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Message 8 of 12

**Samson: A “sun” in Darkness**

**(Judges 13:1—16:31)**

**Theme**: “In those days there was no king in Israel; **each person did what was right in his/her own eyes**” (21:25). God was their king (8:23), but they didn’t live under His rule.

**Cycle Repeats**: (2:11; 3:7; 3:12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; **13:1**).

**Title** **of the Series**: Israel had a severe problem, a gunshot wound: not living under God’s reign (8:23). Temporary fixes were “warriors” or “judges” that brought them temporary relief, Band-Aids. But, now the “Band-Aids” themselves were untrustworthy.

**Today’s Lesson (Judges 13:1–16:31)**:Samson was the twelfth judge in the Book of Judges. His name meant “sun,” but he lived in darkness. God had anointed him for the deliverance of his people. Instead, pleasures and revenge guided his steps. He lived out the lives of the Israelites.

Cycle (13:1): “Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, so the LORD delivered them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years.”

The Birth/Calling of Samson (13:2–25): A childless couple, Manoah and his wife, received a promise of a male child, “a Nazirite, set apart to God from birth” who “will begin the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Philistines” (13:5). From the beginning on, there was blurriness in the minds of the parents on “how to bring up the boy” (13:8) and to whom they were speaking—“what’s your name” (13:17). Regardless of their fogginess, the Spirit of the LORD “began to stir” Samson to achieve what God wanted Samson to achieve (13:25).

“The LORD said to Moses, Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘If a man or woman wants to make a special vow, a vow of separation to the LORD as a Nazirite, he must abstain from wine and other fermented drink and must not drink vinegar made from wine or from other fermented drink. He must not drink grape juice or eat grapes or raisins. As long as he is a Nazirite, he must not eat anything that comes from the grapevine, not even the seeds or skins. During the entire period of his vow of separation no razor may be used on his head. He must be holy until the period of his separation to the LORD is over; he must let the hair of his head grow long. Throughout the period of his separation to the LORD he must not go near a dead body. Even if his own father or mother or brother or sister dies, he must not make himself ceremonially unclean on account of them, because the symbol of his separation to God is on his head. Throughout the period of his separation he is consecrated to the LORD’” (Num 6:1–8).

Walks in Darkness (14:1–20): Samson, unaware of his mission to destroy the Philistines who were oppressing the Israelites for 40 years, fell in love with “a young Philistine woman” (14:1). [#1] His parents tried to reason with him but gave in to his desire and arranged the wedding. On the way to the marriage, Samson entered the vineyards of Timnah (14:5). [#2] There a lion “came roaring towards him” (14:5), and “the Spirit of the LORD came upon him in power so that he tore the lion apart with his bare hands as he might have torn a young goat” (14:6). They proceeded with the engagement (14:7). When Samson returned to wed the girl, he “turned aside to look at the lion’s carcass” (14:8). In the dead carcass was honey; Samson “scooped out with his hands and ate” some honey and gave some to his parents too (14:9). [#3] At the wedding feast, Samson planned to escape the *gifts* given to the bridegroom’s friends. [#4] For that, he told a riddle to which none knew the answer. [#5; cp. 15:16; 16:7–14] Samson’s wife, by nagging, made him reveal the secret. To pay back the dowry, he killed 30 men of Ashkelon and gave their clothing to the groomsmen. But without marrying his wife, he left for his father’s house (14:19). [#6] The father of the bride gave her to one of Samson’s friends!

Frustration Turned to Revenge (15:1–19): Eventually Samson cooled down and returned to get his wife. Finding that the father of the bride had given her to a friend, he went and destroyed their harvest—grains, vineyards, and olive groves—with 300 foxes. When the Philistines knew who he was, they burned his wife and father (15:6). In revenge, Samson “attacked them viciously and slaughtered many of them” (15:8). [#7] He then hid in a cave. Men of Judah came to talk to him. Gaining their promise that they wouldn’t harm them, Samson went with them. When the Philistines came charging against him, the “Spirit of the LORD” came upon him in power” and he killed 1000 men with a fresh jawbone of a donkey. When he became thirsty, the LORD gave him water.

Final Outburst (16:1–31): Samson went to a prostitute. [#8] When the people of the city surrounded him to kill him, he “took hold of the doors of the city gate, together with the two posts, and tore them loose, bar and all. He lifted them to his shoulders and carried them to the top of the hill” (16:3). So the men were determined to revenge Samson. Samson visited Delilah. She tried three times to find the secret to his strength and he tricked her all three times (16:6–14). In each step, he was getting closer to revealing the truth to her. Finally, she succeeded, and Samson was defeated—“his strength left him” (16:19) and “the LORD had left him” (16:20). The Philistines blinded him, bound him with bronze shackles, and made him grind mill in the prison. “But the hair on his head began to grow again after it had been shaved” (16:22). When the Philistines celebrated a festival for Dagon, their god, they brought Samson to shame him. There he pleaded with the LORD: “O Sovereign LORD, remember me. O God, please strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes” (16:28). [#9] The LORD answered and he killed over 3000 people (16:27) with him—“Let me die with the Philistines!” (16:30). “He killed many more when he died than while he lived” (16:30). His brothers and father buried him.

**Character of God—“Long Suffering”:** In everything Samson did, the Spirit of the LORD stayed with him, remained silent, and “assisted” him. In the ultimate end, Samson was listed among the faithful people (Heb 11:32), only because of God’s long-suffering.

* “Honor your father and your mother” (Deut 5:16)
* “You shall not murder” (Deut 5:17)
* “You shall not commit adultery” (Deut 5:18)
* “You shall not steal” (Deut 5:19)
* “He must not drink grape juice or eat grapes or raisins. As long as he is a Nazirite, he must not eat anything that comes from the grapevine, not even the seeds or skins” (Num 6:3–4)
* “During the entire period of his vow of separation no razor may be used on his head” (Num 6:5)
* “[During] the period of his separation to the LORD he must not go near a dead body” (Num 6:7)

**Lesson for us**: God selected and empowered Samson, but Samson wandered in life without knowing his “purpose” and lived in darkness contrary to his name and calling. He fell prey to vices/sins/evil/desires. Yet, God remained faithful and accomplished what He wanted to do—deliver the Israelites from the hands of the oppressors. Similarly, God is always faithful to us in spite of our weaknesses and sin, and He will accomplish through us what He planned to do (Eph 2:10). But will future generations look at us, and say, “He/she had so much talent but he/she didn’t live as God wanted him/her to live: he/she lived in darkness”? Or, will they say, “He/she lived just as God wanted him/her to live—with a purpose, aim, direction, and goal: he/she lived in light”?