

Samson #1 - His Home

by Andrew Foster

The church is in a state of decline because of sin, and the only way to see things changed is to get serious with God's Word and follow His guidance.

Duration: 1:07:42

Scripture: Judges 13:1, Psalm 119:11, Proverbs 3:11-12, Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 12:6

Topics: "Samson"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of taking God's Word seriously and living it out. He encourages listeners to read and study the Bible, seeking God's guidance and instructions for their lives. The sermon focuses on the story of Samson from the book of Judges, specifically highlighting the 40-year period of captivity to the Philistines. The preacher emphasizes the consequences of sin and the need for repentance and prayer in order to experience change and victory in the church.

Transcript

When Alan gave me the invitation to come, there was a passage or a study that came to my mind almost instantly when he spoke of the conference. And I'd like to share some messages with you over the next day or two on the life of Samson. So we're going to make a start this afternoon in Judges chapter 13.

And I'd like for us to take the time to read Judges 13. If you take the time to find a place in the Word of God. We're going to read together in just a moment, but before we begin to read, we're going to bow in prayer and pray for the Lord's help.

We'll be reading at Judges 13 in the verse 1, but let's please take a moment and dear child of God, make it your earnest prayer today that God will speak to you. You need to hear the voice of the Lord. I need to hear the Lord speak.

That's the unusual privilege of being a preacher. You get to speak and to listen at the same time. I need to hear a word from God.

So do you. Let's bow our hearts before the Lord together now, please. Our Father in heaven, we come to thee with the Word of God in our hand.

We thank thee for the unspeakable privilege it is to have the infallible, inerrant, inspired Word of the living God. Our Father, we also recognize that of ourselves we cannot understand these things. We can

sympathize even yet as Christians with the words of the Ethiopian eunuch.

Understandest thou what thou readest? How can I except some man should tell me? O God, grant us now the help of the Holy Ghost. It is that ministry, Lord, that looks for Christ in the book that we want to have today. We pray that we will know something of that Emmaus Road experience when Jesus Himself drew near and went with them, when He opened the Scriptures and showed to them and all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

And warm our hearts to that end, we pray. O God, bless us today with a word from myself. We need help.

We feel our helplessness. We are here because we recognize a little of the need that we are in, and yet we freely confess our need is greater than we are prepared to admit. Lord, we put a brave face on it at times, but our Father, what a mess the church of Christ is in these days.

Lord, grant us help now to learn from the Word of the living God and stir us and revive us for Jesus' sake. Bless now the reading of Thy Word, and in a moment the preaching of Thy Word. Pour out the power of the Holy Ghost that we might speak and hear in the name of Christ.

And for His glory we pray. Amen. Judges 13, verse 1, And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years.

And there was a certain man of Zorah of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah, and his wife was barren and bare not. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto the woman and said unto her, Behold thou, thou art barren and barest not, but thou shalt conceive and bear a son. Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine, nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing.

For lo, thou shalt conceive and bear a son, and no razor shall come on his head, for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb. And he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines. Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible.

But I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name. But he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive and bear a son, and now drink no wine, nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean thing. For the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death.

Then Manoah entreated the Lord and said, O my Lord, let the man of God which thou didst send come again unto us and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born. And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah, and the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field. But Manoah her husband was not with her.

And the woman made haste and ran and showed her husband and said unto him, Behold, the man hath appeared unto me that came unto me the other day. And Manoah rose and went after his wife and came to the man and said unto him, Art thou the man that speakest unto the woman? And he said, I am. And Manoah said, Now let thy words come to pass.

How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him? And the angel of the Lord said unto Manoah, Of all that I said unto the woman, let her beware. She may not eat of anything that cometh of the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing. All that I commanded her, let her observe.

And Manoah said unto the angel of the Lord, I pray thee, let us detain thee until we shall have made ready a kid for thee. The angel of the Lord said unto Manoah, Though thou detain me, I will not eat of thy bread. And if thou wilt offer a burnt offering, thou must offer it unto the Lord.

For Manoah knew not that he was an angel of the Lord. And Manoah said unto the angel of the Lord, What is thy name, that when thy sayings come to pass, we may do thee honor? The angel of the Lord said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret? So Manoah took a kid with a meat offering and offered it upon a rock unto the Lord. And the angel did wondrously.

And Manoah and his wife looked on. For it came to pass when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar that the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar. And Manoah and his wife looked on it and fell on their faces to the ground.

But the angel of the Lord did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife. And Manoah knew that he was an angel of the Lord. And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die because we have seen God.

But his wife said unto him, If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have showed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these. And the woman bare a son and called his name Samson. And the child grew, and the Lord blessed him.

And the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtoel. Amen. May God add His blessing to our Bible reading.

As we begin to look at the life of Samson that is recorded for us in the Scriptures, I want very much to make application of that truth to our present circumstances in the church of Jesus Christ. I know that many of you are here today because of a deep concern for the state of Christ's body on the earth. A deep concern over the decline, the weakness, the powerlessness, the error, the emptiness of much that is called Christianity today.

You have a concern. Does God have an answer? Absolutely He does. And it's the same answer that He has always given because the church of Christ has been here before many times.

The circumstances that we witness all around us today in the visible church are not new. They are not new. And the answer is an old answer.

It's simply to look into the Word of God and discover what it was God did for His people before when they were in such circumstances. And that, I think, is one of the reasons why the book of Judges is a profitable study for God's people in these days. You will know that that book records cycles of blessing and deliverance and then decline into sin and bondage and chastisement and judgment and God's favor and blessing was lost, only to be restored again as God stepped in in mercy and raised up a judge, a deliverer, who came in the power of God and whether on a large or local scale, exercised that reviving, restoring influence among the people of God.

Judges 13 opens for us a view into one of those last cycles because we are coming to one of the final chapters in those centuries known as the times of the judges. And rather than go back into all of the history to this point, we are just going to try to draw a line and jump right in here at verse 1 of chapter 13. The children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord.

Here is that point in the cycle where there is a departure from God. Oh, the wheel has turned so many times up to this point. Previously, we have had judges like Jephthah.

You may be familiar with Jephthah's story in the previous chapters here. Under God, Jephthah saw deliverance. He was followed by three more judges, a little more obscure, who covered 18 years between them.

There was a period of rest. And now God's people again foolishly depart from the law. The short answer to the question why are we here again is given to us in the verse 1 of this chapter.

The children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the law. That's why. The reason why the church of Christ is in the state that it is in today, and when I speak like that, I do not for a moment want either to divorce myself from its current condition or give you grounds to divorce yourself from its current condition.

If you're a Christian today, as I am, you are part of the church. You're part of the problem. I'm not saying that every child of God is guilty of the same sins.

But ultimately, we are all part of the problem. You study the revivals that are recorded in God's Word, and you will discover inevitably that when it comes to the point of a confessing of sin, it's the best of men like Ezra, like Daniel, like Nehemiah that are on their face before God and say, we have sinned. Read Daniel's confession of sin in chapter 9. And there's not a blemish recorded in Bible history against Daniel's character before God.

And he confesses sin like one of the worst offenders in the nation because he was part of the corporate body of Christ. And part of his responsibility was to own up to that corporate need and to confess it as his own. Why are we here? As in, why are we at this point again in the cyclical history of the people of God? The place of powerlessness.

The place where we have to say the spiritual enemies of the Gospel are running all over us. They're trampling us into the dirt. We have no power.

We have no liberty. We have no influence. Why? Sin.

That's the reason. There's no other reason. Why have we lost the power of God? Sin.

The children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord. Don't you find it an interesting thing here that there's absolutely no detail recorded about what they did? In one sense, it doesn't matter what they did. As far as specific activities were concerned, we're told here it was evil in the eyes of God.

So many different forms of sin. Sin that will beset me is perhaps one you have no difficulty with or vice versa. It will not be so much my specific sin as opposed to your specific sin that is the major problem in the church.

It's sin generally. All sin. We don't know or we don't need to know so much what they did on this occasion to grieve God.

We can look into other descriptions in this book and in other passages of God's Word for the sake of time. We're not going to do that. But you will find idolatry.

You will find pride. You will find disobedience. You will find it turning away from the truth of God in one fashion or another.

It was evil. And God delivered them into the hand of the Philistines for a year. They're given into the hand of the Philistines.

God's people called to liberty. Yes, but when they sin, they sacrifice their liberty. Called to be the masters of the enemies of God and the land, but here being reduced to their servants because they did evil in the sight of the Lord.

It's a very, very simple exercise in spiritual logic to argue from cause to effect and effect back to cause. This is not the first time the Lord has used these enemies to chastise His people. Back in chapter 3, we read at a much earlier period in Israel's history, just one of those beautiful references to Shamgar.

Just one verse recording his ministry. After him was Shamgar the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines 600 men with an ounce of gold, and he also delivered Israel. Boy, there's so much in that verse.

One man. What a work for God he did. But we are interested especially in the enemy that he was dealing with.

God had used the Philistines to chastise His people because of their sin. In chapter 10 and verse 7, you will discover a second instance. The anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines.

Why the Philistines on this occasion? Well, look at verse 6. The children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord and served Balaam and Asheroth and the gods of Syria and the gods of Zion and the gods of Moab and the gods of the children of Ammon and the gods of the Philistines and forsook the Lord and served Him not. They adopted the religion of the Philistines and now they're going to have to deal with the influence of the Philistines as their taskmaster. Inevitably, what you worship will rule your life.

You can't avoid that. What you worship will rule you. They worship the gods of the Philistines and now they're tyrannized by the Philistines who reduced them to the level of slaves.

There we read of how they were delivered into the hand of the Philistines. Chapter 10, verse 8 tells us that they oppressed the children of Israel 18 years. But they sinned again.

They don't learn the lesson. Eighteen years is a long time. Eighteen years is a long time in anybody's life.

But they sinned again. And what happens? God delivered them into the hand of the Philistines 40 years. You think of the children that were born in that 40-year period.

And until they were mature men, they never knew anything but Philistine bondage and oppression. They didn't know anything about the liberty of the glory days under Joshua. The times of victory that had been given under men like Othniel and Jackson and others of the judges.

Think of those children. Until they were 40 years old, until they were grown men, they had never seen anything but the powerless, weakened, deprived, oppressed state of the people of God. What a tragedy.

Forty years just about covers the best years of our lives. You think of a young fellow that might have been 10 or 15 years of age whenever the captivity to the Philistines came. The best years of his life were done

by the time it was over.

Was that a waste? Of course it was a waste. It was the waste caused by sin among the people of God. There is a lesson here, and I hope you have picked it up already.

Here's a 40-year period. It's more than double the last time of captivity to the Philistines. More than double.

You see, if you don't learn the first time as God deals with us, He's going to deal more sternly the second time. Go back to that sin again. Well, if we were to take the time to look at Leviticus 26, a series of verses there where Moses is counseling Israel and saying simply this, you turn from God, He's going to deal with your sin.

Now, when He deals with your sin, you turn back. Or if you persist in sin, He's going to deal with you seven times more. And if you still don't learn, it's going to be seven times more.

And still won't learn, it's going to be seven times more yet again. God does not allow His people to go on in sin, unchastised. God does not allow His people to go on enjoying blessing while they are in sin.

He must chastise it. He must work in His people against that which is contrary to His own being. He cannot indulge while earthly fathers may be prepared to indulge in their children that which is destructive and harmful and wicked.

God cannot. He cannot. He will always work against sin and He will continue working against sin until you turn from it if you are a genuine child of God.

Let me be plain about that. If you can live in sin and God takes no issue with it, you're not a child of God. You're not.

It's an evidence of God's mercy. Every son whom He receiveth and loveth, He chasteneth. It's an evidence of God's mercy to the church that it finds itself reduced to powerlessness in a time like this because we are brought to the place where we have to say God's hand is against us in chastisement, therefore we must have sinned.

That's the reason for the chastisement. That's the reason for the inflection of His displeasure. It's not done in a capricious fashion.

It's not done without reason. It's done because there are real issues to be dealt with that are not dealt with easily, quickly, or casually. I want you to understand that.

There is a spirit abroad today among the people of God. I think we have imbibed so much of the McDonald's type culture, you know, where you have drive-through Christianity. You can sort things out in a 60-second sound bite or even in the context of one sermon, been there, done that, fixed it out, and we're moving on.

You think if that had been really possible, Israel would have spent 40 years under the heel of the Philistines? I think what we as God's people need to recognize is that when we depart from God, there is a situation created that is not easily fixed. It's not easily undone. Can God work suddenly? Yes, He does.

And He does. Bless the Lord. But He works as part of a process.

And what we might look upon as a sudden intervention from God is in fact really just the climax of an ongoing process that has been in place for years. Why is it that God breaks through in revival? You probably have read some of the great narratives of revival among God's people. And suddenly it seems in the blink of an eye, there's power, there's conversions, there's influence, there's holiness.

God's people get right with Him. But read behind the scenes. Maybe for years there's been permeatings.

Maybe for years there's been preaching on the issue of getting right with God, dealing with sin, a consciousness, a burden of sin, a submission to the Lord's chastisement. And then God comes. You look at these cycles in the book of Judges.

I commend them to you. We live in a day when every man does that which is right in his own eyes. And when the book of Judges records that, it wasn't talking about the Philistines or the ungodly or the pagans or the heathens.

It was talking about the professing people of God doing what was right in their own eyes. That is the curse of the church today. Every man does what is right in his own eyes.

I think we should do. Let's have a business meeting, a board meeting, a congregational meeting, and let's see what we should do. What does God say we should do? Because until we get to the place, let me share this with you, my brethren and sisters in Christ, share it with you from the depths of my heart.

Until we get to the place where in honesty and sincerity before God we say with an open Bible, O God, what do we need to do? We still live on the cross. I want you to know that. There will be no turning back of the clock one generation, two generations, or two thousand years to the days of the apostles until we get before God and say, Now Lord, what would you have me to do? Show me.

Teach me. Get serious with the Bible. I'm not talking about soundbite Christianity.

I'm not talking about cliched expressions that trip off our tongue so easily. I'm talking about getting serious with God's Word. Read it.

Study it. Lay it up in your heart. Live it.

If you have a burden to see things changed, if you take nothing else away from what I have to say, please take this away. If you want to see things changed in the visible church of Christ today, would you take this book in your hand in the place of prayer and begin to prayerfully read it looking for what God would have you to do to be right with Him. We read here of these 40 years.

I can't take the time to go into some of the historical background and lessons that we could look at here, but I want you to get an overall picture of this. There's 40 years that run from Judges 13.1 and they don't actually finish until we get to 1 Samuel 7 and the events that are recorded there when under Samuel, God defeats the Philistines. Get that idea.

There's a 40-year window of history that's in view in the record here in the Word of God. So from just before Samson's birth right through to 1 Samuel 7, there is a lot of scriptural history packed in, believe it or not, to those 40 years. Inside that 40-year period, we have Samson's entire life.

He's born after the 40 years begins. He dies before it finishes. We're not told quite how long before he dies before that great victory under Samuel in 1 Samuel 7. But he's dead at that point.

So his ministry is less than 40 years. We have events like the life and ministry of Eli. He judged Israel for a number of years.

Judged Israel for 40 years. And his ministry ties in. It's not the same 40 years, but his ministry ties in there as well.

And he dies. In fact, he dies about halfway through this 40-year period. Remember how the ark of God was taken? So if you have a picture in your mind of a 40-year timeline that's described here, halfway through the ark of God is taken.

Eli dies. Samuel is already a young lad at that time, for you'll remember that he's already in the tabernacle and just as a child, but already marked as God's man. For 20 years, the ark, having been returned from the land of the Philistines, for 20 years the ark lies neglected in Kirjath-Jerum until the days of Samuel.

It's still there. You read of that in 1 Samuel 7. The ark is still there. Samuel gets a great victory over the Philistines and these 40 years come to an end.

The interesting thing about this 40-year period is this, that just after it began, God began to work to raise and deliver. The 40 years would run their course, but just after it began, God would provide. That would at least, as we look at verse 5, who would begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.

How merciful the Lord is. You will always find this. You will always find it.

Even when God is punishing sin, He is already working to provide deliverance. Do you not find that in those blessed words of the first great gospel promise of all Scripture in Genesis 3.15 where God promises to Adam, I'll raise and deliver the seed of the woman. I'll come to destroy the power and the influence of the serpent.

When did He speak those words? He spoke them in the immediate wake of the fall. And do you know the interesting thing? He spoke the word of promise before He even got to tell Adam what the curse of his sin would involve. God was already working in mercy.

And you have an illustration of that here. There's a 40-year period of chastisement that's just beginning. But as it begins, God comes to Manoah and his wife.

I'm going to raise and deliver. There's hope. Bless God, there's hope.

But that hope rests in God's intervention in power among His people to stir again. Not so much, and I want you to bear this in mind as we look at the words, not so much to raise a man like Samson, to raise one prominent figurehead, but I think as we apply the words to ourselves, take away this thought. Here is the spirit that God must raise again.

Here is what God is ever at work to raise among His people. The spirit of resistance to the enemy. A spirit that, led by the Holy Ghost, energized by the Holy Ghost, will strike against the enemy.

Samson is such a uniquely marvelous study in the Word of God because not only did he exhibit on the one extreme the power of God, but on the other he demonstrated the awful wickedness of his own flesh. Those are things that we have to confront and deal with as God's people in this day and age. But the wonderful lesson of Samson's life is that God was at work, even to use a faulty, failing, flawed vessel such as Samson to accomplish something for His glory.

Very quickly, I'd like for us to look here at a couple of things. First of all, to see that God raises a Deliverer. In a day of oppression, in a day of darkness and bondage and powerlessness and weakness among the people of God, He raised up a Deliverer.

Or as the word also can be translated, He raised a Savior. A Savior. The judges, to some degree, in some cases it was in a greater degree than in others, but all of them in some way reflected and represented the work of the Lord Jesus, the great Deliverer of His people, the great Judge who is ever at work to deliver His people from their sins.

Now, the raising up of such a man, the raising up again of that Spirit among God's people is a work of the Lord alone. No man can raise himself. No man can raise up another of his own power.

It's not about God's people searching among their ranks and seeing if they can find a man that can help them. God must work. Now, there are a number of ways in which this is seen in this passage.

The revival, the restoration that I believe we're looking for is a work of God as the Sovereign of His church. You see that the raising up of Samuel here involved the personal intervention of God the Son. That's who the angel of the Lord is.

That's Christ Himself, the Messenger of Jehovah, the Messenger of the Covenant. Here is one of those pre-incarnation appearances of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Angel of God. He comes, so He has to come.

Brethren and sisters, He has to come. He has to step into our meetings. He has to step into our churches.

He has to step into our homes. And it's a home situation here. It's so instructive to see that.

He personally stepped down into the home life of two aged saints in Israel and He said, I've got news for you. I am going to raise a deliverer. Revival starts in the most unlikely places, you know.

It started here with an old pair in the tribe of Dan because God the Son one day stepped into their lives and said, I'm going to start a work. I'm going to do something. Now, Manoah and his wife eventually came to recognize this.

This is what lies behind Manoah's somewhat surprising expression in verse 22. We shall surely die because we have seen God and eventually dawned on Him who He was dealing with. Oh, they were prepared to see God's hand in it, but indirectly at the start.

Manoah's wife, you will remember, spoke of the man of God. She thought this was a prophet. And just as an aside, it's always interesting to see that that's how the Word of God describes angels in Scripture.

They were commonly mistaken for men. They looked like men, dressed like men, spoke like men. You just remember that the next time somebody tries to present you with pictures of angels.

Here this woman says, I've met a man of God. I've met a prophet. Now she was obviously therefore acknowledging God has said something here.

The Lord has worked, but He's worked through a man at least as she understood it. So often our human vision is so limited that we see the man. We don't see the angel of the Lord.

It's a sad thing. It's certainly something I think to be happy for in the case of these dear saints of God that they got beyond the man or the idea of the man. We have seen God face to face.

And this is what is needed today. We need to get beyond man. We need to get beyond personalities.

God help us, we need to get beyond these things to see the angel of the Lord. Because nothing is going to be done either in our homes or in the church at large unless the angel of the Lord Himself steps in there and takes a direct hand in the affairs of our homes and of the church. Do you want to see the strengthening of the cause of Christ today? We don't need champion evangelists.

We don't need super preachers. We don't need big buildings. We don't need radio, TV, or any of those things, however useful they may be in their place.

That's not the need of the church today. We need the God-man. The man of God.

The angel messenger of Jehovah. We need Him to come. This was seen to be a work of God in another sense.

When you think of the unlikely source from which the Deliverer came, who would ever have thought that in a home like that of Manoah and his wife, there would have been a judge, a champion raised up? Even if Manoah, and we're told nothing of his background, but even if he was recognized in his community as a forthright man of God, I believe he had a tremendous testimony. I believe he was a good man, an exemplary character. Not a question about it.

Maybe there was somebody in Manoah's neighborhood that knew Manoah well and had observed, you know, if only Manoah had a son, maybe he could do something. But look at the age he is, and look at his wife, and they have no family. We're not even told the woman's name.

But you see what we are told about her? Verse 2, His wife was barren and bare not, and for good measure, it's repeated in verse 3, Thou art barren and barest not. That simple piece of information is there so that we understand this was a work of God. This was no freak of nature.

This was no accidental thing where suddenly an aged couple are visited with a late arrival. They were beyond natural childbearing. This is a work of God.

Did God work through natural processes? Of course He did. He always does. Even when He works miracles, He works miraculously through natural means.

The raising of a Savior from such a source required a miraculous act of divine power. In some ways, can we not see Manoah and his wife as being an illustration of where the church is at today in its barrenness? But God can work. God can raise out of a barren environment a champion for revival, a champion for restoration.

We're talking here about the potential at this point that Samson has. We lay aside for the moment the tragedy of his life that developed. But as God worked, He's working to raise something of a spirit of revival and restoration.

And He does it in the most unlikely place. It's a work of God. Verse 24 tells us that Samson grew up under the direct supervision of God.

And a woman bare a son and called his name Samson. And the child grew, and the Lord blessed him. And the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtoah.

God supervised those early years in Samson's life. It was God who influenced him even in these early years. The Spirit of the Lord, the Holy Ghost began to move him.

And the idea in the word that's translated here is that the Holy Ghost began to drive him, began to impel him, to thrust him out. Driving him forward. At this point, Samson's only a teenager.

His ministry lasted 20 years. And do you remember, he was born and died inside that 40-year period. So the absolute maximum he could have been when he started his public ministry was 20.

I think we have to see that he was some years younger than that even as he begins his work for God under the supervision of the Holy Ghost. You know, really in a nutshell, that's what we need again. God the Son to step in, to stir and to raise by the miracle of His own power the spirit of resistance to the enemy, a spirit of revival and restoration.

Only He can give it. And when He does give it, it will be exercised and developed under the supervision of God the Holy Ghost. That's what we need to see.

The emphasis of all of these simple, natural details is that God must work in a direct fashion if we are ever to see a return to the days of triumph and victory, a deliverance from the days where the enemy has the upper hand, where God's cause is impoverished and weakened and helpless and powerless. If we are ever to see that change, we need to see the Lord Jesus step into our churches, step into our homes, and start something. And then to see what He starts nourished and strengthened and guided by the power of the Holy Ghost.

That's what we need. God is sovereign in how He works. You see that here? He takes the initiative.

He works the miracle. He steps in. He begins to energize Samson to be a force for God.

But divine sovereignty never ever destroys human responsibility either in salvation or in the Christian life. God could have sent an angel to do far better what Samson did. But God worked through a man.

And to begin with, He worked here through Manoah and his wife. God works to raise a deliverer, or as we're applying it to ourselves, He works to raise that spirit of deliverance again within His people. And He worked here to do that by giving certain duties to Samson's parents.

It's through them He works in the child. It's under their influence under God that the child is given, nurtured, taught, and prepared for service. We have those words of the Apostle Paul when dealing with fathers in Ephesians 6. And the verse 4, Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Those are New Testament words. But they describe the process that was going on in Manoah's house. They describe the process that will bring God's people today back again to an experience of the Lord's power and deliverance and victory and triumph.

The nurture and admonition of the Lord, where there is a nurturing of grace and an instructing of the mind and of the soul and the things of God. A getting back to His Word, a getting of that Word into the mind. That's just what the English word admonition means, quite literally.

Putting something into the mind. God's people today have minds that are so often divorced entirely from Scripture. They don't think biblically, let alone act biblically.

But here is a home where God imparted certain duties to Samson's parents that under God became the means of shaping, molding, nurturing, advancing this process of producing a deliverer. I am suggesting to you that as we look at the bits of information that are given to us about this home, that we are going to see something about that process that we need to see revived in the church of Christ. Here is a process.

Yes, we need to see God step in and we must cast ourselves upon Him in His sovereign mercy and grace to step in among us. But there is a process that God works through that He institutes. That process is illustrated here in the instructions that are given to Manoah and his wife concerning the raising of their son.

Here is the home from which a deliverer comes. Here is that environment out of which springs deliverance. Let me quickly share them with you.

It was a home where it was no surprise to hear from God. I said a moment or two ago about the testimony that Manoah and his wife would have had. You look at the incident here and I think that if you look for this, you will see it to be an interesting thing.

The angel of God appears as a prophet from the Lord. That's her reaction. But Manoah's wife didn't bat an eyelid.

It wasn't a surprise. Here is a woman that I believe we can at least suggest, and maybe we can go further than that, but I'm going to at least suggest. Here is a woman who was used to hearing a word from God.

Here is a woman who was used to seeing the man of God in a human sense. Oh, true. She didn't realize at this point she was dealing with the man of God Himself.

But nevertheless, the words that he spoke didn't come as a surprise. Heaven will be a wonderful place for the Christian, will it not? And yet when you get there, if you've lived for God on earth, it will not be a surprise. When you hear those blessed words, the first words you hear from the lips of the Savior in glory, ever think about what they'll be.

I know we speak of those words, Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. We're aiming for those words, I hope.

But if Jesus Christ speaks those words to you, you'll know His voice. Because you have heard that voice before. I hope you hear that voice from behind this desk this week.

You'll know that voice. You thought it was a man of God of one stripe or another. But I think when you get to glory, you'll discover that if that man was preaching the Word of God, you were hearing the words of the angel of the Lord.

It was no surprise to Manoah's wife to have such a meeting. She didn't gather up her skirts and run for her life and swoon into Manoah's arms. She talked quite calmly to him.

And even though the message was a marvelous message, she reported it quite calmly to her husband. Here's what he said. And I think the more you look at this, the more you will come to understand what I'm saying.

It was not a surprise. I tell you today, there are too many of God's people and if they did hear the Word of God, they wouldn't recognize it. It's been that long since they held any kind of conversation with the Lord.

It's been that long. You want to see revival? Allow me to advise you to become familiar with the voice of the Lord. That's where it starts.

You get to the place where you are comfortable with what God says to you no matter how startling it may be. Look at what he told her. Put yourself in her shoes to be told that you are going to miraculously have a child that I'm quite sure, humanly speaking, she had long ago given up hope for.

It didn't matter how startling the message was. Here was a woman used to hearing the voice of the Lord. There are so many parts of this Bible that if a preacher was to stand up and preach them, there are saints of God who would go weak at the knees and run in terror.

Oh, you can't preach that stuff because God's people today are not used to hearing the voice of the Lord. And if I might add a comment, most of the fellows who stand up today claiming to speak for God don't. They don't.

They're strangers. Perverting the truth of God. Many of them not even converted.

Remember the Lord Jesus said about the mark of His sheep, a stranger will they not follow. Why? They know not the voice of strangers. What's the corollary of that? The inference is they know.

And it's stated clearly in John 10 they know the voice of the shepherd. And they ignore the stranger. When you see people being carried away, false doctrine and error in the name of Christ, in many instances you can be sure those people are not sheep.

The sheep do not know, don't recognize, don't respond to the voice of strangers. But they know the Lord's voice. My sheep hear my voice.

And they follow. Here's a home not only where it was no surprise for God to speak, but where there was immediate prayer offered for more divine revelation. Verse 8, Emma Noah entreated the Lord and said, O my Lord, let the man of God which Thou didst send come again and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born.

Notice first here, he believed the first message that he had got. Even though he hadn't been given it personally, it's a reported word from his wife. She met God.

And the Lord said to her, this is what's going to happen. She reports it to her husband. Noah believes it.

And what does he do? He says, Lord, teach us more. Teach us more. He believed implicitly.

What shall we do unto the child that shall be born? He believed it. Without question. He gets before God and prays, Lord, I believe your word, but I need more.

I need more teaching. I need more instruction. What are we going to do? How are we going to carry this through? Where's that spirit today in the Church of Christ? Let's take the liberty of a little imagination here.

Take your average Christian today and rewrite Judges 13 and 8 as you think they would have responded to that message. They wouldn't believe it for a start. They wouldn't have believed it.

And they wouldn't have prayed for more. I can guarantee you that. The average Christian today lives a life of unbelief.

Of prayerlessness. That's the average Christian. Oh, there are exceptions.

Bless God, hallelujah for the exceptions. But that's the average today. And we wonder why the Church of Jesus Christ is in the state it's in.

Lord, teach me more. See what it says in verse 8? Manoah entreated the Lord. That suggests to me much more than a 30-second little sound bite of prayer.

It suggests to me more than just a few phrases that have become meaningless. Worn out. They've been used so many times in hypocrisy.

He entreated the face of God. It's a beautiful term. It's crying for mercy.

It's prayer comes up as incense before God. It's a prayer that's received in a favorable way by the Lord. This is a prayer that's pleasing to God.

All of these ideas are here. Manoah entreated the face of God. My Lord, teach us more.

There was a readiness to worship. As the man of God comes again, as the Lord comes, and you'll see the development of the narrative here. I can't take the time to go through it in any great detail.

But Manoah prays initially in verse 8. He follows through in those words in verse 12 as there is this desire to learn from more. How shall we order the child? And how or what shall we do unto him? It wasn't a prayer that he prayed and went away and forgot. No, when the angel of the Lord was there, this is the word that's on Manoah's tongue.

Now, Lord, what do we do here? What do we do? Will You show us? Will You teach us? He didn't pop down to the local library and go to the self-help section on how to raise kids. He went to God and he said, Lord, that's a whole different subject, but isn't it interesting to follow that line of thought? It was a readiness to worship. Could we not speak here about a family altar? It's right here.

It's right here. They met the angel of God. Where did they meet Him? At the altar.

When they met Him, they offered a sacrifice. They knew what they were doing. That's the reason for the instruction here.

So while they were under some misapprehension about whether this was just a human prophet or not, the angel of the Lord said, you'd be sure to sacrifice to God. There's an act of worship here. A burnt offering.

A meat offering. I don't know if you've ever studied the Old Testament sacrifices. You should.

There's such a marvelous revelation of Christ. What does the burnt offering signify? The fact that Jesus Christ gave Himself entirely to be consumed as a sacrifice for our sins to make peace with God. The meat offering is a wonderful, typical representation of His work as the righteous one, providing righteousness for His people.

There's the basis of justification. There's the basis of approach to God. The sacrifice and the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

On that basis, Lord, will You teach us what to do with our children? They're both here. Father and mother. One helping the other to worship God aright.

Noah's not there initially. His wife runs to get him. Are you going to worship God? Worship God together? Here's a family altar.

The chief emphasis is here upon obeying God. This would have been an exciting time for these people. Naturally speaking, again, try to understand the natural thrill.

We're going to be parents. But obedience to God is paramount. You know how new parents, first-time parents, and I think we can multiply this any number of times given the fact that this is a couple that never expected to have a family.

First-time parents get so giddy and excited about these things. They lose touch with reality. Not with Noah and his wife.

We want to obey God. There is a meek and unquestioning submission to what God reveals what must be done. Take the time to read these verses.

Ponder what's said here. The angel of the Lord lays down the law to Manoah's wife. You don't eat this.

You don't do this. You don't do the other thing. He comes back.

He repeats it. She never questioned it. That's the way you want me to live, Lord? That's the way it's going to be.

Without question. You know, you talk to Christians today about biblical standards of living. But those are the things I enjoy.

Those are my very favorite things. You want me to give those things up? The spirit of arguing with God. I can't let go what God says I must let go.

Even in ordinary legitimate things. Here's a woman called upon to deny herself things that were not in themselves sinful. But she was called upon to deny herself these things for the spiritual advantage of her son and in line with the purpose of God for his life.

It was the mind of God that Samson be. And that's right. From the day of his birth to the day of his death, God told his mother, I am going to rigidly, strictly rule his life.

He's not going to eat certain things. He's not going to go certain places. He's going to be set apart as an oddity in Israel to the service of God.

Yes Lord. Parents who talk about their ambition for their children could learn a thing or two from the newest wife. What is your ambition? If I may just throw this out as a little thought in a sense.

What's your ambition for your children? This woman wanted nothing more than to see the purpose of God fulfilled in the life of her son because she had come to grasp this is God's way of raising deliverance in the nation and of throwing off the shackles of the Philistines. Here's where it begins. One old woman prepared to take God at His word.

One old man prepared to believe God. Worshipping God together saying whatever you say Lord, we're going to do it. Teach us more.

Order our lives. And at a time when they may have been justified for putting on their carpet slippers and putting up their feet at the fire, they're on their knees before God saying, Lord, show us what we need to do. Show us what we need to do.

In all honesty, let me ask you a question in closing. And I've gone over my time, I know. Let me ask you this question in all honesty.

Where are such homes to go? Where are they? Where are they? And we have the brass neck to ask God, to challenge God as if it were God's fault that the church is in the mess that it's in. Where? Where? Tell me where. Where is anything of this spirit today among us? But this is the home a deliverer came from.

Let me leave you with this challenge before God. Are we ready to say, make my home like that? You might say, well, I'm old. My family's gone.

I don't have children. Well, the Lord of Manoah is on His way. Many years their home.

And I don't believe this devotion they showed here was a new thing. I don't believe that at all for a moment. But if you want to see God move, when you pray for the grace to get on the ground that Manoah and His wife were on, seek God.

Step in and raise again a deliverer among us. Can we bow in prayer please? Our Father, we just ask for Thy blessing upon Thy Word. Acknowledge the weakness in which it has been spoken.

The hindrances, Lord, in the preacher's heart and life and tongue. The hindrances in our own minds and understanding to grasping what we need to grasp. But, O God, I pray for the spiritual wisdom today to realize that we need to get before God and in our homes to see God the Son step in.

Believe you'll do it, Lord. Oh, we believe you'll do it. Help us to take God at His Word and seek Thee and find Thee when we seek for Thee with all our heart.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

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