

June 23, 2013

Title: The Reason Samson Fell for a Philistine Woman

Main Text: Judges 13:24-14:2

Sermon by: Pastor Caleb

For your peace, I greet you with the words "May the peace of God be with you."
Today's message is from Judges Chapter 13, verse 24, to Chapter 14, verse 2.

[NKJV] Judges 13:

24 So the woman bore a son and called his name Samson; and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him.

25 And the Spirit of the LORD began to move upon him at Mahaneh Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

Continuing to Judges 14:

1 Now Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines.

2 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."

Today, I'll delve into the subject "The Reason Samson Fell for a Philistine Woman," serving as an appendix to the recent expository messages on the Book of Hebrews that I've shared.

In the previous session, I explained the background of how records about Sarah in Genesis and Moses' parents in Exodus came together in the New Testament book of Hebrews. I emphasized that the arrangement of God's book in this way was not the result of anyone else's actions but a direct command from the Lord. So, if one seeks to bring these scattered pairs back into place, it's something achievable only through the Holy Spirit of God, as evidenced in Isaiah 34:16.

Isaiah 34:16 states, "Search from the book of the LORD, and read: Not one of

these shall fail; Not one shall lack her mate. For My mouth has commanded it, and His Spirit has gathered them." This passage suggests that the Bible, the book of God, contains pairs that are scattered according to the direct command of God's mouth. Understanding the meaning of these pairs requires considering these pairs together. It's notable, however, that God intentionally scattered these pairs throughout the Bible.

Why did He do so? In Isaiah 6:10, it is stated that this was done to make the hearts of the people dull, their ears deaf, and their eyes blind, preventing them from understanding and receiving correction. Who are "these people?" They are the recipients of the "woes" mentioned in Isaiah 5. In verse 8, it records, "Woe to those who join house to house; they add field to field, till there is no place where they may dwell alone in the midst of the land!" In verse 12, it further states, "The harp and the strings, the tambourine and flute, and wine are in their feasts; but they do not regard the work of the LORD, nor consider the operation of His hands." So, these are individuals who focus solely on building their own houses and lands, living for their own pleasure in this world. Despite this, these people were unrepentant, and so Isaiah 5:18 states, "Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as if with a cart rope."

These kinds of people were the targets of the "woes" mentioned, individuals whom God wished would not understand His Word and receive correction. God intentionally scattered the pairs in the Scriptures to prevent people of this nature from realizing the meaning of His Word, from becoming heavenly people, and from knowing the secrets to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Indeed, God's effort to prevent people from fully understanding the secrets of His book goes beyond just scattering pairs. The 66 books of the Old and New Testaments are divided into chapters and verses, although the original manuscripts did not have these divisions. Some individuals added these divisions later to aid comprehension and convenience in reading. However, the problem arises when the division into chapters and verses, intended to facilitate understanding, sometimes leads to confusion and difficulty in grasping God's intended meaning. In some cases, the artificial division of chapters and verses can hinder one from having a clear understanding of God's message. This is

one of the reasons why understanding God's intentions directly from the Bible without the guidance of the Holy Spirit is challenging.

The difficulty I just mentioned is applicable even to the book of Hebrews that we are currently discussing. Hebrews 6:1 begins with the conjunctive adverb "Therefore." Look. "Therefore, leaving the elementary teaching about Christ..." The verse continues in this manner. The word "Therefore," in this sentence is a conjunctive adverb, as you are well aware. A conjunctive adverb used at the beginning of a statement cannot stand on its own. There must be content related to this conjunctive adverb, and one needs to consider the preceding content to understand its meaning correctly.

However, when people read according to the divided chapters, they may unintentionally think that when they reach Hebrews 6:1, a new section begins. Since it is the first verse in a new chapter, they perceive the content as a fresh start. Consequently, the role of the word "Therefore" is knowingly or unknowingly overlooked, and eventually, the content is misunderstood. Readers, when reading the phrase "leaving the elementary teachings about Christ," understand the word "leaving" to mean moving beyond the elementary teachings to intermediate or advanced levels that are not elementary.

However, the word "Therefore" in Hebrews 6:1 is an indispensable conjunctive adverb that cannot be ignored. It has a completely different meaning from conjunctions like "but" or conjunctive adverbs like "however." The choice of word used significantly alters the meaning of the sentence. So, to understand Hebrew 6:1, it is crucial to recognize the content that precedes this "Therefore." So when the verse is understood in connection to the preceding content and the phrase "not laying again the foundation" in Hebrews 6:2, it implies "not abandoning," rather than "abandoning" the elementary teachings related to topics such as repentance, baptism, resurrection, and eternal life. Instead, the emphasis is on progressing towards maturity based on these foundational teachings.

That is how the passage should be understood. However, due to the division into chapters and verses, there is a common tendency to inadvertently ignore

the "therefore" at the very beginning, reading the sentence to mean "abandon" instead of "do not abandon." This can lead to many misunderstandings. For example, Hebrews chapter 2 begins with "therefore," and the same goes for chapters 3 and 4. This division into chapters and verses poses a similar challenge like in chapter 6, making it easy to misinterpret the meaning of the sentences.

These kinds of divisions are not limited to the New Testament; they are prevalent in the Old Testament as well. However, due to time constraints, let me highlight just one example from the Old Testament to illustrate how the division can potentially lead to misunderstandings.

Let's consider the Book of Judges. We've read one of its passages as our main text today. Judges 14:1 states, "Now Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines." Verse 2 states, "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 Samson's parents strongly opposed this choice, saying "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?" Samson's parents had no choice but to act this way, and we can empathize with them. Why?

The cause of concern for Samson's parents becomes more evident when we examine the circumstances surrounding Samson's birth. Samson was born to Manoah's wife, who belonged to the tribe of Dan, one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Manoah's wife was originally a woman who could not conceive. However, Judges 13:3-5 states, "And the Angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, 'Indeed now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. . . And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb.'" Consequently, Samson was born as a Nazirite. Therefore, his parents had to dissuade him from marrying a foreign woman. We, too, share the sentiment of discouraging such marriages.

However, despite his parents' objections, in the latter part of Judges 14:3, Samson insists to his father, saying, "Get her for me, for she pleases me well."

Samson had already embarked on his role as a judge. Shortly after beginning his role as a judge, Samson was at the peak of his strength. When such a powerful man insisted to his parents in this manner, his father could no longer dissuade him.

However, upon closer examination, it becomes clear that both Samson's father's reluctance and our empathetic reluctance were due to a misunderstanding in the Bible. The content that should have been included in the same chapter is divided into different chapters, leading readers to misunderstand Samson's actions. The content from Judges 13:24-25 should have been connected to Judges 14:1, but strangely, it is divided into chapters 13 and 14. This division has led to the wrongful evaluation of Samson's involvement with a Philistine woman up to this point. Many still consider Samson's actions during that time shameful.

However, if we do not let ourselves be constrained by the division of chapters and verses and instead read the content by following the biblical context, it unfolds as follows. The latter part of Judges 13:24 states, "The child grew, and the Lord blessed him." And Judges 13:25 states, "And the Spirit of the LORD began to move upon him." Following this inspiration by the Spirit of the Lord, Samson embarked on his role as a judge. Since the Bible states, "And the Spirit of the Lord began to move upon him," Samson's subsequent actions should naturally be connected to that very inspiration. However, the division into chapters ends Chapter 13 with Samson being inspired by the Spirit, and the events resulting from this inspiration are recorded in the new chapter, Chapter 14. This has led to a misunderstanding of Samson's actions because, when reading Chapter 14, it seems like an unrelated new narrative is beginning.

In essence, when we read Judges 14:1, it is easy to perceive it as introducing new content unrelated to Chapter 13. Therefore, it is not easy to understand the actions recorded in Judges 14, carried out by Samson as a result of God's inspiration mentioned in Judges 13:25. However, the actions of Samson recorded

in Chapter 14, where he goes down to the Philistines, sees the woman, and acts upon it, should be understood as Samson's first undertaking as a judge, carried out under the influence of the Spirit of the Lord.

Indeed. Upon examining the details of Judges 14:5-20, it becomes apparent that Samson's involvement with this Philistine woman, his first love interest as a judge, led to many twists and turns. As Samson endeavors to take her as his wife, there are numerous conflicts and debates with the Philistines associated with her. Through arguments, debates, victories, and defeats, Samson eventually marries the Philistine woman. In the process, he legitimately, and legally, kills a significant number of Philistine people who were enemies of Israel. In doing so, Samson initially weakened the formidable Philistine adversaries.

Additionally, when we look at the content from Judges 16:1 to 16:31, we find that Samson once again falls in love, this time with Delilah, another Philistine woman. His involvement with Delilah leads to a significant event where Samson, still acting as a judge, gathers the Philistine leaders, including rulers, commanders, and warriors, in one place and defeats them all at once. By doing so, Samson further weakens the powerful Philistine forces and fulfills his role as a judge of Israel.

Throughout his 20 years as a judge, Samson's actions were deeply influenced by his relationships with these two Philistine women. It was through his entanglement with them that he was able to accomplish feats that would have been impossible otherwise. It's worth noting that Samson's achievements were not solely of his own accord; it was God who empowered Samson with His Spirit, enabling him to carry out the tasks set before him.

Yes, indeed. Judges 14:4 states, "...at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel." The Philistines had exerted their powerful influence, completely dominating and ruling over Israel. To elaborate, God orchestrated Samson's entanglement with Philistine women, creating conflicts and disputes that would provide an opportunity for Him to move against the formidable Philistine forces. It was through God's plan that Samson became involved with these Philistine women, ultimately establishing the conditions under which Samson could

confront and defeat the Philistines. Thus, God intended to use Samson as an instrument to overcome the Philistine oppression. Samson's entanglement with Philistine women served as a means to fulfill God's purpose in challenging and defeating the Philistines. That's right.

Samson's involvement with Philistine women was indeed part of God's plan. If Samson's parents had been aware of this divine strategy, they would not have opposed Samson's intention to marry a Philistine woman. Similarly, if we had properly understood God's intentions regarding Samson, we would not hesitate to acknowledge that Samson's entanglement with these Philistine women was part of God's plan. In other words, we would not have considered Samson's entanglement with these women shameful. Judges 14:4 says, "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." The passage shows the reason why Samson's parents opposed his love for Philistine women. The Bible explains that Samson's parents should not have dissuaded him from falling in love with them, as it was orchestrated by God.

Indeed, like Samson's father, we too have often misunderstood the Bible. Our misunderstanding arose due to the inexplicable and forced division of the Bible into chapters, all orchestrated by God's intention. Therefore, when we approach the Bible, present it as evidence, or listen to God's word preached, we are once again reminded of the crucial necessity of the Spirit's inspiration.

What does Nazirite, the consecrated one dedicated to God, actually mean? As a consecrated individual, was Samson required to marry within his own people and avoid cutting his hair? Did God make Samson a Nazirite to make him righteous for these reasons?

A true Nazirite, one dedicated to God, should be someone who, in some cases, sacrifices oneself for the benefit of God and His people rather than insisting on personal desires. Moreover, wouldn't a true Nazirite be someone who, even if rejected by God, accepts it without any complaints?

What we can understand from the Bible is that what mattered to God was not

whether a Nazirite cut or did not cut his hair. What mattered to God was that the Nazirite, regardless of personal circumstances, would deliver His people from the oppressive power that held them captive. To God, the paramount concern was the salvation of His people. Hallelujah!

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, today we have come to realize once again that the proper understanding and bringing together of Your Word, divided or scattered into chapters and verses, can only be accomplished through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We humbly acknowledge that without the assistance of the Holy Spirit, having a good intellect; reading many books; or listening extensively may not lead to a true comprehension of Your Word.

In Isaiah 6, the Bible reveals that You have intentionally presented Your Word in a way that those who continue to live in sin, expanding their possessions in this world and drawing others into their sinful ways, cannot comprehend the secret of the path to heaven. Oh Lord, help us to desire the kingdom of God more than the fleeting comforts and glory of this world. May our hearts remain as foreigners and strangers in this world, focusing on the eternal glory we will experience in Your kingdom.

Grant us the understanding of the mysteries of Your Word, which can only be discerned through the Holy Spirit. In the name of Jesus Christ, we fervently pray. Amen, amen.