

Judges 14: Don't Waste Your Calling

Temptation to use sermon for personal soapbox and temptation to hide from the main current of the text and wade in the river bank. This is a harsh text, so if the sermon feels harsh it's because Judges 14 is harsh, but take courage, I do want to leave you built up, spiritually fed, and full of hope because of the potential of your life based on God's calling.

Read Judges 14

I said I wanted to leave you with hope. How many of you have played the game Jenga? It is a hopeless game. You are basically trying not to be the loser and there is a guarantee that someone will lose. Jenga starts as a tower made up of small rectangular logs stacked by threes. The participants have to get a block out of the middle of the tower and place it on top. The rush is in the growing height of the tower, along with the loss of structural integrity, gravity inevitably wins, and the tower falls and makes a mess. Have you ever played a game of Jenga where gravity loses?

The challenge I want to submit to you today is don't waste your calling.

Don't waste your calling playing Jenga, don't take what God has called you to be and say I'm going to make provision for my flesh instead, because gravity always wins and there is a mess left over. God's laws, rules, order, plans and purposes will stand, they will not be thwarted, and in His mercy He has called you and I to be a part of His plan of spreading His glory by the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout this earth. Don't say, well I'll spend my days making provision for my flesh instead, don't do it, don't waste your calling don't play that game because gravity always wins and there is a mess left over.

1. I waste my calling when the rules don't apply to me.

In our case study of Samson what rules applied to him? In a broad sense, he was an Israelite. So the civil laws, the ceremonial laws, the moral laws, that Moses brought from God which we often encapsulate to the ten commandments are rules that Samson and his parents were to keep. More specifically we have already seen in chapter 13 that Samson was to be a Nazirite to God from the womb.

Now, what would that have implied to Samson's mother, father, or other Israelites of that day? The Nazirite vow was for those who set aside a time in their life specifically devoted to serving the Lord. The word Nazirite in the Hebrew is the idea of consecrating or separating.

The Nazirite vow as detailed in Numbers 6 requires the individual to

- 1. abstain from all things grape related (wine, grape seeds, raisins etc.)**
- 2. Not cut hair on their head during the time of the vow**
- 3. Stay away from anything dead.**

The first one keeps them free from the possible vice of alcohol, but I think more importantly it keeps them free from the distractions that social functions bring. Most of these would have included wine in that day since they did not have Dasani or Aquafina, and the individual taking

the Nazirite vow did not need to know the latest celebrity gossip, sports stats, or Marvel Cinematic Universe developments. They were to be consecrated to serving the Lord for that time. In Samson's case, this time was for his whole life. The second one is an outward visible sign of the vow the individual is taking and a sign of restraint and commitment to the Lord during this time. The third has to do with separation with anything unclean, the individual is called to a careful devotion to holiness. There are even details in Numbers 6 if your buddy is standing next to you and dies, you basically have to start your vow over.

So growing up, Samson would have been that weird kid and he knew it. His hair would have been ridiculously longer than the other boys, he would never have been to a funeral, and when the other boys asked Samson about the cute girls they saw at the town's most recent wedding Samson would always have to reply I was not there, I'm not allowed to go. And if all Samson gets are the rules without the why, then he will grow to hate the rules and greatly anticipate being able to break that which he hates.

Samson sees his calling from God as getting in the way of his desires. He chose his desires over the calling God placed on him (to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines) and wastes his calling, wastes what could have been with his life.

[put up map of Judges 14]

The first action that we see Samson taking in Scripture is going to Timnah. Now Timnah is a Philistine city, these are the pagans who in power over God's people at this point. Samson, you are called to save God's people from the Philistines, so are you going there to clean house or are you going to make provision for your own flesh? Who cares if the hook catches me, reels me in and cooks me, I get the bait. Samson went where he should not have gone and he saw, he was looking for the pleasure that this world provides at the expense of what God had called him to. Now look at verse 2 (read) Deuteronomy 7:3 says, "you shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them. You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters for your sons, for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods." Moses wrote this, so Samson's parents would have known this Scripture. Yet Samson confidently proclaims what he has done, and due to the whole arranged marriage thing, needs his parents to go arrange the marriage. He knew his parents were pushovers he knew he was a special child and he was convinced that the rules did not apply to him. No kudos to his parents for at least suggesting some wisdom to Samson, you could have gone north, or south or east, but the west where the philistines are? The West wing is forbidden, why would you go there to find a wife? And Samson responds by commanding his father, "Get her for me for she is right in my eyes."

Kids, teenagers, how many of you wish you could control your parents and tell them what to do? Like, when you want something, if your parents would just listen to you and get it for you, how much easier would life be? Samson had that, he had parents that he could control? How cool is that? You know how that worked out for Samson? He had his eyes gouged out and had to kill himself with the roof of a house for some sense of redemption. That's what happens when the rules don't apply to you. So kids, teenagers, if your parents won't buy you a

smartphone because of what they are trying to protect you from, you praise the Lord, if you do have a phone and your parents know everything that is said in your text messages, every picture that is sent over snap chat and every website you visit, then you praise the Lord for that protection and for not being treated like the rules don't apply to you. If your parents are Christians and they won't let you date an unbeliever, then you praise the Lord that you have parents that love you enough to fight for your heart. Look, before I started the pastoral internship I spent 4 years working in one youth group in college, a year here doing the youth internship, then 5 years as youth pastor, and now 2 and a half years with college students, and before all that I spent 6 years in a youth group. Here is the pattern that is made up of individuals, access to the internet often times means addiction to or struggle with pornography. At some point by God's grace the student that values God's calling on their life wants victory and internet access is either cut off or something like Accountable2U is installed on every device they have access to the internet with so their history is monitored. Parents, that is first and foremost your job. The students who date people that are not Christians either break up real fast and decide never to do that again, or there is this inevitable fade effect that relationship gets priority and God gets the left overs, and eventually there is nothing left over for God, like Deuteronomy says, for they would turn away your daughters and your sons from following me. Parents, don't enable your children to go down a path similar to Samson's. Because when you live like the rules don't apply to you, you waste your calling.

Look at verse 4, how was this from the Lord if it is so clearly wrong? God in His mercy has a calling for your life, but God's plan is not dependent on your stewardship of the calling. Your mistakes are not bigger than God. You might be thinking, there's no point, do you know what I've done? I've already blown it, and I can't find the reset button, ok first off don't be so arrogant to think that God cannot use you. You cannot bind God, you cannot tell Him what He can and cannot do, but secondly and more importantly why are you here? Why are you alive? Your existence is not irrelevant to God's plan, you exist to be a part of His plan, so turn to Him and plead for wisdom and clarity and one way or another God will make it clear as to why He still has you alive here on this earth.

Ester saving Jews, God is going to do it either way, Ester are you going to step up and be a part of this or waste your calling?

Samson continues to waste his calling by living like the rules don't apply to him, where does he go in verse 5? He goes to a vineyard! Remember the first thing in the Nazirite vow? Abstain from all things grape related. The whole family is rebelling against God supporting this awful marriage in the first place, but it was clearly a sin for Samson to go here. Likely his parents were not familiar with the territory, Samson knew what he was doing. And in the midst of sin, verse 5, "And Behold" Surprise! Bam! Woah! A lion, ahh! Did not see that coming! Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. When you are in the midst of sin, you are not on guard, but that does not mean Satan is not looking out to cease you.

God in his mercy floods Samson with strength. The Spirit of the Lord rushed upon him, and Samson through the strength of the Spirit was rescued and easily killed this lion.

2 things I want you to see here. **The vineyard = sin, the lion = warning and the Spirit of the Lord = mercy.** Do not take God rescuing you from the consequences of sin as validation to continue in that sin. I know we crossed some lines, but we did not have sex, so we can go that far again, no biggie, no one found out how I cheated last time so it's all good if I go for it again. I went an entire week without taking in God's word and nothing really bad happened, let's see if I can go 2 weeks next time! If you take God rescuing you from the consequences of sin as validation to continue, then you will waste your calling by thinking the rules don't apply to you.

Second thing I want you to see that this was miraculous, some of this is based on my speculation, I'll give you that, but hear out this thought. If the Hulk takes on a young lion, you're like, let me sit back and watch the show, very little risk to the Hulk, a lot of reward for the audience. If the strongest looking guy performs the greatest physical feats, it's not that amazing. But when the lion jumps out at scrawny little science nerd Bruce Banner and he can't turn into the Hulk, you think he is going to die. Now Samson's name means little sun. Sun points to God's glory, and if Samson is a behemoth, well he is not very little and God gets less glory for the physical feats. In Judges 15 one man stops Samson from getting his wife, now you would think that a physical tank of a man who just took on 30 guys by himself could handle one guy that stood between him and his wife, but this man stops Samson, which makes sense if he is a little guy. I think Samson contrary to popular illustrations was a scrawny little manipulative smart jerk who was clearly blessed by God with ability to be so much more based on his calling.

On the way to Timnah, (verse 5) Samson stops in vineyard, rules don't apply to me because I am a unique individual, those requirements are good for other people, but not for me.

Verse 7 – the rules of talking with the opposite sex do not apply to me.

Verse 8 – That thing almost killed you, God in His mercy rescued you, but how sweet, how pleasing to the eyes, let's make some more provision for the flesh, the rules don't apply to me, I'm an exception, and now Samson gives some honey to his parents, he is deceiving those closest to him and dragging them down into his own sin, but its ok, because it feels good, my flesh is being satisfied, it's not that big of a deal. If we say we have not sinned, we make God a liar and His word is not in us.

That does not have to be your end, but gravity always wins, and some of you need to quit playing games.

2. I waste my gifts when they hurt the Giver

Have you ever given your kid a toy lightsaber only to watch them wack their younger siblings with it? Ever got your kids video games and they don't have time for you anymore? Ever bought a friend a special gift and they just throw it away? Get your kids a car and they start driving places they should not be?

Why did God gift Samson with access to superhero level strength? To deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines, and because Samson is wasting his calling by making provision for himself, he has to use this strength to deliver himself first from a lion, from his own sin. When the lifeguard is drowning by themselves, something is not right.

Outside of his physical strength which is Samson's most notable characteristic, I think he was really a smart guy. The riddle, the manipulation, the deal with the fox tails, but here in chapter 14 Samson used his intellectual ability to please himself. First off he uses practical not-so-special abilities to make a feast in the context of a pagan wedding, which would have been a religious ceremony. Everyone loves a good cook right? This word feast in Hebrew carries with it a clear connotation of a drinking party. This is not thanksgiving at Grandmas, this is let's make sure to have some peanuts so we are at least thirsty enough to drink more. Samson, don't you know you're a Nazirite? Abstain from all things grape, and here you are being a brewer. Samson and his parents are likely the only Jews at this wedding. This would have been a Philistine dominated wedding with 30 guests being from those who rule over the Jews. Samson as the groom can command their attention and wants to stick it to them, and gives them a riddle that points back to his own strength.

30 guys, likely a couple smart people, Samson is smart enough to come up with a riddle that stumps them for 7 seven days, what would have happened if he would have been a witness for the Lord for those 7 days with that intellect? (yes he was supposed to wipe them out, not marry them)

You can just imagine for seven days Samson arrogantly holding this over their heads, asking them about what color outfits he is going to get and so forth, real winner right ladies? It gets better, these guys threaten harm to the wife and her family (based on chapter 15 we know these are not idle threats) she freaks out and for days is crying, which a crying woman is very effective, but as a pattern its usually a short term gain and long term loss, but the gift of a wife that Samson was given is now being used to hurt him, so he gets a taste of his own medicine, loses the bet, and goes over to Ashkelon to get 30 garments to pay up. The Spirit of the lord gives him strength because he was to execute judgment on the Philistines, but look at how chapter 14 ends, his wife was given to his best man. It starts with him using the gift of his life to live as if the rules did not apply to him this would grieve God, and what Samson wanted outside of God's plan ended up causing tremendous pain. You can play Jenga, but gravity always wins.

Think for a moment about the gifts that God has given you. Even as an unbeliever you like Samson have some level of intellect. You can see there is an order and a design to reality. Don't waste your intellect suppressing the obvious Designer. As a believer, a Christ follower, what passions has God given you? Those were given to you to be used for God's glory. Don't waste your calling, don't waste your gifts. I don't care what job skill spiritual gift you have, it has been given to you to build up the body of Christ here on earth to the end that all the nations have access to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Your schooling is not just about your job, your job is not just about your retirement, your retirement is not just about your comfort. A pattern that reflects

continued provision for one's flesh is a wasted life a wasted calling. Jesus calls us to sacrifice for the salvation of others just like He did for your salvation, so what can you sacrifice for the salvation of others? Answer this question, what can you sacrifice so that others can have access to Jesus Christ? Why haven't you done that?

3. What could happen through my calling?

Instead of laying down his calling for his flesh, what if Samson would have crucified his flesh for God's calling on his life? I am crucified with Christ therefore I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. Think of the potential Samson had. I believe based on Samson's context and ability that he could have been a close second to Moses as far as Jews that made an impact on history. The Philistines were the strongest enemy at this point and all they had were a handful of city states along the coast. You wipe them out, you can easily eat up the map around Israel one little chunk at a time. Who would not go to war for God's people with a guy like Samson leading the charge? Think of how far he could have extended Israel's borders had he led an army and how many years Israel's enemies would be dealing with the impact of Samson had he not wasted his calling. The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

You ran out of drinks for the guests at the wedding? Stay up all night with Nicodemus Jairus's daughter, woman touching cloak, feeding the 5,000 then dealing with a storm and scared disciples, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, stopping Peter from decapitating a man, Jesus could have used his gifts to wow the world at their own game better than anyone else in history, but instead even in his life he was laying it down to serve others and what was the result of Jesus fulfilling his calling? You and I can have forgiveness of our sins and have a place at the table with God. So how are you stewarding your gifts? How are you stewarding your calling? Don't waste your calling, don't get to the end of your days and groan, when your flesh and body are consumed, and you say, "How I hated discipline, and my heart despised reproof! I did not listen to what God's calling was, what His way was, I am at the brink of utter ruin. That will be your end if you like Samson continue to make provision for your flesh.

If you are familiar with the liturgical calendar, you will know that today is Pentecost Sunday celebrating when the Holy Spirit came on the apostles in Acts. While Samson was the strongest guy in the Bible who had some of the greatest potential, we as the body of Christ today have more potential to make an impact for God's kingdom than Samson in his day ever had. Acts 1:8 says, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth." What potential do we have based on God's calling and the indwelling Holy Spirit?

This is not just about redeeming one country, but about taking the gospel to the ends of the earth. As a believer in the 21st century you are called to be a part of that end of the earth thing. Don't waste your calling playing Jenga, gravity always wins.