

All right. Let's open our Bibles to Judges 14 as we continue. We also have communion tonight. So let's get to it as quickly as we can.

We've been going through Judges. It is one of the most dismal books in the Bible. It has great encouragement in it as well - from the negative side, in many ways. But we have begun in chapter 13 with the life of Samson. And Samson is one of the judges, and it is a man to whom God gives a lot of real estate in the Bible: chapters 13, 14, 15 and 16.

So we looked, last week, at Samson's birth, the announcement for his birth through his family and this supernatural calling where the LORD said of Samson (before he was born), "I'm going to use him to begin to deliver My people from the Philistines." We told you last week - as far as Samson the judge is concerned - that the outline of his life I can give you in a couple of words, and we'll look at a couple of them tonight. There is the natural setting in which he was born (we looked at last week in chapter 13). It begins with the words that we have gotten to hate, "And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD delivered them into the hands of the Philistines." Forty years, this sin-drome, this time of constant being away from the LORD. The people, this last time, do not cry out for a deliverer, do not repent of their sins. God has just seen fit to say, "I'm going to deal with their enemy anyway." And Samson is the fellow that God purposes to use. He has a supernatural calling.

Tonight, in chapter 14, we want to look at one of the things that designates his life. He's a sinful wanderer. Samson had a problem. His eyes were always someplace God didn't want him to be. And, in chapter 15, he is a single-handed fighter. Unlike all of the other judges who rallied the troops and brought people back together to overthrow an enemy in the name of the LORD and find victory, Samson just goes out, and he fights by himself. He's a one-man show. Next week, Lord be willing, in chapter 16, we'll look at the final ending of his life; it's a sad, sad story.

So, Samson teaches a lot. One of the things we learn from Samson is that you can have a great beginning, but that doesn't guarantee a great ending. You've got to

get up every day and say, "I'm going to follow the LORD." You can't live on yesterday's grace or blessings or God's hand upon you. It does take this determination to finish well, to run to the tape, if you will. In Samson's life, Samson could have been much more than what he turns out to be, and maybe there's an insight from the LORD in that the LORD said He was going to begin to deliver the children of Israel from the Philistines through the life of Samson. He wasn't going to be able to finish that work through this man's life.

So he had a supernatural announcement of his birth. His parents, who were godly parents, were given the information about what God's plans for him were. His mother was told he was to have a Nazirite vow from the day that he was born. It was a vow that you will find in the Old Testament of dedication. It was usually for thirty days or sixty days, certainly not for an entire life. We read, at the end of chapter 13 last week, verse 25 - that the Spirit of the LORD began to move upon him in incredible ways, and yet, with all of that advantage, he ends up very poorly.

So tonight - sinful wandering and the one-man show (or the single-handed fighting). Chapter 14:1, "Now Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines. So he went up and told his father and mother, saying, 'I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife.' Then his father and mother said to him, 'Is there no woman among the daughters of your brethren, or among all my people, that you must go and get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?' And Samson said to his father, 'Get her for me, for she pleases me well.' But his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD - that He was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines. For at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel."

We skip forward (in chapters) twenty years. In fact, the life of Samson is broken up into his birth and his early years; twenty years later, we have two stories of him, and then, twenty years later, we have one final story. They all involve women, as you would, I guess, guess if you read ahead.

Samson was raised in a place called Zorah. It is mentioned in chapter 13:25. It is a southern area of Judah, down below Jerusalem. It is a beautiful place of terraced hillsides and all. But he only travels to Timnah, four miles away, and he goes there as an adult, like I said, twenty years or so later. But we find him, after his birth and anointing and all, in the city of an enemy - looking and dating and

getting involved with a woman that is absolutely from a group of people that are the enemies of God's people. Beautiful Philistine girl. But we realize that Samson, even in his twenties now, has already moved away from all of the advantages that God had given him - the Spirit of God moving, the plans of God for his life - and he finds himself, if you will, allured by the world. And that's always, unfortunately, where we find Samson. Like I said, he's written for our learning, but he's written so that he might teach us what not to do. Clear direction from the Word of God - you are not to marry outside of the Jews, God's chosen people. Second of all - the counsel of his parents was just the same, "Come on, there's got to be a beautiful Hebrew woman you can fall in love with." And then there was, of course, that conviction of the Holy Spirit. So he is absolutely fighting against all sides. Right? The enemy, the counsel of his parents, the Scriptures, the conviction of God's Spirit. God had given him great strength. That strength would continue to be with him because God had a purpose to wipe out these Philistines, and He needed a man of great strength. But Samson would be a vessel; not willingly but one that God would use because God can do what God wants. Can't give Samson much credit nor his heart with God much admiration at all. One mistake for Samson led to the other. He was now dating a girl from not only a foreign tribe but a sword-dominant enemy of Israel. He fell in love, or probably we should say he fell in lust. Notice verse 1. It says, "He went down and he saw." He went down to Timnah, and he saw this girl. And I would say to you that the best solution for your flesh is - if you read verse 1, "He went down, and he saw a woman," the counsel is - just don't go down there. Just don't go down there. Sometimes deliverance is simple. You just don't get involved. Stay away from the problem! Right? If he had never gone here, he would have never seen her. If he had never seen her, he wouldn't have desired her. Samson is one of those guys that when he sees a beautiful woman, he's in love. "Oh, that's the girl for me!" It doesn't take much. He believes in lust at first sight, and it happens constantly. In fact, it's the example of Samson's life.

Samson is basing his choices, and he will for the rest of his life, on what he sees. Look, Satan is an interesting opponent that we have because he invariably looks into your life and mine to look for our weakest link. He's got to be the best at reading people that exists, other than the LORD. He's been doing it since we were created. He knows how to push buttons. He knows about human nature. And Samson is a guy that, if he sees a beautiful girl, that's it for him. And because he's not walking with the LORD, he's constantly being caught.

I've been pastoring for almost - a long time (Laughing) - forty years. I think I have met more men in the church that fall for this issue than any other - that somehow a beautiful woman and a double take and, "Now I'm in love;" that they make the same mistake that Samson does in determining the worth of someone just based on what they see outwardly. And let's face it - that's the culture we live in, too, isn't it? We are told what the perfect woman should look like. I don't know if I've ever met a woman the size of a mannequin - emaciated body or something. I don't know. But we all are given the standards, and the girls look to live up to it, and the guys go out looking for that. It is, at best, outward, is it not? And passing. And I would say to you young guys tonight - if you're looking for the Olympic athlete, the bikini model with the IQ of Einstein, when you find her, she doesn't want anything to do with you. (Laughing) Just telling you that right now, so pretty sure that's biblical. (Laughing) Proverbs 31:30 says, "Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised." Well, that wasn't Samson in any stretch of the imagination. And all of us face the same enemy, and I'll tell you what it is - it's entropy. Entropy - the second law of thermodynamics. Or if you want, you're going to age, you're going to get older. I did a funeral this week, and it was a young man that had passed away, and I was talking to his family, and there were a lot of young people there. And I said, "You know, all you have to do is look in the mirror for a while, and you'll believe the Bible. Because you're just going to get looking worse and worse. Just look. That's worse than last week." I hate the Facebook. They put pictures up of what you looked like three years ago, and I think, "Man, I was fat then, and look at me now!" (Laughing) They're terrible reminders. So, being moved by the outward is foolish. But Samson - that's his life, man. And whether that's beauty or whether that's riches, it's all going to burn, pal. It's all goin' away.

Well, his parents were broken-hearted. They give him some pretty good parental advice, and, like most kids, he doesn't listen. "Just get her for me." Never mind that the Law said you weren't to do these kinds of marriages. He wanted what he wanted, and he said to his father, "Just go pay the dowry. Quit preaching to me." But this is a place Samson had no business being, no engagement, no admiration, no window shopping, no allowing himself to be entertained. We sometimes find Christians that believe that there's something called missionary dating. There is not. You're going to get taken out - there's no good in that. If you get to 1 Corinthians 7:13, and you read the LORD saying to a believer, "If the unbelieving spouse that you have is not pleased to dwell with you, let them go in peace," and you realize that God said it's an untenable situation to those who are, maybe, married

and then get saved, don't enter into that problem, don't look for that issue. It's just going to break your heart. It's better to never start down that road than to be unequally yoked. And, unfortunately, everyone that Samson gets involved with - because of his life - is away from God or doesn't know the LORD at all.

But God's purpose was to deliver. Notice verse 4 - don't let that stumble you, that the parents didn't know that this was of the LORD. It wasn't of the LORD that Samson was up here sinning. But it was of the LORD that God was going to use this rebellious nature to accomplish His will, and His will was to begin to relieve the children of Israel from the bondage of the Philistines. But it is a picture of God's sovereignty in the midst of human sinfulness. I think that Scripture says, "Surely the wrath of man will praise you" (Psalm 76:10). God will have His way no matter what. Unfortunately, you can be like Samson - an unwilling participant in accomplishing the will of God - or you can be a willful participant.

"So Samson went down to Timnah," verse 5, "with his father and mother, and came to the vineyards of Timnah. Now to his surprise, a young lion came roaring against him. And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat, though he had nothing in his hand. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done. Then he went down and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well." The trip down was made memorable by a lion attack. God gives to Samson that strength to do God's will, His strength. And he doesn't acknowledge that the LORD had given it to him, doesn't tell his parents about it, doesn't seem to have much of an attachment between strength and God's blessing in his heart. We only read that, as they went down to pay the dowry - make plans, this girl pleased him well. And I wrote in my Bible, years ago, "Don't let sin please you well." At the same time, you're ignoring God's power in your life. And that's kind of where Samson is.

Well, verse 8 tells us, "After some time," (they go back for the wedding) "when he returned to get her, he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion. And behold, a swarm of bees and honey were in the carcass of the lion. He took some of it in his hands and went along, eating. When he came to his father and mother, he gave some to them, and they also ate. But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion." So, Samson goes back a little time later for the wedding. He checks into the carcass; and something weird here - he finds bees making a hive in a carcass, which bees don't do. Bees do not set up shop in rotting flesh. It is an unclean decaying place. That's not the place they go. So, here's the

LORD, "Samson, look what you're doing." He does something ridiculously odd that Samson would have caught immediately. He's a Nazirite who shouldn't be touching anything dead anyway; that's part of the Nazirite vow. But that doesn't matter to him. So his flesh and his lust and his desires for things - he takes of the honey, he takes it in his hand. He's eating it, he shouldn't be. He gives it to his parents, which would defile them in their religious ways, their relationship with God. He doesn't tell them either. He just doesn't really care about God or anything else. He's kind of a spiritual dullard, and he moves to his wedding, but he's dead to the light that God continues to set before him.

Verse 10 tells us, "So his father went down to the woman" (to make the arrangements). "And Samson gave a feast there, for young men used to do so. And it happened, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him. Then Samson said to them, 'Let me pose a riddle to you. If you can correctly solve and explain it to me within the seven days of the feast, then I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing. But if you cannot explain it to me, then you shall give me thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing.' And they said to him, 'Pose your riddle, that we may hear it.' So he said to them: 'Out of the eater came something to eat, and out of the strong came something sweet.' Now for three days they could not explain the riddle. But it came to pass on the seventh day that they said to Samson's wife, 'Entice your husband, that he may explain the riddle to us, or else we will burn you and your father's house with fire.' " Nice group. " 'Have you invited us in order to take what is ours? Is that not so?' "

The word "feast" (in verse 10) is the word for drinking party or bachelor party, if you will, seven days before the marriage was consummated. The question again would be - what is a Nazirite doing at a drinking party? He's not supposed to drink of anything from the vine. He comes to his own marriage party, his bachelor party, but notice (in verse 11) he doesn't bring anyone to the party. Samson is not a guy who has friends. Most people would bring their own friends - a best man, maybe, a wedding party. He's kind of an isolationist. He's got no one that he's accountable to. There's a proverb in chapter 18:1 that says, "A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; he rages against all wise judgment." He's alone because he wants it his way. And so they have to supply for him a wedding party. "Well, here. This guy'll be your best man, and this guy will be in your wedding." And it's a dangerous thing to be alone, even as a Christian. "It's not good that man should be alone"

(Genesis 2:18). There's not anything good to be had in your walk with God to hang out to yourself. Plug in. Right? Stay plugged in. It's good for us.

At the party, because he is alone, it is Samson who uses this experience with the LORD and the lion to be the basis for a bet with these thirty guys. "Guess my riddle, you all get a new suit. You don't guess it in the next week, I get a new suit from all of you." And for three days, they worked on the riddle (verse 14), and then somehow they went to Samson's would-be wife to say, "Maybe you can entice your husband to tell us what the answer is, or you're going to pay. We didn't come here to be made fun of. You hired us to be part of the wedding. Now you're trying to take advantage of us."

"But it came to pass on the seventh day," verse 15, "that they said to Samson's wife, 'Entice your husband, that he may explain the riddle to us, or else we will burn you and your father's house with fire.' " Verse 16, "Then Samson's wife wept on him, and said, 'You only hate me! You do not love me!' " They're not even married yet. How is this workin'? " 'You have posed a riddle to the sons of my people, but you have not explained it to me.' And he said to her, 'Look, I have not explained it to my father or my mother; so should I explain it to you?' Now she had wept on him the seven days while their feast lasted" (which would suggest that they might have asked her on day one; but on day seven they said, "This is your last chance"). "And it happened on the seventh day that he told her, because she pressed him so much. Then she explained the riddle to the sons of her people." So, Samson was strong enough to tear up a lion with his bare hands, but he's not strong enough to fight a beautiful woman's tears.

I read this week, and I thought it was an interesting story, there were three hundred whales that beached themselves in northern Africa. And the scientists wondered how they all got beached, and they said it apparently was because they had been chasing sardines, and there were whole schools of them, and they were eating well. And they chased them all the way into this shallow area, and the tide went out, and they got stuck. And I thought about Samson - that that's kind of the way Samson lived, you know? He was forever chasing his lusts. He wasn't aware of the dangers of the place he was swimming in and how he was going to get stuck. But here he is - playing around in the world, just not in the right place, with the wrong people, playing games in the wrong way.

Well, verse 18, "So the men of the city said to 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 to them: 'If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have solved my riddle!' " Not exactly a compliment for his new wife. A heifer is a young cow that hasn't had a baby yet. But he knew that they had gotten to her. Verse 19, "Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily, and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of their men, took their apparel, and gave the changes of clothing to those who had explained the riddle. So his anger was aroused, and he went back up to his father's house. And Samson's wife was given to his companion, who had been his best man." Just so she wouldn't be left at the altar. Now here's (verse 19) the interesting picture of Samson's life. I think it was Spurgeon who wrote, "Samson's whole life was filled with miracles and folly, or the miraculous and the foolish." Because God, like I said, was going to deal with the Philistines. He had chosen a man through whom He would work. Because he wasn't willing to walk with God, God would still you can't frustrate God's plans. So God works. He uses his anger, He uses his selfishness, He uses his narrow-mindedness, He uses his great strength. God gets what God wants except for, He doesn't really get the loyalty out of His servant. Because that He gives to you and me. We can choose. Love has to be chosen. You can't make love.....you can't force love. You can't create that in someone's heart. That has to come from the heart. And so God wanted to eliminate the Philistines. He would use a willing servant or just a rebellious one. But here's Samson. And he's mad, he's been hustled; this woman has sold him out. They haven't even gotten married yet! He goes twenty-three miles down to Ashkelon, kills thirty guys, and the LORD goes, "That's thirty of 'em." Steals their clothes, brings them back, and then leaves the wife. "Forget you. I'm not marryin' you. You ripped me off." And off he went in anger. It's an interesting picture, isn't it? Because Samson was a man who wanted to just fight because he is not driven by loyalty or love for God or love for God's people; he's driven by a love for Samson. So, he becomes this single-handed fighter. He doesn't lead any armies. He doesn't rally the people. In fact, everybody you see him killing, it's out of anger and self-driven fury. He's a lustful, angry guy, and he uses God's power - when the Spirit comes upon him - not for good but for personal vengeance; this time to pay off a bet he lost, a little later to show off the power that he had. But here he is chasing sardines and getting beached.

The minute you decide that you're going to serve the LORD, the enemy is going to come to attack you. The problem for Samson is that he always gave in to the pressures of his flesh, and so he never really got to the point where he could serve

the LORD and be a vessel in God's hands for good. He was a vessel in God's hand, and God would use it for good, but Samson was completely detached with God's will.

Well, eventually he calms down, cools down. Verse 1 of chapter 15 says, "After a while, in the time of wheat harvest, it happened that Samson visited his wife with a young goat. And he said, 'Let me go in to my wife, into her room.' But her father would not permit him to go in. Her father said, 'I really thought that you thoroughly hated her; therefore I gave her to your companion. Is not her younger sister better than she? Please, take her instead.' And Samson said to them, 'This time I shall be blameless regarding the Philistines if I harm them!' " So Samson cools off, and he goes back to apologize - with a box of chocolates. All right - with a goat. And he finds out that the woman that he wanted to marry had now been given to the best man, and, again, he's angry. He's not angry that God's name isn't being exalted. He's not angry that these Philistines are oppressing God's people. He's just angry that he's been humiliated and slighted, and he's incensed. He has a problem with anger, made all the easier by the fact that he was supernaturally strong. He could get away with shootin' his mouth off. No one could deal with this guy. He was as tough as they come, and it was a gift that God gave him - not because of anything other than God had a plan. So if you have a gift from God, just because you use it for yourself doesn't mean it didn't come from the LORD; it just means we're accountable to Him for what He gives us. Well he's furious, and he says (in verse 3), "Hey, whatever I do now is really not on me. If they get hurt, it's really not my fault. My wife got married off to some dude I never even met."

Verse 4, "Then Samson went and caught three hundred foxes; and he took torches, turned the foxes tail to tail, and put a torch between each pair of tails. When he had set the torches on fire, he let the foxes go into the standing grain of the Philistines, and burned up both the shocks and the standing grain, as well as the vineyards and olive groves." The word "foxes" - most translations say jackals; not that it matters, I guess, but foxes live very lonely, solitary lives. Jackals run in packs. It would have been easier to catch a bunch of those together. The natural instinct of a jackal or a fox would be to run to your den. But if you're tied to another fox or jackal, and then there's fire, there's panic. And it was very effective, if you will. God went after the Philistines. He had destroyed their food source, their standing grain. He destroyed the oil that came from the trees. He destroyed the vineyard, the wine. He pretty much took them out of their economy. They were suffering. But it was all because Samson looked like a buffoon. He

didn't like to be made to look like this. But, look, he shouldn't have been there to begin with.

Notice (in verse 3), and I think we just mentioned it, he almost says, "It's really not my fault what happens next." Revenge is natural. Forgiveness is supernatural. You might have heard the story of that truck driver who had driven all day and stopped at a diner in the evening, and three Hells Angels came into the restaurant, and they didn't look like they were up to any good. And they walked by him, and he didn't really give them the look that they wanted, and they grabbed a cup of coffee and threw it on his lap. And he didn't say anything. They laughed at him and said he was a real sissy, and they went and sat down. The man got up and paid his ticket, and he left. And they said to the waitress, "Man, that guy's not much of a man." She said, "Yeah, he's not much of a truck driver either. He just ran over three bikes." (Laughing) And I hear the story, and we feel good about just hearing that. "Good for him!" Immediately we feel good about revenge. Revenge is natural. Forgiveness is supernatural. Samson was a very natural man. He loved getting his vendettas. He loved to satisfy his rage. But, look, get the big picture. He's in the wrong place with the wrong people doing the wrong thing, and he knows better. And yet God would still use him. Hey, the Philistines were still getting dealt with through the life of Samson, but he misses out in the blessing. He's not a willing vessel. He's just a vessel because God will have His way.

Verse 6 tells us, "Then the Philistines said, 'Who has done this?' And they answered, 'Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he has taken his wife and given her to his companion.' So the Philistines came up and burned her and her father with fire." Again, Samson's in the middle of it, but the Philistines are getting dealt with.

Verse 7, "Samson said to them, 'Since you would do a thing like this, I will surely take revenge on you, and after that I will cease.' " Now he got angry again over the burning of the house. Another anger movement. "So he attacked them hip and thigh with a great slaughter." A hip and a thigh is an idiom in Greek for vengeance or viciousness, if you will; so he really went after them with great viciousness. "Then he went down and dwelt in the cleft of the rock of Etam." So he said, verse 3, "I'm blameless." Verse 7, "I'm going to do this because you've done that." I think his mantra was, "I'm going to do to you what you've done to me and then worse." That's kind of verse 10 as well. They said, " 'We have come up to arrest Samson, to do to him as he has done to us.' "

So, the Philistines were angry. They burned down the house of his would-be wife. He takes many of them to task. We don't know how many he slayed. But, verse 9, "Now the Philistines went up, encamped in Judah, and deployed themselves against Lehi. And the men of Judah said, 'Why have you come up against us?' So they answered, 'We have come up to arrest Samson, to do to him as he has done to us.' " So, they come to arrest him or to take him into custody.

Verse 11, "Then three thousand men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam, and said to Samson, 'Do you not know that the Philistines rule over us? What is this you have done to us?' And he said to them, 'As they did to me, so I have done to them.' " An eye for an eye. "But they said to him, 'We have come down to arrest you, that we may deliver you into the hand of the Philistines.' Then Samson said to them, 'Swear to me that you will not kill me yourselves.' So they spoke to him, saying, 'No, but we will tie you securely and deliver you into their hand; but we will surely not kill you.' And they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock." Now it's an interesting story because we're talking about the culture of Israel. Here's a captive people doing the bidding of their enemy against one of their own. None of them are walking with the LORD. This isn't about walking with God, this is about survival. "Don't you know that the Philistines rule over us?" And here's a nation that has already acquiesced to a ruling power, hasn't been looking to the LORD, doesn't want to get out from under what they're going through. They just want to make peace with their captors. But they're kind of doing the work of the enemy. Right? We live in a world that is not really for us, and sometimes you find Christians bending to the cultural demands to fit in or follow the rules. It's kind of like the salt loses its savor. Right? We just want to fit in and get by. But the salt that loses its savor is really good for nothing but to be cast out (Matthew 5:13). And so these guys weren't really being the salt of the earth. But notice that the Philistines weren't afraid of the Jews. "We'll kill you. We're coming to get him." And I think it's a bad sign when Satan leaves you alone, you know? But here you find this destructiveness amongst God's people. It came from within. So, they bring Samson down, tied up - three thousand of them (afraid of him).

Verse 14, "When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting against him. Then the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him; and the ropes that were on his arms became like flax that is burned with fire, and his bonds broke loose from his hands. He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, reached out his hand and took it, and killed a thousand men with it." Then Samson waxed poetic. "He said: 'With the

jawbone of a donkey, heaps upon heaps, with the jawbone of a donkey I have slain a thousand men! " So, notice the Spirit of God comes upon Samson. He finds a new jawbone, one that is not decayed but is very strong. He kills a thousand people by himself! The single-handed fighter. And, through all of this, he misses - he doesn't acknowledge, he doesn't recognize - that the LORD is working upon his life. He takes credit for the victory in battle. Notice (verse 16) the song is all about him. And yet, in the process, the will of God is accomplished. I think Samson wants to be a poet. He did the thing about the honey out of the lion's carcass and the riddle, and now he's got a rhyme. And, by the way, this rhymes in Hebrew; it doesn't rhyme in English. But it's a rhyme. He's all about Samson. Learn the lesson. God can use you without you being cooperative, and He'll have His way, and you'll get no credit. And the gifts that God gives you and the anointing that He lays upon your life and the work of God's Spirit can all be His, and you can just be the unwilling, unwitting participant. God will still do what He wants. The people that want to argue, "Well, God is still blessing me, so living in sin is okay" are idiotic in their outlook. Just because God hasn't seen fit to wipe you out yet doesn't mean God's good with it. God's ways are very clearly laid out. We should follow them for sure.

"And so it was, when he had finished speaking," verse 17, "that he threw the jawbone from his hand, and called that place Ramath Lehi," Jawbone Heights. What a guy. "Then he became very thirsty; so he cried out to the LORD" (because when he wants something, he prays) "and said, 'You have given this great deliverance by the hand of Your servant; and now shall I die of thirst and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?' So God split the hollow place that is in Lehi, and water came out, and he drank; and his spirit returned, and he revived. Therefore he called its name En Hakkore," the Spring of the Caller, or, if you want (in Samson's case) the Spring of the Whiner. Look, he just kills a thousand people with the jawbone of a donkey, and then he goes, "I'm gonna die" (Pastor Jack says this in a whining tone). "I'm thirsty." He's such a whiner.

Verse 20, "And he judged Israel twenty years in the days of the Philistines." Twenty more years. Twenty years between chapter 13 and 14. Now twenty years will pass between chapter 15 and the last, if you will, page of Samson's life. And we will jump ahead to where he is now in his forties or a little bit more than in his forties. The Spirit of God continues to fall upon him. The plans of God have not changed, and neither has Samson. He continues to face the patient longsuffering of God, and he will take no steps of faith whatsoever.

Next week, we will conclude with Samson - looking at his failed way of life. In his death, he seeks an opportunity to make up for forty-five years of life. But he squanders every day. Now, he'll bring the city down. He'll take out more people in one day than he has in his whole life. But it's really way too little, isn't it? And it could have been so much more. And I would say to you tonight - if God has saved you, and He's called you, and He's enabled you, don't waste your time. Get busy doing the things of God. His plans are far greater than you've realized. There is more that you can be a part of in His plan than you will ever give yourself space for. If you'll just submit to Him, what God can do will blow your mind. Or you can just kind of squeeze by, you know? "I've got Jesus over here and my life over here and the world over here and my plans over here," and you just compartmentalize all that stuff, and you end up like Samson. God will still have His way. You will not interfere with what God wants to do. However, you can certainly keep yourself from being all that God would want you to be. And Samson is this great disappointment of a man that had everything to go on, and it was just his unwillingness to relinquish himself to the LORD. He wouldn't do it. His lust, his eye, the pride of life, the things that he saw just hooked him, kept him. Don't let that happen to you. Don't let that happen to you. God has far better work for you and me to do than this.

Next week, if you'll read chapter 16, we'll cry together. And then we'll get to the last five chapters of the book of Judges which, to me, are the worst five chapters in the Bible. But they are an absolute template for where we're headed as a country if we decide that we don't need God in our lives at all. Here's a picture of how life can get without God. Two times, here's the definition of the last five chapters (if you want to read ahead): "There was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in their own eyes." It says it two times (Judges 17:6, 21:25). There's no leadership, there's no oversight, there's no direction. Everyone just did their own thing. This is the kind of life you get as a society. It ought to be a warning to us because we don't want this kind of life. Like I said, you read it. Don't make me show up by myself and teach it to no one. But these are hard passages for sure.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
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