor foolish man who would have destroyed himself and turn him and change the course of his life in that moment, in those circumstances, and in actual fact snatch victory out of the jaws of defeat so many times. That's the

character of Samson's life.

Why is it in the Bible? Because that's the way it is when God works with his people. Pride in ourselves will pat ourselves on the back and say, God will use me because I am so much better than everybody else, so much holier than everybody else. Now God demands holiness of his people.

God demands a sanctified life. God demands a holy life. Even when we have done all that is our duty to do, where such a thing possible, we are still unprofitable servants.

And anything that will be accomplished, it will be accomplished because God has been pleased to work in spite of us. Not because of us. Let's get to look at this incident here, this episode in Samson's life, and you'll see, I want you to see this.

This is the emphasis of the messages. I want you to see the work of God here. Because this is the burden I want you to take away.

God must work among us. Now what we do, what we feel, what we can stir up, what we can self-generate among ourselves by way of religious ardor or devotion or consecration, God must work. Now you look at this episode.

You have Samson's first contact with the enemies that God has called them to contend with. You have some interesting events described, and ultimately they climax in a measure of victory and a defeating of the Philistines, and a setback for them, and a measure of victory for Samson. But I tell you the path Samson followed to that experience of victory ought never to have led to that victory, and wouldn't have led to it had it not been for God stepping in and doing something in spite of Samson.

Because you will notice that this conflict and victory came despite the sinful weaknesses that Samson showed. The sinful weaknesses that he showed here, the flaws of character that ultimately proved to be the downfall of this man of God, proved to be a ruin, are evident at a very early stage in his life of service for God. The same sins that destroyed Samson are seen here.

Great sin never appears suddenly. It never does. It never just comes out of the blue.

I know we read sometimes of prominent individuals within the church of Christ falling into great sin. And leaving aside just for now the question as to whether or not they ever were truly saved, we'll leave that aside for now. The fact remains that great sin that exposed them didn't come out of the blue.

Had someone with discernment watched that life, the sins that brought his downfall were there for years. It's just they hadn't been noticed, hadn't paid attention to them. But you look at this, and the sins that destroyed Samson some years after this, they're present from the beginning.

Just as a storm is announced by the clouds appearing over the horizon, here we have clouds on the horizon of Samson's life that warn of the end that he's going to come to. You'll see that he allowed himself to be guided by his own desires. He feels within him the prompting and the leading of the Holy Ghost.

We learn as much in the end of chapter 13, the Spirit of the Lord began to move him. There's the prompting of the Holy Ghost to carry through the will of God. But in Samson there is, as there is in every Christian, the working of the flesh.

And Samson allowed himself here to be guided by his own desires, and particularly by what he saw. You notice the emphasis of the opening verses with relation to his choice of a wife. Verse 1, Samson went down to Timnath and saw a woman in Timnath.

He saw her. Verse 2, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines. Verse 3, the final phrase literally is, get her for me for she is right in mine eyes.

Quite literally the Hebrew words that are used there. She pleases me. It's right, it's good, as far as I'm concerned, in my eyes.

Verse 7, she pleased Samson well. Same words again. She's right in mine eyes.

Oh, how wrong Samson's perspective on things was. He wasn't seeing things from a spiritual perspective at all. Here is carnality.

Here is sin, the working of the flesh. He sees this woman, enchanted no doubt by her physical beauty, but there's a spiritual blindness here. She's right in mine eyes.

Oh no, she wasn't right. She was wrong. She was a Philistine.

She was a heathen. She was wrong, not right. How often God's people view things from a carnal, worldly perspective, yet it all wrong.

Don't see the way it should be. Here's a man, the spirit is prompting him now to act against the enemies of God and of God's people. And we find him, I think that it is true to say in the light of the passage here, we find him responding to that stimulus within him by looking at things through worldly eyes.

It's seen in relation to the carcass of the lion. Here's another thing that again brings this to view. Verse 8, he goes down to see this woman, and look at the words carefully, he turns aside to see, to see the carcass of the lion.

And then look at the interjection here, and behold. Again, even in these simple ways, there is an emphasis in the scripture on what he was seeing, what he was looking for, what he had an interest in seeing. Remember God called him to be a Nazarite? You look at Numbers chapter 6 and the verse 6 that you'll discover that a Nazarite was to have no contact with anything that was dead.

Nothing. Spiritual lesson of course was profound in that. It was to be withdrawing from all that was dead and sin, marked by the fruits of sin and the evidences of sin and spiritual death.

It was to be withdrawing from that, and that was worked out even physically in the life of the Nazarite. Did you see this? He goes to look at something that God said you don't touch. Ah, but it's just a look.

It's what Eve said. It's what the devil told Eve, isn't it? Did you see the look always leads to the touch. And what did he do? He went to see, he looked, and the idea in the word behold, even just used as an ordinary interjection in the text, is concentrate on this.

I don't want you to miss this. See this. Get your eye on it.

And I think there's an insight into what Samuel did, or Samson did. He goes to see, and now he looks. Concentrate.

And as he concentrates, what does he see? As he concentrates upon that which God said that he as a Nazarite wasn't to touch, and had he been thinking right, he would have kept himself at a distance from it, and never thought to investigate and kept on his way. But he goes to see, he looks, and what does he find? Honour. Sweetness.

And he puts his hand out and he takes it. And right there, Samson compromised his Nazarite condition for a sweet thing. The psalmist prayed in the Psalm 141 in the verse 4, to be kept from the ways of the world, and he put it this way, let me not eat of their dainties.

Because is that not the truth? And again, the scripture uses this imagery of the wicked man and the sweetness that he derives from his wickedness and his rebellion against God, rolling it on his tongue, the way a kid might savour a particularly nice candy. Samson went to look, and he found that which at the time was sweet. Don't you think all this left a bitter aftertaste in Samson's mouth? The taste of the honey was soon replaced by the bitterness of the experience.

He allowed himself to be guided by his own desires. The working of the flesh, that which appeals to the flesh, seems sweet to the flesh, but a compromise right there is standing with God. His communion with God, he had broken his vow of consecration.

Now, it reminds us, does it not, of how easy it is to sin. Even when we are sincerely setting out to do something for God, we sin. Wise man Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 5 verse 1, Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God.

Setting out to go to worship, I'm going to do that which is right, which is commanded by God. I'm going to go to worship the Lord. You better keep your feet because you're liable to fall.

Be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools. He went on to write, Dear Christian, you are never more vulnerable and liable to fall into sin than when you are starting out to serve the Lord. Here's Samson, he is being impelled, driven to attack the enemies of God.

That's what this is all about. He's going to take on the Philistines. He's not getting off to a very good start, is he? Already he's got his eye off of the Lord.

He's beginning to look at things that are of the world, heathen things, coming into contact with that which is defiling. Now we know from the passage as a whole that Samson is, even at this time, looking for an opportunity to give the Philistines a black eye, as it were. He's looking.

This is what this is about. Even as he's seeking out this woman and going down to Timnah, in the back of his mind there is this idea, I'm looking for an opportunity to smack the Philistines one. I'm looking for an opportunity to get at them because that was the driving force in the working of the Holy Spirit within them.

The Christian is one who has an inherent desire to resist the enemies of God. To take on that which is in opposition to God and to his word, to his Christ. But the reality is that so often, even in responding to that impulse of the Spirit within us, our eyes are blinded by carnal thinking.

And we seek to follow through that right desire in a fleshly, foolish fashion. He formed improper relationships. That's obvious here in the passage as well.

What did he do? He wanted to marry a Philistine. He wanted to marry a Philistine. His parents rebuked this sin.

You find that here in the verse 3. His father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all thy people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And notice the line that Manoah and his wife take. They rebuke it. They take a stand against the sons and this is wrong.

Why? Well, because she's not pretty or she doesn't have a big dowry or... No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. Look at why they oppose this. She's one of the uncircumcised Philistines.

That's a spiritual argument. She doesn't belong to the people of God. If we might bring in the spiritual application of the reference here, we might say she's not born again.

She doesn't have a circumcised heart. Samson, she's not among God's people. That's why they opposed it.

She was no friend to Samson. She showed no loyalty to him or to his God. In fact, look at what she says in verse 16.

As she's weeping and wailing and trying to tease his secret from him, she speaks about the children of my people. She didn't put a tooth in it, as we might say, to let him know, I don't belong to your people. I owe no loyalty to Israel.

These are my people. She made her loyalties plain and clear. Samson forms an improper relationship with her.

Does the Lord in 2 Corinthians 6, 14 not speak to his people? Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers? That's not a new principle. It has always been God's way. And Samson is reminded of that here, even by his parents.

Samson, she doesn't belong to the people of God. You have no business forming an attachment with her. But he insisted.

But he did. And this, of course, leads on to further entanglement with the Philistines. It broadens his Philistine acquaintance, if we might put it that way.

In verse 11, we have Manoah and his wife going down. And ultimately, for whatever reason, they cease to protest and to reason with Samson. He gets his way in this.

And so there's a journey made down to Timnath in the country of the Philistines. Verse 11, it came to pass that when they saw him, they brought thirty companions to be with him. Thirty companions.

It doesn't take long to make friends among the Philistines, does it? The devil's going to see to it that when God's mind makes the error that Samson makes, that he's going to be well outnumbered by his Philistine friends and acquaintances. If you put yourself in a group and you're outnumbered thirty to one, it's going to have a dampening effect on your opinions about things, and how you're going to talk about things, and what you're going to say and do, and how you're going to act. You see that Samson here is conforming to the practice of the time.

He goes down to make a feast, verse 10, for so used the young man to do. I'm going to suggest to you that that's not an Israelite custom. I'm going to suggest to you that was a Philistine custom he was going along with.

Certainly, I can be dogmatic about the fact that this feast that was arranged and carried through, even if it wasn't altogether a Philistine invention, it was a Philistine version of it, because you'll see that it lasted seven days. One of those days was the Sabbath. One of those days was the Sabbath.

And even if there had been something of the sort among God's people, I will suggest to you it would not have compromised the Sabbath day. But among the Philistines, Samson finds himself now conforming to the practice of the young man of the time, and one of the first things to suffer is a proper observance of the Sabbath day. The fourth commandment is still in God's moral law.

There still is a Sabbath, a Christian Sabbath. The Lord's day is still the Sabbath day. But you know many of God's people get to the place where Samson got to.

Yes, undeniably in their heart there might be the prompting of the Holy Ghost to do what is right, but because they've begun to look at things, and even to touch and to taste things, to form companionships that have compromised their communion with God, the Sabbath day is forgotten. Where is Sabbath observance in the Church of Christ today? I ask you, where is it? Where is it? It's almost non-existent. I can't speak in any authoritative fashion about the religious scene here, but I know back in Canada the big trend among evangelical churches over the last number of years is for a start to cut the life out of any services that are held on a Sunday, and then even to shift some of them back to a Saturday night.

So let's get the God thing done out of the way so we can go do what we like on Sunday. I recently came across, because of something else I was doing, I came across a church website in the run-up to Christmas. I don't want to get into the subject of Christmas and all of those things, that's a different issue, but here's an evangelical church, and Christmas this year was what, on a Friday? Saturday? Saturday.

So they got a Christmas Eve candlelit service, cancel everything they would normally have on a Saturday, cancel everything they have on a Sunday, and then the week after they're going to resume normal service. Now where in the world, excuse me, where in the Bible do you find any warrant for that kind of behavior by the Church of Christ? There's an emphasis upon a service that you never find in the Bible. A candlelit Christmas Eve service.

You'll not find it in the Bible in any place. Okay? So they bring in this stuff, and then they dump the Lord's day. And the thing God says you are to do, they don't do, and the things that he gives no command to do, they're ready to do.

Where is biblical Sabbath observance? Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. 6 days shalt thou labor and do all thy work, but the seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. It's still in the Bible.

It's still part of God's law. It's still relevant in the New Testament age, just as much as thou shalt not steal and thou shalt not commit adultery. Where is the observance of God's day? I don't want to labor the point, but it's here.

I want you to think about it. And the man God has raised up here to be a deliverer. Oh, he shows such blind spots here, does he not? It was Samson's intention, as I've said all the way through, to find an occasion of quarrel with the Philistines.

That is brought out in verse 4. His father and his mother knew not that it was of the Lord that he sought an occasion against the Philistines. For at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel. There are three things you need to notice in that verse.

One, Samson is looking for an occasion to have a go at the Philistines. That's what he wants to do. Number two, God has a purpose that is not known to man.

God had a purpose in all of this. But Noah couldn't see that Samson couldn't see. And the third thing that really is the theme of this whole passage is that Samson is determined to follow the prompting of the Holy Spirit within him to find that occasion against the Philistines, not by seeking and knowing the will of God, but by pursuing his own thoughts and his own ideas.

On one hand, he has the prompting of the Spirit of God within him, a natural hostility to the Philistines, just as every Christian has a hostility to the ways of the world and the wickedness of sin. That's the work of the Holy Spirit within the born-again child of God. But on the other hand, there is that within us which the Bible speaks of as the flesh, which still hankers after the ways of the world, that is a vehicle for sin, that is a vehicle by which the devil can get access to the life and heart and mind of the Christian.

The lesson here is this, it is never, never, ever the will of God for a Christian to pursue the prompting of the Spirit in a carnal fashion. You cannot use the means of the flesh to do the will of the Spirit. That's what Samson was doing here.

He had to learn a lesson. How well he learned it, I don't know, but the lesson is here, and we don't want to miss it. You cannot do the work of the Holy Ghost in the flesh.

It's not enough just to be prompted by the Spirit to do what is right, and then to take that prompting and to say, okay, we're going to do this my way. It's not going to work. Now the fact that God overruled in this case, as he did, doesn't justify any Christian following on in that foolish path that Samson set himself on here.

This is why I'm saying you need to show care and discernment when you're looking at Samson. Don't ever use Samson as justification for trying to do the work of God in the strength of the flesh. Samson would have destroyed himself here.

His ministry would have been over and done and finished here had God not stepped in. Yes, God had a sovereign purpose. God had a purpose to work even through Samson's folly.

He purposed, though Manoah didn't know it, and Samson didn't know it. As Moses put it, the secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but it's the things that are revealed that belong to us and to our children. And because what Samson was doing was contrary to the revealed will of God, Manoah objected to it.

And Samson had no business going contrary to the revealed word of God. He couldn't use the fact, as I've heard many Christians do, he could not use the fact that God has a sovereign purpose unknown to me that allows me to live like the devil. I have heard the doctrine of God's sovereign purpose is so perverted it's an evil, devilish lie.

God's sovereign purposes are real, but no man can ever use those as an argument for staying in sin or practicing sin. God's sovereign purposes don't destroy duty to his revealed will, yet so many use those purposes to that end. As we look at the example of Samson, we need to be careful about following his

example.

Remember how Paul wrote to the Corinthians, Be ye followers of me, even as I am of Christ. To that degree and to that degree only you take a lead from any man. Where his example lines up with the example of Christ.

You're not called to follow man or any man, it doesn't matter who he is, it doesn't matter how godly he is, it doesn't matter if he's the apostle Paul himself, it doesn't matter. You're not called to follow any man as a man. Yes, be glad for the example of godly men, but always measure their example by the example of Christ.

Samson is setting out here, yes, with a desire to accomplish a victory. He's going about it all the wrong way. Many of you have come here to this conference, as I understand it, with a burden to see God revive his church.

I believe that to be the prompting of the Holy Ghost. But, brethren and sisters, we can go about it the wrong way. We can go about it the wrong way.

We can go about it in a way that's pleasing to the flesh. What is more natural than that you as an individual or I as an individual should fall into the trap of desiring revival? There's nothing more natural than that, nothing more to be expected, but there's nothing that we must guard against more than acting like that. It's exactly what Samson's doing here.

Within his soul there's this overwhelming desire, I want to see liberty for my people. I want to see Philistine oppression broken. I want to see that.

I'm going to do it my way. The conflict and the victory that's recorded here came about because of the sovereign purpose of God and God's direct intervention again in Samson's life. Oh, God, overrule our folly.

Make that your prayer. God, overrule my folly. Overrule my blindness.

Overrule my stupidity. Overrule my worldly madness. Turn me from it.

Because even though you may not see it, be sure it's there. Be sure it's there. The fact that you don't see it is an evidence that it's there.

Samson's first skirmish or conflict with the Philistines did not arise out of a pure and a holy zeal for God. Oh, did we look deep enough into Samson's heart? Was his motive good? Was his desire good? Yes, it was. The prompting of the Holy Spirit, driving him, is here.

But as Samson thought about this matter, he thought about it in a sinful and in a foolish fashion. The best of men can do that. Remember Abraham, father of the faithful, friend of God? God said to Abraham, Abraham, I'm going to give you a son.

What a promise. What did he do? He went and took Hagar. No doubt in Abraham's mind, there was the desire to see the promise of God fulfilled in his life.

But he looked at that promise of God and the purpose of God revealed in it, and he thought to himself, I know a way I can do that. I know a way I can make that work. That's why Sarah encouraged him in the action.

Was it right? No, it was wrong. Did it work? No, it didn't. For Ishmael wasn't the promised seed, and it brought trouble and heartache and difficulty into Abraham's home.

Good, good men have always done this. We're not going to be any different. Here is something, and I'm not saying this just so that you can sweep, or that we can sweep our own sin in this manner on the carpet and forget it and say, well, Abraham did it, Samson did it, so what difference does it make? No, I'm saying these things so that we can be warned and take avoiding action.

Do we want revival? Do we want liberty? Do we want deliverance? I say yes, we do. But let us not go about that in the will of the flesh. There's nothing more that the devil wants for you than to get you diverted into saying, I want revival and I want it my way, on my terms.

I want you to notice the purpose of God. Let's go back to verse 4. Very quickly, just look at it. His father and his mother knew not that it was of the Lord that he sought an occasion against the Philistines.

God's purpose is a mystery to men. There is an element to God's purpose that you and I cannot know and will never know, sometimes referred to as the inscrutable will of God. Above and beyond, but never in conflict with what he has revealed, but above what he has revealed to us.

God, he that sits in the heavens, disposes all things according to his own purpose and only for his own glory there is a purpose. Now, Samson doesn't know it. He doesn't have some secret insight into the mind of God in this.

Unhesitatingly, we can say Samson was dead wrong to do as he did here. The fact of the matter is that God, wonderfully, providentially, for his own glory, overruled Samson's folly and sin and rescued, out of the mess, a victory that should never have been there. Any blessing from God that we enjoy in our life and our service for him, inevitably, that's what it comes down to.

It's in spite of what I am, not because of it. Not because of it. It's in spite of it.

God, in spite of me, my foolishness, my worldliness, my sinfulness, my pollution, my weakness, my frailty, my backsliding, in spite of those things, God has stepped in and done something. But that purpose and plan, as I've said already, does not destroy the responsibility of men and especially of God's servants to do what he has revealed. I am not at any time called to sit down and meditate on what the secret counsels of God may be.

I am not called to do that. I am called to sit down, open the book and say, Lord, what will thou have me to do? And I am called to carry through those counsels in such a way, simply believing that I don't know how this is going to work out or accomplish what God says it's going to accomplish, but I believe that this is my duty and God who rules over all things, it is his business to work it out. I don't know how he's going to do it.

Do I know how revival's going to come? No, I don't. But I do know this, that he has revealed that his people, like Manoah and his wife, are to give themselves to seeking his will, seeking his feast, get to the altar, get to the presence of God, listen for the voice of Christ, do what he says, set aside all of those notions of the flesh and of the world and forget about doing what the young men used to do in the time, get rid of that and get before God. And as we do that, God will work.

You see, he has pride at work, has he not? Samson knows a better way than God to get a victory over the Philistines. Oh, is there not so much of that spirit abroad today in the church? We now have evolved. It's

amazing how many who profess to believe in creation are actually spiritual evolutionists.

We have evolved to the place where we know better than God, better than the prophets, better than the apostles. Let's do it this way. I mean, the world has changed.

Things have moved on. People are different. And where you get the theological basis for that, I have no idea.

We don't know better than God. We don't know better than God. It's not our business to try to invent clever plans.

It's our business just to attend to what God has revealed. Now, in conclusion, I know I'm out of time again. But I want you to look at the sovereign intervention of God here in his life as God overrules.

You walk with Samson here, out of the territory of Dan, down into the territory of the Philistines to Timna. He's bent on doing things his way. You ever stop to think why Samson acted the clown the way he did at that party with the Philistine young men? What's all that about a riddle? Do you ever wonder about that? Well, you shouldn't have to wonder too long because you see it exemplified in the modern church all around us.

I tell you, in the majority of evangelical churches today, serving God is just a joke. It's all it is. It's a game.

It's a party game. It's all it is. Samson here doesn't demonstrate the sober-mindedness of a man who's working in the power of the Holy Ghost.

No, he does not. He demonstrates the giddy, game-playing mindset that characterizes a man whose eyes are blinded by carnality. It's just a game.

Playing games with the enemy just to get a go at him. Entertaining the enemy to try to conquer them. How many churches, oh please, think about this, think about the application of all of that.

How many churches today play that game? Let's entertain the sinner to try to conquer him for Christ. The Bible doesn't come on the back of riddles and entertainment and party games. God help us it doesn't come that way.

But that's where Samson's going. How do you explain how the whole thing ends up with victory and deliverance and the power of God? The only explanation is because it pleased God to step in. How did God step in? First, he stepped in to save Samson's life from the attack of the lion.

Look at that, think about that. As a Nazarite you should never have been in the vineyard because God said you don't not only drink the wine, the strong drink, you don't touch any part of the wine. You don't eat it, you don't touch it.

He's in a vineyard. Again, a compromise of his Nazarite position. Not only a vineyard, he wasn't even allowed in a vineyard in Israel but now he's in a Philistine vineyard.

He had no need to be there. You notice something in the story? Samson had made a detour to get into that vineyard. Did you notice that? Because all of this came down with the lion and he didn't tell his mother and father who were on the same journey with him down to Timnah.

Why did they not see? Because he had taken a detour from the path. He was separated from his mother and father and is there not a lesson for us to learn and apply at this point? Can we not say he was separated from the kind of devotion that his mother and father exemplified? To find himself again in a place where his Nazarite consecration was compromised, he had left behind the consecration that marked the home that he'd come from and there the lion attacked. Oh, there's a whole sermon in that in itself, is it not? You know when a Christian gets into the ways of the world, gets separated from the consecrated life and the consecrated company of God's people and the rest of the family of God, he's waiting.

Why? Goeth about. That adversary going about it a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Likely this was a mountain lion of some kind.

I don't know. You got cougars here? We got cougars in our part of the world anyway. And I tell you when they spring, you're in trouble.

Usually from behind and usually one great big bite in the back of your neck and you're dead. That's it. God spared his life.

Samson's stupid ideas would have killed him stone dead before he had slaughtered one fellow slave. That's where Samson's stupid ideas were taking him. But God stepped in.

You know the ideas that permeate the church today are killing the church. Killing it. Killing it stone dead.

Those human ideas that are produced by worldly wisdom and carnal minds. You know we look at the church and we say what a mess the church is in. I think it'd be more accurate to say but for the mercy of God the church would have been dead long ago.

Killed itself. Because of our own stupidity. But God kept him alive when the lion attacked.

Samson got himself into a real mess with the philistines did he not? His little party game sort of backfired. Now he finds himself under obligation to the philistines. He owes them 30 sheets and 30 changes of garments.

Instead of his plan leading to him having the upper hand and getting advantage of them they have the advantage over him. He's now in debt to them. Under obligation to them.

He owes them. The party game didn't work. Samson to me always exudes that sort of cocky swaggering self-confident attitude.

When he's acting in a carnal fleshly fashion. He was so sure of himself. He was going to go in he was going to fix these philistines.

Show them a thing or two. Play a little game with them and he would come out of it and they would be the worse off. Did it happen? No.

But God stepped in. God intervenes. Look at what it says.

The spirit of the Lord came upon him. Who? I can't even begin to explain the working. Now there is sovereign purpose.

The Holy Ghost coming upon a man in Samson's condition. How? Why? I cannot explain other than to say God did it because it pleased him. Because it was God's purpose to do it.

It certainly wasn't something that Samson had worked up to or that he deserved or that he had earned. God came. You know there's an interesting word used here.

The spirit of the Lord came upon him. Came upon. The military term translated here and it is used I believe very deliberately by the Holy Spirit in the scriptures.

The Holy Ghost attacked him. The Holy Ghost came upon him with a sense of hostility. The way one army may come on another.

Coming against. The Holy Ghost fell upon him the way one soldier might fall on another and attack him. I believe that's deliberately put that way.

Because at this point Samson is going contrary to the ways of God. But in sovereign mercy the Holy Ghost steps in. Gets the hold of Samson.

Turns him around and says you're going to do it my way. Fleshly nature resist God and even our best efforts with the best will in the world when they're carried through in the flesh we find ourselves working in opposition to the Holy Ghost. But God in mercy.

And you marvel at the mercy here. God gets the hold of him. Samson you're going the wrong way.

You look at that in scripture. One of the greatest examples of it is in Revelation chapter one. You know the words.

I was in the spirit on the Lord's day. What an exemplary consecration that was on John's part. Do you know what it says next.

I heard behind me he was still looking the wrong way. He still had to be turned to see the Son of Man. Left to ourselves we will always go the wrong way.

Because that's the working of our flesh. And unless the Holy Ghost comes upon us as he came upon Samson. Got the hold of him.

Attacked him in that sense. Turned him around and said this is the way. We're never going to see revival.

We're not going to see any kind of victory. Our little efforts are never going to amount to any more than riddles and party games. I don't have the time.

Look at what happened here. God stepped in. The Holy Ghost came.

Samson burns. We didn't read the verses into chapter 15. You remember he takes the 300 foxes.

He sends out the firebrands into the standing corn. He burns up their crops. The trees, the vineyards are burned.

Philistines suffer a setback. The standing corn, that's an immediate setback. The vineyards, the olive yards, that's a long-term setback.

They weren't going to bounce back from that very quickly. There were Philistines that were slaughtered as he went and he slew those 30 men in Ashkelon. Under the power of the Holy Ghost.

Aye, there was something accomplished. A little deliverance. A little lifting of the bondage.

But it was because the Holy Ghost did something, not because of what Samson did. Let's learn this. God's work can't be done our way.

It must be done God's way. And if there's anything going to be done, the Holy Ghost must come. Turn us from even our best ideas and best notions, and turn us to do his will.

Then, and only then, there will be victory. Let us not leave this place to play riddles and party games. Let us leave this place looking for God to meet us and turn us from our ways.

And his power to revive his cause again.

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