

The Life of Samson #1

2001 Family Conference

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Please turn with me to the book of Judges 13. There are four chapters in the book of Judges that deal with the life of Samson and it is my plan to read one of those chapters in each of these meetings to help us to get all of the verses in on the life of Samson because I will not be exhaustive in what I say about Samson. As you're finding your place there, let me also express my thankfulness to the church in Mebane and to the elders there and to the deacons and to those who put on this conference for the benefit of God's people. It's a privilege to be able to be here and it's a joy for me to be able to hear the ministry of the word of God from Pastor Donnelly and from Pastor Hartland and being the third speaker, in one way, it really takes a lot of pressure off because I know that no matter what else happens, you all have been well fed and you will be well fed and I trust God will do that yet again today.

Judges 13, beginning in verse 1. We read,

“1 Again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord delivered them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.

“2 Now there was a certain man from Zorah, of the family 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, 'Indeed now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. 4 Now therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or similar drink, and not to eat anything unclean. 5 For behold, 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; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.' 6 So the woman came and told her husband, saying, 'A Man of God came to me, and His countenance was like the countenance of the Angel of God, very awesome; but I did not ask Him where He was from, and He did not tell me His name. 7 And He said to me, “Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. Now drink no wine or similar drink, nor eat anything 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 my Lord, please let the Man of God whom You sent come to us again and teach us what we shall do for the child who will be born.' 9 And God listened to the voice of Manoah, and the Angel of God came to the woman again as she was sitting in the field; but Manoah her husband was not with her. 10 Then the woman ran in haste and told her husband, and said to him, 'Look, the Man who came to me the other day has just now appeared to me!' 11 So Manoah arose and followed his wife. When he came to the Man, he said to Him, 'Are You the Man who spoke to this woman?' And He said, 'I am.' 12 Manoah said, 'Now let Your words come to pass! What will be the boy's rule of life, and his work?' 13 So 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 anything that comes from the vine, nor may she drink wine or similar drink, nor eat anything unclean. All that I commanded her let her observe.'

“15 Then Manoah said to the Angel of the Lord, 'Please let us detain You, and we will prepare a young goat for You.' 16 And the Angel of the Lord said to Manoah, 'Though you detain Me, I will not eat your food. But if you offer a burnt offering, you must offer it to the Lord.' (For Manoah did not know He was the Angel of the Lord.) 17 Then Manoah said to the Angel of the Lord, 'What is Your name, that when Your words come to pass 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 upon the rock to the Lord. And He did a wondrous thing while Manoah and his wife looked on - 20 it happened as the flame went up toward heaven from the altar it happened that the Angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar! When Manoah and his wife saw this, they fell on their faces to the ground.

“21 When the Angel of the Lord appeared no more to Manoah and his wife, then Manoah knew that He was the Angel of the Lord. 22 And Manoah said to his wife, 'We shall surely die, because we have seen God!' 23 But his wife said to him, 'If the Lord had desired to kill us, He would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering from our hands, nor would He have shown us all these things, nor would He have told us such things as these at this time.'

“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.”

Let's pray and ask God's help as we seek to understand his word this morning.

Our Father, we do pray that you would take the life of Samson and make it for us a means of liberation, a means, living God, by which we might serve you more excellently

and more passionately in this present world. And, Father, we would pray during these times especially for the young people, for the teenagers and the young adults who are here, that they especially would take heed from the life of Samson, that they would listen well, that they would heed the example of Samson and that they would be determined that they would live in your power and might as a distinct people in this world. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

In 1 John 2 we read these well-known words beginning at verse 15, the apostle says,

“15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”

It is a sad indictment of the state of the human heart this side of glory that such words need to be written. It is a sad commentary on the state of the people of God not yet perfectly redeemed that the apostle by the Spirit, needs to command us to stop loving the world. The world which is at enmity with God, the world which hates us, we have to be told: stop having affection for it. There is, we are reminded in this passage as well as many other places in the word of God, an ongoing necessity for us to be on the alert, for us as the people of God to be sensitive and for us to see things as they really are. As our Brother reminded us in the previous hour, the world is all around us and the reality is that that world can and that that world at times does seduce us. And the longer we live in the world, the more we can get acclimated to the world and the more subtly we can be conformed to the image of the world. I think there are some of us here that can testify that when we were first converted and we were zealous to live fully for the glory of God, that there were things that we put off, things that we might have said, “I’ll never do that again. I’ll never watch that again. I’ll never listen to that kind of music again. I’m going to put that away from me,” and yet as months and years go by, as our resolves, at times weaken, that we find those things have crept back into our lives. There may have been things that when we were first converted, that shocked us and we said, “Well, I can have no part of that,” but as it is around us more and more and more, it no longer bothers us and no longer shocks us. Things that used to be kept at an arm’s distance can now, perhaps, be played with and there is barely a whisper in our conscience.

It is, again, for such reasons that we need to be called as the people of God to be watchful, to take heed to ourselves lest we fall back into the world and bring shame and reproach to the Lord Jesus. As we begin this morning, a brief study of the life of Samson, it is predominantly from this vantage point that I want us to study his life: I want us to see in Samson a man who allowed himself to be seduced by his culture. He was a man who came to love the world and the things of the world. A man who became ensnared by the lust of the flesh, by the lust of the eyes and by the boastful pride of life. He was a man that got sucked into his society contrary to God’s high calling.

This morning, I want us to begin this series with a bit of background and what I want us to do is to look at two things: I want us to consider Samson's culture and then, secondly, Samson's place in that culture. So, let's consider first of all this morning, Samson's culture. Now, we know broadly speaking from our reading this morning that Samson was born during the time of the Judges. It was in those years following the settlement of the covenant people into the Promised Land and we read a summary of the book of Judges early on in Judges in Judges 2:10 and these words really conform a synopsis of all that we read. Verse 10 of Judges 2 we read,

“10 When all that generation,” that is, the generation of Joshua, “When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel. 11 Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served the Baals; 12 and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the Lord to anger. 13 They forsook the Lord and served Baal and the Ashtoreths. 14 And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel. So He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. 15 Wherever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for calamity, as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn to them. And they were greatly distressed. 16 Nevertheless, the Lord raised up judges who delivered them out of the hand of those who plundered them. 17 Yet they would not listen to their judges, but they played the harlot with other gods, and bowed down to them. They turned quickly from the way in which their fathers walked, in obeying the commandments of the Lord; they did not do so. 18 And when the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed them and harassed them. 19 And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them. They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way.”

As most here are well aware, I'm sure many of you could stand up and you could give that outline of the book of Judges that there is sin and rebellion against God, chastizement by God and that a crying out to God for mercy followed by the sending of a deliverer and once deliverance comes and people get used to being delivered again and they are at peace and then they go back to their old paths. Time and time again we read that this is what happened in those days as we hear that there was no king in the land and every man did what was right in his own eyes. And it is for this cause that the book of Judges is one of the darkest and most depressing sections to be found anywhere in God's word. I find that when I have been reading through the book of Judges in my Bible reading, that I

want to get through Judges as quickly as possible. It is distressing. It is depressing. It is filled with the most gross and vivid portraits of depravity at its most aggravated. And if you want to learn how far and how deep a people can sink when they turn their back upon the living God, you can do no better than to read the book of Judges. Sadly today, what we read in the book of Judges can be read almost daily in our newspapers across the land.

Now, at the time when Samson is born, we read here in Judges 13 that there is an invading people that has dominion over Israel and that people are the Philistines and they are over them now, we read, for a period of 40 years. Now, the last time that Philistia had been used as a source of judgment was back in Judges 10 and at that time we read that they were under the thumb of the Philistines for a period of 18 years. During that time, Judges 10 tells us that the Philistines harassed and oppressed the nation. The words there could mean that they were grinding the nation of Israel into powder. They were crushing them and grinding them and in that crushing and grinding, the people of God were crying out. What God, I believe, was doing at this time was taking the people of God who had become so enamored with the world and the Lord was rubbing their noses in it, "Do you want the Philistines? Do you want what they have? You want their gods? You want their culture? Okay, here are their gods. Here is their culture." And he rubs their noses in it for 18 years until they could bear it no more and they asked God to have mercy upon them.

At that time, God was reluctant, as it is portrayed in Judges 10, to deliver them. The people say, "We have sinned against you because we have both forsaken our God and served the Baals," and God says, "I'm sick of delivering you. If you want to be delivered, why don't you cry out to your gods? Why don't you ask Baal to help you? Why don't you ask Ashteroth to help you and see if they come to your aid? You've been in bed with them. You seem to love them. You're committing adultery with them. Why don't you let them comfort you?" But the people here have enough sense to know that they cannot lean upon those broken reeds and so they put away their gods and they continue to cry out as the text puts it "until God could bare the sight of their misery no longer." And then God raises up this man, Jephthah, to deliver the people.

But now, more years have gone by and another generation has come and the zeal of that repentance has faded away. The people had put away their gods, they had wanted, they said "nothing more to do with Philistia," but now the years have gone by, the old awakening is now a distant memory and the thought of how badly they were treated and how gross it was to live under the dominion of Philistia, has now gone away. Now their gods again begin to look pretty good and I think the idea is, you know, the Philistines are a very advanced race: they had the best weapons, they had the best chariots, they were on at that time what would be regarded as the cutting edge of technology and there was much about them that began to look attractive. As a result of this, they once again come under Philistia dominance and they are there now, we read, for a period not of 18 years but of 40 years so that by the time Samson is born, for 40 years, for an entire generation, God's covenant people have lived under the dominion of another nation.

Now, what is very interesting and it's really here, we get this from silence rather than what is explicitly said, but there is something that is glaringly absent from Judges 13 for

in the past, when we read of a nation that had overtaken Israel, after a period of time, we read of the people groaning, we read of the people complaining, we read of the people longing for deliverance but there is no such words in Judges 13. After 40 years of being under the dominion of this nation, the people of God are not crying out for God to deliver them. After 40 years, life as a Philistine colony has become the status quo. It is just the way things are. Their ways, their ideas, their language, their gods. It is all a part and parcel of daily living and I believe, as we are going to see here, that it can be demonstrated that the thought of the people of Israel at this time is, "You know, things really aren't all that bad. Things are really pretty good and the Philistines aren't really as bad as our forefathers made them out to be." Or maybe the thought is that, "The Philistines aren't as bad as they used to be. You know, they used to be hard, they used to be cruel, but now they seem pretty nice. I like them. I like their culture. I like their ideas. A lot of them are our friends."

As one commentator puts it: the people of Israel had settled down into a peaceful coexistence with the Philistines. The days of warfare and conflict are essentially over and there is not in the thought in the minds of God's people, that those people over there are our enemies. There is not in the thinking of the average Israelite the thought that these people hate God, they hate all that God's word stands for, they are a people with their own gods, they have their own morality which is shaped and molded not by revelation but out of the stuff of their own depraved hearts. Nobody seems to be thinking, "I am being dangerously acclimated to the world." Nobody is saying, "These people that I live among are a danger to my soul and, therefore, I better stay as far away from them as possible or else." Or saying, "I had better pray to God to deliver me." There is no thought, "You know, these people have taken my eyes off of God and they make me live for this present evil age. They have led me through the process of months and years of having dominion over me to water down my conviction so that now the breaking of God's law seems to be a trite and a little thing to me. In fact, a lot of those things that I used to call sin or that the Bible calls sin, you know what? They're actually kind of amusing and there's a lot of fun to be had in the breaking of this commandment or that commandment. Our people used to live so strictly that now the Philistines have invited us to live it up, to enjoy and not have our conscience burdened with all of these things. Our people used to burn with a zeal for the glory of God. We used to have a passion that the nations of the world would know our God and that through us, they would be drawn to him rather than us going out as evangelists and making the world conform to the revelation of God. We who have the law of God, have become happy to be like they are. I no longer have the strict standards of right and wrong. I'm okay with that."

Again, that's the mindset. Does it sound familiar? Have you ever known such thoughts to go on in your own mind? To know on the one hand that we live in a world that the Bible tells us hates God and the Bible tells us that the world hates us? We know that the people of this world are at enmity with God. They are not subject to the law of God. They hate God's law. They hate God's way. They hate God's holiness. You know that that is the case. You know that there is a war going on for your mind. You know that they would seek to cause you to turn from the way of truth. That they would seek to cause you either through constant pummeling and belittling, to deny your principles or else to seduce you

through carnal reasoning and emotional manipulation to think that the word of God and living God's way is really a bit extreme and that trying to be precise and holy in your life ought not to be done in the current generation, sin is not really so sinful as it appears to be. Have you ever had thoughts like that going on in your mind? To begin to think: you know, I know the Bible says that this guy hates God but once you get to know him, he's really very decent and she's really very nice. In fact, they are sweeter and more helpful than a lot of my so-called Christian friends. That athlete whose poster adorns my wall may have multiple sex partners, he may be proud and boastful but he really is funny and he really is charming. That actor or actress may be a homosexual or passionately pro-abortion but, you know, that really is their own business because, boy, when they get up there and start cracking the jokes, it really loosens me up.

We can walk through the checkout line and there is stuff there that would have caused a past generation of sensitive Christians to run from the store or to blush or to weep but it barely elicits a yawn from us. I mean, it's got to be really bad now to get our attention. Now we're finding that in many so-called Christian circles, that there is not even an attempt to fight the world any longer. In fact, we're told that we need to learn from the world. We must incorporate the world's ideas into the church so that we can be relevant and hip and in-touch and, in fact, they tell us that if you really want to win the nations, you've got to become as much like the nations as possible. We need to show them that we're really not all that different from you.

Now brethren, I'm not saying here this morning that every single thing in this world is openly and overtly and sinfully in the fullest sense, opposed to God. I'm not saying that it is God's will for us to enter convents or to extend family conference for years on end. I am not saying that no believer interested in holiness and with a zeal for the glory of God can have no interest in anything going on around them. I'm not saying that there is always something sinful in an interest, perhaps, in sports or in some politics or some relaxing form of entertainment. I'm not calling here for a complete withdrawal but I am saying this, I'm saying it to myself and I'm saying it to you: it is so easy to subtly be seduced, to be made numb, to slowly be put to sleep. Brethren, I ask you: when was the last time in your own heart as you live and have sensed in a world under Philistine oppression, when was the last time you cried out for a deliverer? When was the last time you sensed a real burden of distress? When you looked around and you realized our young girls are dressing like the world? Our young people are listening to the music of the world. The young people from our churches go and watch all the same movies and they watch all the same television programs of the world. We find that we desire to have the world admire us. We want the world to love us and to be impressed with us. Young people, I find, hate the thought of standing out of, again, not being hip, not being cutting edge. The thought that, "Well, Dad, I've got to wear this thing or else people are going to think I'm a nerd or I'm a loser."

One of the things that I've witnessed even in our own circles is that there is this tremendous fear of having the slightest indulgence and so-called Christian liberty taken away from us. I have in the past spoken at a number of young people's meetings and as I interact with young people, one of the things I've heard over and over again is this

thought of whether it's expressed as blatantly or not, how far can we go? Rather than determining how safe we must be. You see, again, we want to sometimes assure our young people, "You know, you can be a Christian and love Jesus and still have the world's approval. Don't worry." We think that that's what's keeping our kids from Jesus is that they're afraid the world is going to reject them and so we want to try to soothe them. "Oh, no, no, no, you can still be hip and cool and groovy. Don't worry about that." No, friends, young people, you've come to Christ and the world will hate you because it hates Jesus and Jesus says, "If it hates me, it will hate you." John 15:19, "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."

Moms and Dads, we need to be faithful to our children to tell them that there is a cost in following Jesus Christ. And don't try to tell them otherwise by thinking – maybe the idea is, "Well, let's get them into the kingdom first. Let's get them saved first and we'll tell them about the cost later." We need to fight against the spirit of the age in religious circles which is the spirit of costless Christianity, that I'll follow Jesus as long as it doesn't cost me anything. I will be obedient to Christ as long as it doesn't cost me my promotion; as long as I don't lose my friends; as long as I don't lose my status. You know, the idea Jesus may have laid down his life for me but don't ask me to give up any of my comfort or reputation for him. We must learn afresh the meaning of Romans 12 which Paul says, "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God which is your reasonable service and do not," or it could be translated, "and stop being conformed to this world." Stop it. Stop as one translator says, allowing the world to squeeze you into its mold.

Brethren, we need to know something about the uncompromising stand that the Apostle Paul who said in Galatians 1:10, "For do I now persuade men or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still please men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ." The two are incompatible. We need to have it said of us what Paul assumes to be true of everyone who professes faith in Christ. He says in Ephesians 2:2, speaking of the world in which we were brought out of, he says, "you once walked according to the pattern of this world," i.e. you no longer do. And we must embrace the sobering words of James in James 4, speaking to the church. He's not talking here to a people that are in some kind of watered down, seeker-sensitive church. He's talking here to an apostolic church. James 4:4, he says, "Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

Do you believe that? That if I have in my heart a desire to fit in, blend in, make the world love me and to become like them: dress like them, think like them, be entertained like them. I am setting it up in my mind whether I articulate it or not, "God, I want to be your enemy so that I can be their friend." Again, brethren, I say, where are the calls for deliverance? When was the last time that as you walked through this world, as you were at a mall or perhaps at a checkout counter or perhaps you tried to find something on tv if you have a tv, you try to find something there or the thought came, "Maybe there is a movie out there somewhere we could see." And you flip through the paper and you think

to yourself, “Lord, I don't belong here. I feel like an alien. I feel so strange and so weird here.” Have you ever been in a foreign country? I know Rebecca's here. Imagine when she first went – every sign is in Chinese and everybody is speaking Chinese and it's a constant reminder, you don't belong here. You try to talk to somebody and you find you cannot converse on any kind of deep level. You can't figure out a lot of the things that are going on. Why? Because we don't belong.

Brethren, when was the last time that you had a longing for the homeland? A sense, “I'm just passing through.” One of the men from my church told me last night that he didn't sleep well. He said, “I don't sleep well in strange places.” And have that sense, “This is a strange place. It's not my home.” But I think, brethren, there are many of us and I confess this is true of myself many times, we get quite comfy here. The Philistines are all around us. All of our lives, that's been the case and there are few that are crying out, “O God, deliver us!”

That brings us very closely associated to this this morning with God's purpose for Samson. What was Samson's place in his culture? It was into such a world and at such a time and by means of supernatural generation that a child of promise was born who would begin to deliver the people of God. He was going to be giving them a deliverance that they were not asking for. Even though, again, the covenant people of God were not asking for it and were not longing for it or if they were, it had gotten to be at such a low ebb, God was going to give it to them anyway. Into this world, God raised up a Nazirite. Now, you can read about Nazirites in Numbers 6. I will read more of this later on, I just want to allude to it now. In Number 6, there is the law of the Nazirite and a Nazirite vow was normally something that was taken only for a short period of time in which someone would give themselves intensely over into the service of God. A Nazirite was set forth primarily by three things: first of all, there was the avoidance of wine or strong drink or anything associated with the fruit of the vine. They weren't to eat raisins or grapes; they weren't to have anything to do with the vine. Secondly, they were to show their separation unto God by not cutting any of the hair upon their head: they were not to shave their faces, they were not to trim their hair. Then, finally, they were to avoid contact with the dead. And then once that vow was over, the hair would be cut and the hair was offered up with a burnt offering before the Lord.

Generally, these vows would last from 30-100 days but occasionally we read in the word of God about someone who would bear the marks of consecration all their lives and these people were to live so that anyone who saw them who had any knowledge of the Bible at all would be able to say, particularly by their hair, “Ah, there goes a Nazirite. There is someone who has consecrated their life to the service of God.” Simply to look upon that man was to remember that there was a God who speaks and a God who calls people to serve him. The outward look of a man like Samson would serve as a visible reminder that really not just that man but really all of the people of God were meant to be distinct and separate in all of their manner of life. I believe that a Nazirite's look was meant to remind all of the people of God that we are to be separate and distinct people upon the earth, that we are not to be like everyone else. Now, I'm not saying that we all need to grow out our hair like that and all of us have beards like that but I am saying that such a person in their

extremity, reminds us of what we are all to be. We're not like the people of the world and in seeing a Samson, people would say, "You know, he is very different from the Philistines." We are different and a distinct people. Unlike those people, we have been redeemed by God. Unlike those people over there, we have a God who speaks to us. We have a God who has revealed his will. And a man like this living in their midst, again, would be a reminder of passages like these: Exodus 19:5, "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." Very closely related to this, the words of Deuteronomy 7:6, "For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. What was true under the old covenant is true in the new covenant as well. Titus 2:11 tells us, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works."

God comes to a people who have been supernaturally born like Samson was and God puts his hand upon us and he says, "You shall be mine." And as Peter reminds us, "Like the holy one who calls us is holy, so we are to be holy in all of our conduct for it is written, You shall be holy for I am holy." The Apostle Paul in Ephesians 5 can speak to believers who are living in such a sexually immoral, what one called a sex-saturated society, and he says in the midst of that, You are to be so pure and distinct. There are things that are not even to be named among you," he says, "as is fitting or is proper for saints." Why don't you live like they do? Because you're different. You are a saint. You're not like them and so what they indulge in is not even to be named among you. The Apostle Paul can say in 2 Corinthians 6, he can quote those words, "In light of the promises of God," he says, "come out from among them and be a separate people." 1 Peter 2:9, we read there, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles." You are a people that claim to have obtained mercy. You're a people that say, "God has bought me. Jesus Christ has died for me." You're not to live like everyone else.

Peter goes on to speak of the cost. Young people, again, I want to bring this out. It speaks of the cost as associated with such a life. There will be mocking. There will be a scratching of heads as people may see you having left one kingdom and going over to another, having to use the imagery of the week, to be transferred from one belt over to another. He says there in 1 Peter 4, "For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles." Haven't you lived enough of your life in the world? Why do you want to keep living that way? We gave enough of our life over to that. We wasted enough of our days, he says. There was a time, he says, "when we walked in lewdness

and lust, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, abominable idolatries.” Then he says, “In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.” “What happened to so-and-so?” “Oh, he's become some kind of holy Joe. He don't drink no more. He doesn't fool around anymore. He's not going to come to our parties anymore. He doesn't fit in anymore. He's not like us anymore. Isn't it strange, man, he used to run with us but now he or she doesn't.” And it doesn't say that now they stop and admire, you know they'll speak evil of you and that's okay. We've got to get used to that. We've got to allow ourselves to be fools for Christ's sake.

Jesus said of his disciples, “You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world. But what happens,” he says, “if that salt becomes insipid? If it loses its pungency? If it loses its ability to do what it was made to do?” You throw it out unto the dung heap? Right? And “who takes a light and then puts it under a bushel? Or hides it under their bed?” He says, “If you're going to be my people and you live in a dark world and a putrefying world, I send you out there not to be like the darkness, not to be like the rotting meat, but to be like salt and to be like light.” And as we do that, the world around us will again notice that we are different from them, that we are not like them and they will see that we are not simply cleaner versions of themselves but that we have a different desire, we have different thoughts, we have different lives.

Again, my friends, someone like Samson, it was obvious in how he looked. When he got to be a certain age and I don't know all about Jewish barbershop life or anything like that and exactly how short or how long but at some point it became pretty obvious this guy wasn't cutting his hair, he wasn't trimming his hair. Spurgeon says that Samson must have looked like a lion. You've seen some of these guys from the Civil War period and others that had beards down out like this, well Samson's beard would've been out like that and Samson's hair may well have gone up like a mane and then all the way down. Most likely, by the time he reaches his maturity, all the way down to below his knees and perhaps down to his feet. It would have been obvious whenever you saw that man. I mean, there is a guy God has called. That's a man different. I mean, he's consecrated to God. He is devoted to God. And if they were at a meal and they were passing the goblets of wine around, “Hey, Samson, do you want some?” “I need to have some water or perhaps if you have some goat's milk. I can't drink that.” “Why? Are you allergic?” “No.” “Oh, that's right, Samson, you're a Nazirite. You're devoted to God.”

Brethren, though perhaps it's not always going to be that obvious with us but I will say sometimes it's obvious the other way, that there are ways of dressing, there are certain styles, certain ways of adorning ourselves that if we stop and ask ourselves, “Why do I want this? What is it that compels me to be like this?” Generally speaking it will be conformity to the world. Now, before you say I'm judging you, you take that before God and you ask God why you put on what you do. “Lord, do I put all of this on with the desire to honor and glorify you or do I do it to be cool? Do I do it so that I will not stand out?” Ladies, particularly for you, the day may well come when it's going to be pretty hard for you to find something to wear. I mean, my wife has a hard time shopping. It's hard to get clothes for our little girls that don't come up almost to their rear ends. And as

they get older, it's going to be hard to find something that doesn't plunge down the neck and open up so that all the men can gape at them. There is going to come a day, I think, where it may be fairly obvious to see those people who are different. It's just like when we see somebody that's Amish or somebody that's Mennonite, just by the way they dress, right away they're identified.

It says of Samson in verse 5 here that he was born to be a deliverer. He would begin to deliver Israel. His purpose was to call Israel back to its life as the distinct people of God. He would deliver the people of God, I believe, by revealing what Philistia really is. The role of Samson was to expose their gods. It was to expose their hearts. It was his business to stir up enmity. Rather than there being friendship between the people of the devil and the people of God, between darkness and light, Christ and Belial, Samson was going to get in there and he was to stir up the pot. He was to expose things and I believe it would be by means of broken bodies and dead bodies and burnt fields that he would begin to show the people what things are really like and what our attitude toward them should be. That our attitude toward one another is not love but it ought to be warfare so that that ancient prophecy could continue to be fulfilled that the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman would be at enmity one with the other. Samson's role was to judge the world. Samson's role was to reveal the hostility of the world toward them, to reveal its true ugliness and worthlessness and to show to them God's utter contempt for it. Unto this end, Samson would be endowed with supernatural strength, a strength that would be found not in his hair but in the Spirit of God coming down upon him. His hair was, as we will see in the hours ahead, but an outward manifestation of a heart dedicated to God so that when the symbol and the substance were in harmony, there was power to live in a way that God would have him to live and to do things that God had called him to do that would be a source of wonder to those who watched it.

And, my friends, God has done the same for us. God has given to people a supernatural mandate and unto that end, God has given to us a supernatural strength and there is a fight that God has called us to. Brethren, quite honestly, it's a fight that I see that we're losing and I fear. Perhaps for that reason, I'll be a bit more pointed in these coming messages than I would be otherwise. But I have concerns when I spend time with the young people in our churches, in the generation yet to come. I have concerns sometimes when I look at my own life and consider the folks in our churches. I think there is far too much friendship and far too little hostility. Brethren, there are strongholds to be torn down. There are enemies to be defeated. But we will only win this fight and we will only advance as we are what God has called us to be. And we need to have a wake-up call, I believe, even as Reformed Baptists who are very well taught. We need to have a wake-up call that Jesus did not die to make the church into a group of powerless worldlings who simply go to heaven when we die. He did not die to have us be a people that just are able to spout good theology. One of the reasons he sent us into the world is to live in a sense as Nazirites. Brethren, I think we of all people, I hope that's not any Reformed pride but I don't know where else it's going to come from because we, at least, have some inklings about the holiness of God and the seriousness of Scripture and we say we're committed to these things. There needs to be a group of Nazirites today so that other people who are

just playing church might be able to look at us and say, "Wait a minute. Those folks are a reminder that the people of God are different people."

Sometimes that's going to mean, you know what? we're not going to know what people are talking about. I remember a few months ago, I was out at a store and some guy trying to be nice and sweet said to my two oldest girls, "Well, girls, do you like Brittany Spears?" I did not deck the man but I did say to him in a bit of a growl, "No, they don't and God helping me, they'll never even know who she is." Sometimes we're going to need to have blank expressions on our face far more than the knowing nods so that when some preacher tries to be clever and he's giving the outline for the latest movie or the hottest tv show or the latest pop group that we sit there and think, "Who is he talking about?" Because I don't swim in those waters. And maybe by showing that, we'll be used of God to remind a sleeping church of what God has called us to be. And maybe in stirring up some warfare, we'll be reminded that those people over there are the enemies of God who need to be won rather than just really nice, swell people and we're like them and they're like us. No, that's not the way it's to be. People hanging on the two different belts are not to be alike and may God help us as we study the life of Samson, to take up our mandate and that we might be salt and light in a needy world, that we might shine in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. May God help us.

Let's pray.

Our Father, we do pray that you'll help us to soberly evaluate what you've called us to. And, Father, we pray that we will not be so afraid of extremes that we will refuse to shine as lights. Father, help us, Lord, to wrestle through and to know and, Lord, we don't have all the answers, we don't know all of the ways in which you call us to be separate but, Father, surely we know some of the ways. Father, in those things that we do know, help us to live as distinct people. Father, help us to shine in a dark world and not to have our lights covered by compromise, not to have them covered by our being in league with and wanting to marry the Philistines. O living God, help us. Unto this end we pray in the name of the one who bought us that we might be a distinct people. Amen.