

JUDGES 13
A LIGHT THAT FLICKERED!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Judges chapter 13 as we continue our study through the book of Judges.

This morning we will begin looking at the 13th and final Judge in the book of Judges, Samson. And Samson also ministered in the western portion of Israel.

Now Samson is a very interesting man who will start out with great potential as God calls him to a work before he is even born, God calls him when he was in the womb!

And yet, he fell far short of all that God had for him because he was controlled by his bodily appetites, by the flesh, instead of by God.

In fact, as we will see, Samson will destroy more of the enemy, the Philistines in his death than in his life.

You see, he was a man that played with fire and he truly got burned.

Let me share these words with you from Warren Wiersbe on this man Samson. He wrote, “It is a riddle wrapped up in a mystery inside an enigma.”

In a speech broadcast October 1, 1939 that’s how Sir Winston Churchill described the actions of the Russians in his day.

But what he said about Russian actions could be applied to Samson, the last of the judges, for his behavior is “a riddle wrapped up in a mystery inside an enigma.”

Samson was unpredictable and undependable because he was double-minded, and “a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways” (James 1:8). It has well been said that “the greatest ability is depend-ability,” and you could depend on Samson to be undependable.

Bold before men, Samson was weak before women and couldn't resist telling them his secrets.

Empowered by the Spirit of God, he yielded his body to the appetites of the flesh.

Called to declare war on the Philistines, he fraternized with the enemy and even tried to marry a Philistine woman.

He fought the Lord's battles by day and disobeyed the Lord's commandments by night.

Given the name Samson, which means "sunny," he ended up in the darkness, blinded by the very enemy he was supposed to conquer.

Four chapters in the Book of Judges are devoted to the history of Samson. In Judges 13-14, we were introduced to "Sunny" and his parents and we see the light flickering as Samson plays with sin.

In Judges 15-16, the light goes out and Samson dies a martyr under the ruins of a heathen temple, a sad end to a promising life.

- Warren Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary – OT*, p.459

I have called our study here in Judges chapter 13 – ***A LIGHT THAT FLICKERED!*** And the reason for that, as Warren Wiersbe said, was that he started out with all that he needed to serve the Lord, to shine brightly, but sin caused his light to flicker and then, eventually go out.

This is how I have broken this chapter down.

THE FALLING AWAY – JUDGES 13:1

THE CALLING OF GOD – JUDGES 13:2-5

UNBELIEF – JUDGES 13:6-8

GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS AGAIN – JUDGES 13:9-14

THE WORSHIP OF GOD – JUDGES 13:15-21***THE FEAR OF THE LORD – JUDGES 13:22-23******THE BIRTH OF SAMSON – JUDGES 13:24-25***

Once again this is a tough section of Scripture because I think we can all see a little of Samson in each of us as we allow the flesh to get in the way of what God wants to do in our lives, how God wants to use us.

It is as Morgan reminds us, “We have one of the strangest stories of the Old Testament, the story of Samson. It is the story of a great opportunity and a disastrous failure in the case of a man who might have wrought a great deliverance but failed.”

That truly is the story of Samson, and like I have said, the Holy Spirit did not place this story of Samson to just speak of this man, but to us, to warn us of the dangers that are out there and how we need to commit our lives to Christ, stay focused on him and not let the distractions of the world draw us away.

I look at this like a horse race. In a horse race you see horses that have blinders on so they can't see on either side of them.

Why is that?

So they are not distracted by the other horses, the people, or whatever. But they can stay focused on what is right in front of them, the race that is set before them.

That should sound familiar to us, because God wants us to stay focused upon Him so that we may finish this race of faith strong and not be distracted by other things, pulled off course by the things of this world, the flesh and the Devil!

So we will spend a few weeks looking at this man Samson before we get to the end of this book and deal with full blown idolatry and the wickedness that it brought to the nation, to the children of Israel.

But before we dig into the life of Samson, we will see God working through his parents and then to his birth and all that God had for him, and yet he came up short, his light flickered, and, like I have said, eventually went out before he came to his senses and returned to the Lord.

With that said, let's begin reading in Judges chapter 13, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word and look at this topic – ***THE LIGHT THAT FLICKERED!***

JUDGES 13

VERSE 1

Here we go again. This repeated cycle of sin, servitude, supplication, and then salvation.

This time their sin leads them into bondage by the hands of the Philistines. And as we have seen so often that apostasy, sin brought the judgment of God upon them, not for their destruction, but that they would repent and return to the Lord.

I have called this section – ***THE FALLING AWAY!***

Now we read what the children of Israel did, how they turned away from the Lord and went after the pagan gods, that were not really gods at all!

And as we look at this happening over and over again, it is easy for us to think, ***“How in the world could they be so foolish? Look at all that God has done for them. Look at how God brought them out of Egypt. Look at how God brought them through the Red Sea. Look at how God sustained them in the wilderness. Look at how God brought them into the Promise Land. Look at how God defeated their enemies. Look at how God. . .”***

And as true as that is, I think the Holy Spirit wants us to look in a mirror because it is easy to point our finger at someone else and wonder how they could turn from the Lord like they have, but what about us?

Think about it. Look at all that God has done in our lives, ***“Look at how God. . .”*** and then we turn from Him and go after the things of the flesh, the things of this world and the things of the Devil!

Now I don't think for most it starts out as full-blown rebellion. I think it starts with a little sin here, a little compromise there, here a little and there a little. And we don't think much about it until we are so far away from the Lord that we can't believe we have drifted like that.

That is always the danger. Once you open the door to sin, once you open the door to rebellion against God, no matter how small you may think it is, once that door is open, it is hard to shut. And before long that door is wide open and what you are allowing into your life you can't believe!

We see that with the children of Israel!

And, like the children of Israel, we too can fall into that cyclical patten of sin, servitude, supplication and salvation.

In other words, we fall into sin and when our life is falling apart, we cry out to God to deliver us. And He is gracious, He is merciful, and He does. And as things are going well, we are losing our love for God once again, we are allowing other things to compete for our time with Him, and before you know it, we are back into sin again.

Here in Judges we see that this judgment came at the hands of the Philistines who were the perennial enemy of the children of Israel.

And this oppression lasted forty years, the longest period of judgment we find in the book of Judges and these Philistines will rise up again against Israel and they are really not defeated until the book of Samuel, but they still remain a thorn in the side of Israel.

Now, the big question is, especially today, who are these Philistines?

Some will foolishly say that they are the Palestinians of today!

Well, if that is true, and it isn't, then the land of Israel is not theirs.

You see, the Philistines didn't come from the land of Canaan, but they originally came from the Island of Crete somewhere around 1200 B. C. and they organized five cities primarily on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

These five cities were: Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gath and Ekron.

The area of land that they occupied was about 50 miles long and some 15 miles wide. And now they were oppressing Israel.

So we see here ***THE FALLING AWAY***, and we don't see the children of Israel cry out to God for deliverance, but I think that is exactly what they did.

Remember what we were told in Judges 2:11-19, **“Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served the Baals; and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the Lord to anger. They forsook the Lord and served Baal and the Ashtoreths. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel. So He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. Wherever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for calamity, as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn to them. And they were greatly distressed. Nevertheless, the Lord raised up judges who delivered them out of the hand of those who plundered them. Yet they would not listen to their judges, but they played the harlot with other gods, and bowed down to them. They turned quickly from the way in which their fathers walked, in obeying the commandments of the Lord; they did not do so. And when the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed them and harassed them. And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them. They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way.”**

There is that cyclical pattern that we have been talking about, and what I want you to see is that they did cry out to God as they were oppressed by their enemies and God delivered them and I think that is what we are seeing here.

Yes, the Philistines oppressed them for forty years, and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord for deliverance and we will now look at – ***THE CALLING OF GOD!***

VERSES 2-5

As you read this, I want you to see that ***THE CALLING OF GOD*** for this young man was before he was even born! It was when he was still in the womb!

We see this of Jeremiah as God called him and we are told in Jeremiah 1:4-5, “**Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying: ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.’**”

Now think about this for a minute. Just as God formed Jeremiah, knew him before he was even conceived, God knows each of us and has set us apart for a work that He wants us to do.

He prepared the work for us and He has prepared us for the work and all we must do is walk. You see, God has a plan for our life; we need to take those steps of faith as He leads us.

Paul put it like this in Ephesians 2:10, “**For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.**”

Our destiny you might say has already been determined by God, we just need to walk as He is leading us.

In Psalm 139:13-16 the Psalmist tells us, **“For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them.”**

Make no mistake about it, God has our days planned out, but He will not force us to walk in them. He gives us the option to follow Him, to do those things He has called us to do, or not do them.

We saw that with Jeremiah, and we are seeing that here with Samson. God had called him from his mother’s womb to deliver the children of Israel from the hands of the Philistines!

Now let’s look a little closer to what is taking place in these verses.

We see that his dad, Manoah was from the tribe of Dan.

And keep in mind that much of the tribe of Dan moved northward because they could not drive out the Amorites.

Thus, they moved to the area of Laish, by the headwaters of the Dead Sea, by Mount Hermon.

But some of the Danites remained in the land, as did Manoah. He lived in Zorah, which is about 14 miles west of Jerusalem.

We also see that this man, Manoah, was married but his wife was barren, she was not able to conceive a child.

We might not think much about that today, but make no mistake about it, this was a disgrace in Israel. In fact, if you as a woman could not bear children, that was grounds for divorce.

This is not what God said, but it is what the children of Israel came up with because children were so important in the society they lived.

And we don't see it here, but I would imagine that both Manoah and his wife were praying for a child and at the appointed time we see "the Angel of the LORD" appeared to Manoah's wife.

I believe that this is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, an Old Testament appearance of Jesus Christ or a Christophany.

And at this point Manoah is not there with his wife, he does not see this Angel of the **LORD!**

And the **LORD** tells this barren woman that she will have a son and he will be special; he will begin to deliver the children of Israel from the oppression brought upon them by the hands of the Philistines.

Now we tend to read these stories and not think much about them. But can you imagine what is going through her mind after she hears the **LORD** telling her that she is not only going to have a child, but this child is going to begin to deliver the children of Israel from the bondage that they were in by the hands of the Philistines.

Not only that, but she was to take the vow of a Nazirite during her pregnancy. For Manoah's wife, that meant she was not to drink any wine or similar drink.

And again, this child that was to be born to her and her husband was going to be special!

And another thing that they would have to do in raising this child.

After her son is born, he is to follow this vow of the Nazirite all his life!

What is that all about, this vow of a Nazirite?

In Numbers chapter 6, verses 1-21 we are given the rules of this vow of the Nazirite.

And the whole idea behind this vow of a Nazirite was that the person was dedicating himself to the Lord.

In fact, the Hebrew word for “**Nazirite**” is NAZIR and it means to “*set apart.*”

In other words, he was setting himself apart from this world and focused on the Lord.

You were consecrating yourself or dedicating yourself totally to the Lord and both men and women can take this vow that could last for 30 days or your entire life.

For the most part, the vow was a short one, maybe lasting 30 days or so, but again, like in the case of Samson it was to last his entire life!

It was a time where you would draw close to the Lord and fellowship with Him.

And the only woman we see taking this vow in the Scriptures was Manoah’s wife when she was pregnant with Samson, (Judges 13:4), but that does not mean that other women didn’t take this vow.

With this vow there were three main things that the person needed to do or abstain from.

First of all, you were to abstain from anything that came off the vine, not just wine but the grapes that make the wine!

Why?

It is possible that God wanted their joy to be pure and not artificial in nature. He wanted them alert to His voice as they were spending time with Him!

Also, you were not to cut your hair but let it grow during the time that this vow was taken.

The long hair was just an outward symbol of your dedication to the Lord.

And lastly, you were not to touch anything that had died for then you would be unclean!

This was just showing the purity we are to have before the Lord.

One more point here that we touched on but I did not go into detail and that is what is going on here in Judges 13:5, the last part where we are told that Samson “**... shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.**”

In other words, God is saying that Samson is not going to destroy the enemy completely!

I don't know about you, and maybe it is just me, but in Judges, when God raises up a Judge, they deliver the children of Israel from the bondage that they were in. The enemy is destroyed!

But not here. Why do you think that is?

I think it is because Samson did not walk accordingly, he did his own thing, he let the lust of the flesh get the better of him and the work was not completed like it should have been.

And when you look at the life of Samson, he was kind of a one-man show. And when he fought against the Philistines, it was not because they were the enemy, but they did something that offended him, something that went against him.

So he did not take care of the Philistines like he should have.

In fact, it is not until the time of Samuel that we see a large-scale victory against the Philistines.

You can read of this in I Samuel 7:3-14, but let's just look at what we are told in a few verses here in I Samuel, let's read I Samuel 7:11-14. We are told, "**And the men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, and drove them back as far as below Beth Car. Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen, and called its name Ebenezer, saying, 'Thus far the Lord has helped us.'** So the Philistines were subdued, and they did not come anymore into the territory of Israel. And the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. Then the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron to Gath; and Israel recovered its territory from the hands of the Philistines. Also there was peace between Israel and the Amorites."

Make no mistake about it, *THE CALLING OF GOD* was upon the life of Samson and we will see that as we finish up our study, we will see that in our last point in a little bit more.

But first, keep in mind that Manoah was not with his wife when the Angel of the *LORD* appeared to her and now, as she tells her husband all that the Angel told her, we will see – *UNBELIEF*, our next point!

VERSES 6-8

Look at what is taking place here. As the *LORD* finishes speaking with her, she tells her husband Manoah of the wonderful blessing that God has given to them, they are going to have a child, a son!

Not only that but he was to be a Nazirite unto the Lord from his conception until his death.

That is why she was not to drink wine or eat any unclean thing because it will affect her unborn son.

Now, as Manoah hears all this, he wants to really hear it for himself. Yes, he asks how He is to raise this child, there is nothing wrong with that, but keep in mind that the **LORD** already told his wife, as a Nazirite!

So there could be some doubt here on Manoah's part, I think we see some unbelief and thus, Manoah prays to the Lord to show him these things to confirm what his wife has said.

Here is where we need to be careful because we can allow unbelief to cause us to stop moving forward, to begin to doubt what God has told us.

There is nothing wrong in asking the Lord for clarification but as the Lord shows you, you can't allow fear to stop you from moving forward.

And yes, fear that shuts you down, fear that causes you to stop walking where God has told you to walk, fear that causes you not to do what God has called you to do, in reality, is just plain – **UNBELIEF!**

I know that is difficult but think about it. If God called you to do something, don't you think He will see you through that work? Of course He will and of course He does!

And what we see here is that our Lord is so gracious and merciful towards Manoah just as He is towards us.

For Manoah, I think he just wanted to be sure, even though we do see some **UNBELIEF** on his part, and the Lord is going to show him, which is our next point – **GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS AGAIN!**

VERSES 9-14

Maybe it is a guy thing, but I think this is funny. Manoah prays that the Lord show him about this son he was to have and then he is out somewhere.

I'm not sure what Manoah was doing but the **LORD** appeared to his wife again and bless her heart, she runs to get her husband so he could hear all this for himself.

We need to be careful that as we are seeking the Lord that we don't get so busy that we can't hear from Him.

Here we see that as Manoah's wife comes and gets him that Manoah asks the **LORD**,
“... ‘Now let Your words come to pass! What will be the boy’s rule of life, and his work?’”

And the LORD basically tells him, ***“Look, I already told your wife, he is to be a Nazirite, he is to be consecrated unto Me.”***

You see, I do see some doubt here with Manoah about what his wife told him, some unbelief. But with our gracious Lord, as I have said, Manoah has the confirmation from the **LORD!**

Now let me also say this. God did not give to Manoah and his wife everything that their son would do, all that he would be involved in.

What we see here is that the **LORD** gave them some information and then they were to walk by faith as they trusted in what the Lord had already told them.

God honored Manoah's request for confirmation; but He did not answer this request to know the future. He simply called Manoah and his wife to obey what God already told them to do.

I think we see that played out in our own lives.

When God spoke to my heart about being a pastor in Wisconsin, that is all He told me. He didn't tell me, at that point, how this was going to work out or even what I was to do, or even all that I would encounter once He brought me up to Wisconsin. Just the fact that one day He would accomplish this in my life.

Then, some 10 to 12 years later, He opened the door for me to come to Manitowoc, Wisconsin and to be the pastor of this church.

He gave me this verse for our church, what we are to be about, Acts 2:42, which says, **“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.”**

And it truly has been one step at a time for me and I am sure it is the same for you and your walk with the Lord.

Can you imagine if God gave you all the information about what you would go through in your lifetime all at once!

I don't think we could handle it and He doesn't. He tells us to walk by faith and the things He has called us to do, we need to step forward and do them. It truly is one step at a time and as much as we would like to know what will happen, how things will turn out, I don't think we really want to know because I think we would be overwhelmed and we may not handle the situation as God would want us to.

I will give you this example. There was a pastor's wife on the east coast who had a best friend. They served the Lord together; her best friend and husband were leaders in the church.

And one day this best friend stabbed her in the back, not literally, but you know what I mean. It was really bad.

This woman shared with her best friend her entire life, they worked so well together, then, all of a sudden, it was over!

And this pastor's wife cried out to God for the relationship that was now gone. And she wondered why the Lord allowed her to get so close to this woman if she was going to cause all this trouble, stab her in the back!

And the Lord spoke to her and said, ***“If I would have told you all that she would do to you, would you have allowed her into your life?”***

I think that is a powerful point. God has a plan, He has His purpose, and we are to walk by faith!

We see that here with Manoah and his wife. They have the instructions to take that step of faith!

And it is out of ***GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS AGAIN*** that we see ***THE WORSHIP OF GOD!***

VERSES 15-21

I love this about Manoah. As the Lord speaks to him, look at what it does. It causes him to worship the Lord!

Think about that for a minute. God speaks to us and what should our response be?

It should be – ***THE WORSHIP OF GOD!***

I can only speak for myself, but I am sure you find this to be true also.

When I am teaching, I am amazed how God knew what I needed to hear on the exact day I needed to hear it!

Now you may be thinking, ***“Pastor Joe, you are putting the studies together, you should know what you are teaching on!”***

That is true, but keep in mind I am a few weeks ahead in my studies so I can get the notes to Max so we can mail them out to some of the men who are in prison each week.

And it just blows me away as I am going over the study, as I am sharing it with you, that God meets me where I am at, it was exactly what I needed to hear.

Now let me also say this. And I am not trying to offend anyone, but maybe to get your attention.

If you feel that you come to service and you are not hearing from God, something is wrong.

Now some would blame me, I am the pastor. But as inadequate as I am for this work, God’s Word is God’s Word and it is living and it is powerful and it will cut right to the heart of the matter, if we allow God to!

And again, I am sure you feel this way. As God speaks to you, as He shows you things, you just want to praise Him and worship Him.

And as you read the Word of God you get to know God more and more and the more you know Him the more you love Him because you see His tremendous love for you. And I think that just causes us to worship Him!

We even see that as we sing unto the Lord. We see songs that move us, just bring us to tears as we worship the One we love so much.

And once again, this Person we see here is an Old Testament appearance of Jesus Christ!

I know some have a hard time with that but think about it. If this Angel of the **LORD** or this messenger of the **LORD** was just a man or an angel, he would never ever ask for a burnt offering to be made but since it is the **LORD**, He does!

Secondly, this is not only the **LORD**, but it is specifically the pre-incarnate Christ, the second person of the Holy Trinity.

How do I know that? Because when Manoah asks Him His name, He says, “... ‘Why do you ask My name, seeing it is wonderful?’”

That should bring to mind a verse we tend to read every Christmas in Isaiah 9:6, “For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

So as Manoah prepares this meal, an offering to the **LORD**, this offering was burnt up and while that was happening, while this burnt offering is lifted up, the Angel of the **LORD** ascended up into Heaven as both Manoah and his wife looked on.

Can you imagine what was going through their minds at that point. I mean, what a sight that must have been and now they both know for certain that this was the **LORD!**

And when God does something amazing like that in our lives, we tend to come to the wrong conclusions as Manoah did.

He went from **THE WORSHIP OF GOD** to **THE FEAR OF THE LORD** and not a good fear of the **LORD** as we will see.

VERSES 22-23

Again, this is funny to me. Manoah wants to be part of what God is doing, he wants to be involved, and then, when Manoah sees this happen, what does this man of faith do?

He cries out, ***“Oh my gosh, we’re going to die! We have seen God and that is it, it’s all over for us. Honey, make sure our will is up to date!”***

Okay, maybe he didn’t say all of that, but you get the idea.

Gideon did the same thing! Remember what we are told in Judges 6:21-23, **“Then the Angel of the Lord put out the end of the staff that was in His hand, and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire rose out of the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. And the Angel of the Lord departed out of his sight. Now Gideon perceived that He was the Angel of the Lord. So Gideon said, ‘Alas, O Lord God! For I have seen the Angel of the Lord face to face.’ Then the Lord said to him, ‘Peace be with you; do not fear, you shall not die.’”**

Gideon also felt he was going to die because he saw the Lord. And it is the Lord who comforts Gideon and lets him know that he is not going to die!

I’m not sure what is wrong with men, but they do go to these extremes at times like with Gideon and here with Manoah.

God told both Gideon and Manoah that he was going to do a great thing with them, a great work and they both didn’t believe, they both thought they were going to die because they saw God!

This is not a good ***FEAR OF THE LORD***, but one that caused them to cower and tremble.

Now here’s the thing. Do you really think our God is like that?

Of course He is not!

God said to Manoah and his wife that they would have a son and now He is not going to kill them before this son is even born! Absolutely not!

And for us, don't come to your own conclusions about the Lord and what He is doing, listen to what He is saying, and it will reduce your anxiety!

THE FEAR OF THE LORD that we need to have is that reverential fear, a respectful fear of who He is and that His love for us is so great that He died for our sins so that we can live with Him!

Now, with Gideon, it was the Lord who comforted him.

Here with Manoah, it was his wife. And she basically tells him, ***“Manoah, chill man! If God accepted our offering and He told us all these wonderful things, why in the world would he kill us?”***

Again, as you can tell, a little paraphrase, but you get the idea!

Now I don't know about you, but I am so thankful for my wife that the Lord has blessed me with. She has helped me many times by basically saying, ***“Joe, chill! God is in control!”***

Sometimes we can lose the perspective of the situations we face. And don't get me wrong, they can be overwhelming situations that there is no way out humanly speaking.

But if God has spoken to you, if He has told you what you are going to do, what He is going to do in you and through you, then, no matter how difficult it is, walk by faith, trust the Lord and don't let fear drive you, let the Lord guide you!

And all of this is leading up to what the Lord told Manoah and his wife. That they would have a son, who was to be a Nazarite from birth, and he will begin to lead the children of Israel from their bondage at the hands of the Philistines – ***THE BIRTH OF SAMSON!***

VERSES 24-25

Make no mistake about it, our God is faithful to what He has said and what He has promised, He is more than able to bring to pass. And that is exactly what we see here.

The **LORD** fulfills His promise to Manoah and his wife, and they have a son and call him Samson!

I like that because his name means, "**Sunny**" and maybe they called him Sunny because he brought sunshine into their lives every time that they saw him, he was a blessing to them.

But I think also he was to be a light to the children of Israel, to deliver them from the oppression they faced at the hands of the Philistines and turn the people back to God, at least that is what he was supposed to do!

But, as we will see, he was a man of contradiction. He fought the battles of God by day and succumbed to the flesh by night you might say!

Samson had great potential but fell far short of what God desired in his life. And the same can happen to us, just as it did with Samson.

God wants to use us but are we willing to sacrifice our lives unto Him and surrender to the Holy Spirit's leading in our lives? Or, are we going to succumb to the flesh and not reach that potential that God has for our lives?

It truly is a choice we have to make!

Now from the television shows and Sunday School teaching, when we think of this man Samson, we think he is a huge, muscular guy. A Charles Atlas or Hulk Hogan or Arnold Schwarzenegger type.

You know, muscles bulging from places you didn't even know muscles existed!

I think that is the wrong picture of this guy. I know, some of you I have messed up here, I ruined your picture, but Samson was probably your average Joe!

Why do I feel that way?

There are two reasons why I think Samson was just your average guy.

Frist of all, when you read of the things that he is going to do, like tearing a lion to pieces, killing thirty men at one time, killing a thousand men with the jawbone of a donkey, those are not things that even the strongest man in the world can do on his own.

Thus, if he was that muscular, it was not an advantage to him. But I don't think he was big and strong.

Secondly, and the reason he was so strong, so powerful, is found for us in Judges 13:25, where we are told, "**And the Spirit of the Lord began to move upon him at Mahaneh Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.**"

You see, it was not the strength of Samson, but it was the Spirit of God that empowered him for this work. That is what made him so strong. That is where his strength came from. That is why the people wondered where his strength came from because as you looked at him, he was not that impressive looking!

I think that this is something that the church in general today is lacking, that empowering of the Spirit of God to move the Gospel message forward.

Instead of asking for God to empower us with His Spirit, we come up with programs, gimmicks, all kinds of things to draw people into the church and that is a never-ending project. And that may work for a time, but what you are doing will always have to be bigger and better to keep them coming!

Think about this for a minute. If you watch a Science Fiction movie from the 1950's you may think it is good, until you put it alongside of all the special effects that they have today in movies. Because of that we are not satisfied with what we saw back then anymore. What we see today blows our mind at how amazing it is, and back then, not so special anymore!

And you can't stop there. It always has to get bigger and better or people will lose interest. And, like I have said, we see this going on in the church today.

Let me share with you what A. W. Tozer had to say about this, what he saw happening in the church some sixty years ago. He wrote, "If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95 percent of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95 percent of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference."

That is an alarming statement and I think that trend has gotten even worse today!

I am not sure why we don't understand this, why we think we can do it on our own, we can fix this and fix that or accomplish this and accomplish that and we never ask God to empower us for the work that is before us.

And in the end, we are not fruitful in our endeavors, we are frustrated, and many times people just give up because they just can't do it.

And again, we forget about this, but we can't do it on our own and God never intended for us to do these things on our own.

Think about the religions of the world. They tell you how you are to live, what you are to do, what you are not to do. And some of them have some very practical things, good things in them. And yes, they can't save you, good works, only Jesus can.

But don't miss the point. These religions tell you how to live but they never give to you the power to live as God has called you to live!

Remember in Zechariah 4:6, **“So he answered and said to me: This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” Says the Lord of hosts.”**

The Jews had returned home from their Babylonian captivity, some of them did, and the Temple was a mess. And people were frustrated, they were wondering how they were going to accomplish this task, and the Lord told them it was not going to be about them doing this, but it will be the Spirit of God working in them and through them that will accomplish this task!

And that same thought we see in the New Testament. In Acts 1:8, listen to what Jesus tells us, **“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”**

You see, at this point the disciples of Jesus had all the information and yet, they lacked the power to run with it.

The work of the Holy Spirit upon a believer's life today is to move the Gospel message forward, to give us the strength to accomplish the work that is before us.

And as it is true for us, it was true for Samson as well. Like I have said, there is no way that he could have done those things on his own, with his own power or strength, but it was the Holy Spirit that came upon him and empowered him for the work that God had called him to do while he was still in the womb!

Also, keep in mind that Samson lived just north of the Philistine boarder and it is there that the Spirit of the Lord began to work in and through Samson, empowering him for the work that God had for him!

All the potential is there for Samson to do a mighty work for God, but with that potential, the individual has to walk accordingly, and, as we will see, Samson was a man who was controlled by his bodily appetites, the flesh.

And by the time we get to the end of his life, the Spirit of God who had empowered him, left Samson and he did not even know it before it was too late and he was taken captive by the Philistines. And we will see that as we read on here in Judges.

I hope this is a wake-up call for all of us here. God wants to use us. But are we willing to follow Him? That is a question you will have to answer on your own, but I pray that you desire to be the men and women that God desires you to be.

You see, He has already prepared the work for you and you for the work, but now you must walk!

I will close with this for you to think about. We are told,

While visiting Grand Coulee Dam, my family and I were surprised to see that the visitors' center was dark.

It was a sunny day, so we thought the center might have tinted windows, but as we got closer we realized there were no lights on.

We went in and saw that none of the displays were working. Suddenly it became clear: there was no power to the center.

Due to a technical difficulty of some kind, the visitors' center that sat only hundreds of feet from a hydroelectric dam had no power.

How could something be so close to the power source, yet not be “plugged in”?

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What about you? Are you plugged in to the Spirit of God or are you trying to accomplish the work of God by the power of your flesh?

Don't be ***A LIGHT THAT FLICKERED*** but be strong in the Lord and the power of His might!

SHINE BRIGHTLY FOR JESUS AND DON'T LET YOUR LIGHT GO OUT OR FLICKER!