

JUDGES & ROMANS: RUINED TO RIGHTEOUS

Lesson 15: Righteous Samson

Key Verse: And Manoah said to the Angel of the LORD, "What is your name, so that, when your words come true, we may honor you?" And the angel of the LORD said to him, "Why do you ask my name, seeing as it is wonderful?"~Judges 13.17-18

"You are what you eat."¹ This (unfortunate) truth provides us with an enlightened understanding of the role nutrition plays in our good, or bad, health. While science has taught us much about the necessity of caloric intake² (or reduction) as well as the role of macro-nutrients, protein, sugar's inflammation, and micro-nutrients, still we do not know everything about food's role in our overall health and well-being. Thus, the vitamin industry and fad diets flourish! Just as we know much about food and nutrition but not everything, we also know much about God but even so He remains **Incomprehensible**. Just as we must make food choices within what we do know is healthy and meets our body's needs, our faith and understanding of God drives how we view our days and how we spend time. Even more so, by the empowerment of the **Holy Spirit**, we can be certain of God's Presence and oversight of every circumstance we experience every day. Rather than becoming insecure about all we don't know about God, *His Spirit in us secures us in what we do know about Him!*

Incomprehensible Father, Thank You for allowing us to know You. We praise Your name as Wonderful! You have chosen to "show us all these things" and even more, You chose to announce the advent of Messiah! Wonderful Savior, Thank You for valuing all Your people, even as sin and Satan attempt to marginalize and devalue those You Love. Remind us of Your Love of all Your creation, all Your people, secured by Your Son's death and resurrection. Thank You for using women to accomplish Your plan of salvation. Thank You for vowing to be with us, always, eternally.

Judges 13.1-14.20 And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, so the LORD gave them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.

2 There was a certain man of Zorah, of the tribe of the Danites, whose name was Manoah. And his wife was barren and had no children. **3** And the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, "Behold, you are barren and have not borne children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. **4** Therefore be careful and drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean, **5** for behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb, and he shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines."

6 Then the woman came and told her husband, "A man of God came to me, and his appearance was like the appearance of the angel of God, very awesome. I did not ask him where he was from, and he did not tell me his name, **7** but he said to me, 'Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. So then drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.'"

8 Then Manoah prayed to the LORD and said, "O Lord, please let the man of God whom you sent come again to us and teach us what we are to do with the child who will be born." **9** And God listened to the voice of Manoah, and the angel of God came again to the woman as she sat in the field. But Manoah her husband was not with her. **10** So the woman ran quickly and told her husband, "Behold, the man who came to me the other day has appeared to me." **11** And Manoah arose and went after his wife and came to the man and said to him, "Are you the man who spoke to this woman?" And he said, "I am." **12** And Manoah said, "Now when your words come true, what is to be the child's manner of life, and what is his mission?"

13 And the angel of the LORD said to Manoah, "Of all that I said to the woman let her be careful. **14** She may not eat of anything that comes from the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, or eat any unclean thing. All that I commanded her let her observe." **15** Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, "Please let us detain you and prepare a young goat for you." **16** And the angel of the LORD said to Manoah, "If you detain me, I will not eat of your food. But if you prepare a burnt offering, then offer it to the LORD." (For Manoah did not know that he was the angel of the LORD.) **17** And Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, "What is your name, so that, when your words come true, we may honor you?" **18** And the angel of the LORD said to him, "Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?"

19 So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering, and offered it on the rock to the LORD, to the one who works wonders, and Manoah and his wife were watching. **20** And when the flame went up toward heaven from the altar, the angel

¹ This quote is attributed to the Frenchman Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin (1725-1826) whose book about the study of how one's diet reveals their social class began the philosophical quest to understand how diet influences health. This led to this exact phrase used by American nutritionist Victor Lindlahr (1897-1969) for his book, "You Are What You Eat".

² During training camp, NFL players (football) must consume between 3,500 to over 7,000 calories per day!

of the LORD went up in the flame of the altar. Now Manoah and his wife were watching, and they fell on their faces to the ground. **21** The angel of the LORD appeared no more to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of the LORD. **22** And Manoah said to his wife, "We shall surely die, for we have seen God." **23** But his wife said to him, "If the LORD had meant to kill us, he would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering at our hands, or shown us all these things, or now announced to us such things as these."

Samson: **24** And the woman bore a son and called his name Samson. And the young man grew, and the LORD blessed him. **25** And the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

CH 14 Samson went down to Timnah, and at Timnah he saw one of the daughters of the Philistines. **2** Then he came up and told his father and mother, "I saw one of the daughters of the Philistines at Timnah. Now get her for me as my wife." **3** But his father and mother said to him, "Is there not a woman among the daughters of your relatives, or among all our people, that you must go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?" But Samson said to his father, "Get her for me, for she is right in my eyes." **4** His father and mother did not know that it was from the LORD, for he was seeking an opportunity against the Philistines. At that time the Philistines ruled over Israel.

5 Then Samson went down with his father and mother to Timnah, and they came to the vineyards of Timnah. And behold, a young lion came toward him roaring. **6** Then the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him, and although he had nothing in his hand, he tore the lion in pieces as one tears a young goat. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done. **7** Then he went down and talked with the woman, and she was right in Samson's eyes. **8** After some days he returned to take her. And he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion, and behold, there was a swarm of bees in the body of the lion, and honey. **9** He scraped it out into his hands and went on, eating as he went. And he came to his father and mother and gave some to them, and they ate. But he did not tell them that he had scraped the honey from the carcass of the lion.

10 His father went down to the woman, and Samson prepared a feast there, for so the young men used to do. **11** As soon as the people saw him, they brought thirty companions to be with him. **12** And Samson said to them, "Let me now put a riddle to you. If you can tell me what it is, within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothes, **13** but if you cannot tell me what it is, then you shall give me thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothes." And they said to him, "Put your riddle, that we may hear it."

14 And he said to them, "Out of the eater came something to eat. Out of the strong came something sweet." And in three days they could not solve the riddle. **15** On the fourth day they said to Samson's wife, "Entice your husband to tell us what the riddle is, lest we burn you and your father's house with fire. Have you invited us here to impoverish us?" **16** And Samson's wife wept over him and said, "You only hate me; you do not love me. You have put a riddle to my people, and you have not told me what it is." And he said to her, "Behold, I have not told my father nor my mother, and shall I tell you?" **17** She wept before him the seven days that their feast lasted, and on the seventh day he told her, because she pressed him hard. Then she told the riddle to her people. **18** And the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down, "What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?" And he said to them, "If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have found out my riddle."

19 And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon and struck down thirty men of the town and took their spoil and gave the garments to those who had told the riddle. In hot anger he went back to his father's house. **20** And Samson's wife was given to his companion, who had been his best man.

Diamonds: The cycle of God's people has been well-rehearsed in the first 12 chapters of Judges. Beginning with Jephthah, we see God breaking His pattern with His people (Judges 10.13-14).

1. This time we see that the people are breaking their pattern with God. What is missing between the first two verses of Judges 13? What do God's people typically do when in distress that is absent this time? (Compare Judges 10.10 with Judges 12.1-2)
2. What is revealed about God as His people no longer cry out to Him for deliverance? What is God teaching you about Himself?

Theologians suggest that the story of Judges can be viewed through several lenses, one of which is the story of the women who play key roles in Judges. Beginning with the pragmatic life-sustaining wisdom of Achsah's request for water rights (Judges 1.15) to the fiery, godly leadership of Deborah (Judges 4-5) to the steadfast, godly theological understanding of Manoah's wife (Judges 13.6, 23), God's actions scream of His value of His daughters. From the pagan women who God

used to win wars for His people (Judges 9.53) to the one He used to highlight the deadly cost of misunderstanding Him (Judges 11.39-40), God uses women to reveal His character, His compassion, and His strong Love for His daughters. No matter how God's people treat women, or the property-like terminology they use to describe His daughters, nor the diminishing relegation to roles that benefit only themselves, God's voice and language is clear: He values, cherishes, and loves women! Even more, they too have a role in HIS plan of salvation for all His people!

3. Choose any of the following portions of scripture that further prove God's equal value of women as demonstrated by their active God-ordained and sovereignly coordinated role in carrying out His plan for salvation. What is God confirming, building, teaching, or encouraging you about His value of you and the meaningful role He has given you in His kingdom building?
 - a. Jesus' birth: Matthew 1.18-25; Luke 1.26-38
 - b. Jesus' anointing: Mark 14.3-9; John 12.3-8
 - c. Jesus' prophecy fulfilled: Mark 14.29-31, 66-72; Luke 22.21-34, 56-62; John 13.36-38; 18.15-17, 25-27
 - d. Jesus' death and burial: Matthew 27.55-56, 61; Mark 15.40-41, 47; Luke 23.49, 54-56; John 19.26-27
 - e. Jesus' resurrection: Matthew 28.1-10; Mark 16.1-11; Luke 24.1-11; John 20.11-18

God's actions in Judges 13.3, 9 are a strong statement from God Himself of His continued commitment and value of women even as the men of Israel continue to devalue women by reducing them to property and strategic political alliances through marriage. God's clear violation of sinful societal norms and sin-marred social norms is as the ROAR of a lion in a cave! God listens to Manoah and responds. God's response reveals that God isn't choosing favorites but is instead revealing Himself.

4. God Himself proves this truth through His intentional and sovereign interactions with Manoah and his unnamed wife in Judges 13. What do you notice about God's interactions with Manoah and his wife? How does this solidify the truth of God's equal value of you, His daughter who He intentionally and sovereignly designed for His Glory?

Scholars note that neither Samson nor his mother were given a choice in taking the Nazirite vow (13.5). That said, we see clearly that his mother took God and His divinely appointed Nazirite vows seriously, while Samson repeatedly and intentionally went against his parents' adherence to them, as well as God's command of obedience to them. Even more so, we see that Samson's disobedience to God and to his parents leads him into situations that produce more sin upon sin, hardening his heart so that he repeatedly and intentionally withholds the truth from his parents! (Judges 14.6, 9)

5. Review the Nazirite vows either from your work in Lesson 13, Question 8 ("Ruin of Disobedience") or by reading Numbers 6. How does Samson violate the Nazirite vows in Judges 13-14? Bonus points for those who also identify any of the laws of God that Samson violates!

Here again, God gives us hope in the midst of a "prodigal son" or abandonment of the religious beliefs (apostasy) faithfully taught by Samson's parents. Our first encounter with apostasy was in Judges 2.10b-13 (see Lesson 3: "Covenantal Righteousness", see page 2). Through that first encounter with apostasy in Judges, Dr. Webb confirms that Samson knew his calling by God Himself to be consecrated, set apart as holy for Him.³ This time, Dr. Davis offers us hope through God's sovereign plan: "Many Christian parents have stood in the sandals of Manoah and his wife. They have, though realizing their own sinful inadequacies, faithfully taught, prayed for, disciplined, and loved a son or a daughter only to see that child

³ Webb, pg.44

willfully turn from the way of the Lord. No one can deny it is anything but devastating. Yet no one should forget verse 4: 'But his father and his mother did not realize it was from Yahweh.' What we don't know may yet prove to be our deepest comfort."⁴

6. Read Judges 21.25. How does the author of Judges prepare us for the downward moral spiral of God's people through this portion of Samson's story? How does Judges 14.3, 7 warn us of the danger of "doing right in [one's] own eyes"?

Not only does the author of Judges prepare us for the downward moral spiral of God's own people through their "doing right in [their] own eyes", but they also set up a great irony in Samson's story: the first cruelty Samson's enemies perform on him is gouging out his own eyes (Judges 16.21)!

Samson's wedding feast is more like a frat party held in the home of a wild frat house!⁵ (Judges 14.10) That Samson chose this (probably demanded it of his parents) reveals Samson's desire to be more like the Philistines rather than set apart as holy to God as designed and commanded ("for so the young men used to do"). It is self-evident that nothing good comes from a frat party. Samson is foolish and his arrogance drives him to pot-stirring with his idea to outwit his enemies through his riddle. Even more alarmingly, his foolishness and arrogance endangers his new wife and her family! (Judges 14.15)

"The depiction of her as a foreign temptress luring Samson is completely unfounded. Samson was the aggressor and she was threatened by the action of her own people and her future, possibly present, husband."⁶ The man tasked with her safety and security has instead placed her in a terrifying life or death dilemma. Rather than building fidelity within their marriage, Samson has placed her in the hands of his 30 companions.

Samson's response to their discovery to the answer of his riddle was despicable (14.19). The phrasing and key words at the end of verse 19 transliterate to taking plunder from military men in an act of war.⁷

7. What was Samson's motivation for creating a geopolitical military crisis (14.19)?

Just as in Jephthah's story (Judges 11.29-31) we find the "Spirit of the LORD rushed upon" Samson even as he was personally motivated by sinful rage that was the result of his own making (14.19). And just as Jephthah's faith is commended in Hebrews 11.32, so too is Samson's in Hebrews 11.32.

8. From the final phrase in Judges 13.5, what does God tell us is His purpose for Samson? How do you reconcile God's Spirit coming upon Samson (14.19), His Spirit stirring in Samson (13.25) while reading of Samson willfully choosing to disobey and reject God's call upon his life? (It will be helpful to review your answers to the doctrine, "Vows", in Lesson 13: "Ruin of Disobedience")

Deity: Incomprehensible~ (Judges 13.18)

9. What does God teach us about our ability to comprehend Him in Isaiah 55.8-9?

⁴ Davis, p. 170

⁵ Davis, p. 171; Scheider, p. 206

⁶ Schneider, p. 210; note that the timeline of events carries some challenges when aligned with the marriage rituals. Thus, while it is undisputed that she was betrothed to Samson in marriage, there is uncertainty in the exact timing of their consummation.

⁷ Schneider, p. 211

However, God as incomprehensible is different from His desire that we know Him. “The entire Bible is predicated upon the idea that the God beyond human comprehension can be known by His creatures. While we cannot penetrate deep into the deep things of God, God can be known insofar as He makes Himself known.”⁸

10. How do Deuteronomy 29.29 and 1 Corinthians 13.12 help you understand the incomprehensibility of God with the knowability of God?

1 Corinthians 2.6-16 teaches us that we can “know the hidden wisdom of God” through the Spirit of God empowering us to have “the mind of Christ”! Just before He takes up His cross, Jesus reveals to us the “hidden wisdom of God”: making God known in Christ, eternal *life* (John 17.3).

11. From John 17.1-3, what were Jesus’ preoccupying thoughts in His prayer just before He was arrested, tortured, abandoned, and crucified? What was His focus before He experienced betrayal, shame, and trouble?

“Affirming that God is both incomprehensible and knowable has practical ramifications for the Christian life. On the one hand, God’s incomprehensibility means we must never treat God as a specimen to be examined under the microscope of our human minds. We must allow – indeed, rejoice in the fact – that God is metaphysically sublime, and His ways are beyond tracing out. At the same time, we must not confuse ignorance about God with humility. If God has made Himself known, we should not castigate systematic theology as ‘putting God in a box’ or treating Him as ‘freeze-dried’ or ‘shrink-wrapped’. Surely the God who speaks wants to be heard – if only we have ears to hear.”⁹

12. After mining the wonder of God’s plan of salvation to both the Jews and the Gentiles, Paul erupts in adoration and praise of God’s incomprehensibility in the midst of what He has made known in Romans 11.33-36. What have you learned in this deity that causes you to likewise erupt in adoration and praise of God’s incomprehensibility in the midst of what He has made known? Is there something in Paul’s adoration and praise that inspired an “Amen”, or “Hallelujah”? (Hint: Your answer to this question may fit nicely into your Scripture-Soaked Prayer!)

Doctrine: Holy Spirit~ (Judges 14.19) The Holy Spirit is “the third person of the Trinity, fully divine and fully personal.”¹⁰ MacArthur and Mayhue explain that from Genesis to Revelation, “references to the Spirit’s filling would be encountered first in Exodus 31.3 and last in Colossians 1.19.”¹¹ One Hebrew term in the Old Testament and three Greek terms in the New Testament are used to describe the Holy Spirit. However, all four terms “convey the general idea of divine sovereignty as the cause and human submission as the effect.”¹²

God used His Spirit in the Old Testament to equip or empower them to carry out His plans for a specific moment or time period in Israel’s history. “None of the [Old Testament] filling events involved Spirit-produced character.”¹³

The Old Testament records several unique times when God’s chose to send His Spirit to *indwell* His servant:

- Joshua in Numbers 27.18 in preparation for his leadership of God’s people upon the death of Moses.
- Ezekiel in Ezekiel 2.2 and 3.24 as he prepares to “confront the exceedingly rebellious nation of Israel.”¹⁴ In Ezekiel’s

⁸ DeYoung, p. 37, “*The Knowability of God*”

⁹ DeYoung, p. 37, “*The Knowability of God*”

¹⁰ MacArthur & Mayhue, p. 930

¹¹ MacArthur & Mayhue, p. 369

¹² MacArthur & Mayhue, p. 369

¹³ MacArthur & Mayhue, p. 367

¹⁴ MacArthur & Mayhue, p. 366

story we discover that God's Spirit is "not a permanent indwelling". Instead, it seems that God's Spirit entered him in two unique moments in time.

- The New Testament teaches us that God's Spirit indwelt the prophets, empowering and sustaining their work as God's prophets (1 Peter 1.10-11).¹⁵

In contrast, God intentionally placed His Spirit "upon" unique leaders of Israel "as an act of empowerment."¹⁶ This empowerment is the same word used to describe Simeon's actions and understanding surrounding his personal experience when Jesus Christ was brought to the temple as an infant (Luke 2.25-35). This same use of God's Spirit coming upon His specific leader rather than indwelling them is found in sixteen people and two groups of people within the Old Testament.¹⁷

- The sixteen people: Bezalel (Exodus 31.3; 35.30-31); Moses (Numbers 11.17); Balaam (Numbers 24.2); Joshua (Deuteronomy 34.9); Othniel (Judges 3.10); Gideon (Judges 6.34); Jephthah (Judges 11.29); Samson (Judges 14.6, 19; 15.14); Saul (1 Samuel 10.10; 11.6; 19.23); David (1 Samuel 16.13); Amasai (1 Chronicles 12.18); Azariah (2 Chronicles 15.1); Jahaziel (2 Chronicles 20.14); Zechariah (2 Chronicles 24.20); Isaiah (Isaiah 61.1); Ezekiel (Ezekiel 11.5)
- The two groups of people: Seventy elders (Numbers 11.25), and the Messengers of Saul (1 Samuel 19.20)

God's use of His Spirit to come "upon" an individual or to indwell them has the following characteristics:

- It was infrequent
- It was limited to select leaders of Israel alone
- It was temporary
- It was used specifically to empower the individual service in the name of God
- It was not connected to the individual's salvation, best emphasized in God's ability to remove His Spirit (1 Samuel 16.14; Psalm 51.11)

God's Spirit was also present and active during Jesus' time on earth. Often referred to as the "pre-Pentecost", this time period distinguishes the roles, uses, and empowerment of the Holy Spirit as different from when the Holy Spirit arrived on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2.1-4).

13. How did Jesus Christ expand the use and role of God's Spirit? Review the doctrine of the Holy Spirit from Lesson 14 ("Righteous Living in the Spirit") to guide your answer.

Your Scripture-Soaked Prayer: You live in the post-Pentecost *privilege!* Paul provided us a superb example of praise and adoration of God when the weight of our privileges in Christ collides with the Majesty of God. But it's not like a train wreck! Instead, it's a glorious moment of adoration and praise and confession and humility before a Majestic, Incomprehensible God who is *listening!* Collide here and now!

Lecture Outline:

Aim: God uses flawed people to accomplish His divine purposes.

- I. Righteous Remnant (Judges 13) **T1:** God uses flawed people to accomplish His purposes through the strength of the Holy Spirit.
 - a. Which of your flaws or weaknesses are keeping you from wholeheartedly serving God?
 - b. How might the flaws or weaknesses of fellow believers keep you from trusting their ability to serve God effectively?
- II. Reckless Rebel (Judges 14) **T2:** God uses flawed people to accomplish His purposes, but they still experience the consequences of their rebellion.
 - a. How does your rebellion against God manifest itself?

¹⁵ MacArthur & Mayhue, p. 366

¹⁶ MacArthur & Mayhue, p. 367

¹⁷ MacArthur & Mayhue, p. 367 + Table 5.8, "Cases of Holy Spirit Empowerment", p. 367

- b. Which of His commands draw out your disobedience?
- c. What do you insist on doing because it is 'right in your eyes'?

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