

## Samson: part 1 "Separate or just hiding?"

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**Text: Judges chapter 13**



Judges 13 –16 is the story of Samson, but even more so it's about what it means as believers to be "separated from the world." There is scriptural direction on this matter found in several places throughout the Word of God. 1 John 2:15-16 speaks of our relationship with and to the world... *"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. 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."*

James 4: 4 goes further in saying *"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."*

But if we are to effectively cut ourselves off from the world, how can we therefore be obedient to such calls to *"go into all the world and make disciples"* and fulfill directives that we be *"salt of the earth and light of the world?"*

This is a difficult thing for us to rectify, and yet our failure to do so can mean losing our distinctiveness as children of God, not to mention placing ourselves in danger of falling into the very sin that we were trying to steer others away from! We can also endanger the eternal salvation and sanctifying discipleship of others who do not know Christ if we fail to take to them the gospel. What is the answer?

Samson shall be our example of how to do this wrong, so that we might better to do it right. I am always amazed at how scripture records time and again the "dirty laundry" of the lives of so many scriptural players. Noah's drunken nudity, Judas' betrayal and suicide, Peter's public denial and failure, the apostles falling asleep and then running away, Abraham's issues with anger, Moses' issues of fear, (not to mention record of him murdering someone), Paul graciously holding the coats of those stoning Stephan to death, David's sexual sin and murder, etc, etc.

Some of these folks were brought to repentance, and others were apparently lost for all eternity, and their life record remains herein for all to read over thousands of years! How embarrassing! Yet there is a certain accountability that comes with this walk of faith. We can be examples of godliness, holy manhood, blessed womanhood, radical faithfulness, or we can be examples of failure and sin. Our positive or negative "confession" becomes our legacy!

Matthew 10:32-39 *"Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven. Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.' He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it."*

God tells us these accounts, so that we who follow will be warned away from the danger and will instead walk in safety. He names names too, so that we might differentiate between the parable...the fictional allegory, the “**story**”, and the real thing...the factual truth. When the facts are “on the table,” the truth rises to the top, and cannot be denied. That may seem uncomfortable in our age of frail sensibilities, but when we become confessed property of God and Christ, there is a public arena in which we enter to live our faith. One where secrets are now public, because truth and safety are paramount and neither can exist in the dark! That’s not a JFB premise! That is the Bible from one end to the other!

Chapter 13 starts with word’s that are becoming all too familiar to us here in Judges: “**again, the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord...**”. This is Israel’s “7th tour” of apostasy. And God...the *consistent faithful God we follow*, reacted the same way this time as He had previously; “**discipline.**” Why? Because He was angry and his hand was merely punitive action? No. His discipline is always out of love and geared toward repentance and restoration.

Proverbs 3:11,12 — “*Don’t despise God’s discipline and reproof. He disciplines those whom He loves, just as a father does his children. Such acts are not contrary to love, but are an **expression** of love because they are done for man’s good.*”

Note Hebrews 12:5-11 — God disciplines those whom He loves like earthly fathers discipline their children. This is for our **profit**, that we might partake of His holiness (v10), and might yield fruits of righteousness (v11). It also causes us to respect the one who disciplines us (v9).

It is interesting to see just how the Philistines conquered Israel. It was not overnight, and it was not overwhelmingly by the sword. In fact, the Philistines “conquered” Israel instead very slowly and through methodic assimilation. They did so through trade and intermarriage. You see, the Philistines were of the first people on earth who had learned to smelt iron, so if you wanted an iron plow or an ax, you had to go to them to get it. If a Philistine youth caught the eye of your son or daughter, then the Philistines had no objection to a marriage between them. And slowly there grew a lopsided dependence based on worldly goods and fleshly desires, and over time they overtook Israel without really “firing a shot.”

Sound familiar? This is the way the enemy is overcoming the Christian world today! We are being imperceptibly squeezed into the form of this world. A frontal attack would be too obvious, but a slow assimilation would hardly be noticed. At least until it was “too late.” This fact seems lost on a lot of folks today. Those who desire to “see no evil, hear no evil, and speak no evil” effectively are saying as in Jeremiah 6:14 “*‘Peace, peace!’ when there is no peace.*” Compromise and assimilation will be their undoing. Refusal to acknowledge a danger, *an enemy*, will be their downfall!

In verse 1 there is something conspicuously missing. It seemed that every other time there was a record of something like “*and the people cried out to God in their pain and God rescued them through a prophet or warrior.*” But we don’t see that here. That’s because the people didn’t even really realize that they *had* been conquered! It was a time of affluence and mock peace. Things were ‘fine.’ No need to get into an uproar! There was no national outcry, so there was no national repentance, and so there was no national deliverer!

Samson would effectively fight alone in personal battles against personal ‘demons.’ God would have his victory in the end, but Samson would not live to see it, and he would not be assailed as a selfless rescuer of the likes we have read of previously in this book. Samson would be used by God, but it was in despite of himself and in a way he did not volunteer for. God *always* gets the last word and is sovereign. Meaning He does what He wants because He is God!

Samson's parents seem to be genuine believers *and followers* of Jehovah God, in a time and environment that would have made such a stance difficult and even trite in the culture that surrounded them. The people of that day would have been quite dismissive on the subjects of God, faith, and holy living! But these two were seemingly committed to their God, though we will see how they were less committed to sanctification and discipline when it came to their child, and such would be their fatal undoing even during a time in which they loved God and were trying to be faithful. Obedience to the HARD things in our faith will be the ultimate victory or the fatal demise in our walk. Many say they love Jesus but will not take a stand when the situation is uncomfortable or personally costly to them.

Verse 3 says that "the angel of the Lord" appeared. Not *an* angel, but *the* angel of the Lord. That's the language which describes a "pre-incarnate appearance of Christ." Meaning this was God in human form. Thus we can gather that His message had weight! The angel responded to Manoah's enquiry concerning His name with "*why do you ask my name, see that it is wonderful.*" In that day, a person's name indicated his character and nature. So the reply was of course staggering in its meaning and awesome in its implications! In Isaiah 9:6, we see the same given in prophetic form...the coming Messiah, "*wonderful counselor...*" So His **name** was not only "wonderful", but **He was** and **IS** wonderful!

The coming child Samson would be a "Nazarite." This was not some sort of religious mandate...and it was more than the typical voluntary commitment. It seems that it had aspects of both; *God's calling to be what he was created to be, and Samson's acquiesce to that call.* It was a vow to be "set apart": *dedicated wholly to God, with a purposefully and serious lifestyle commitment to be different than the world around Him...to not adhere to its ways, standards, and pursuits.* God brought him into the world for this position, but Samson had to willingly step up to fulfill it! There were outward things he needed to fulfill, but they all were to reflect a greater inward action on the spiritual and personal realm. All of this is much like that of the reborn Christian today. It maybe seems somewhat more 'monk-ish' but the principles and reasoning behind this was holiness and sanctification.

Verse 5 says that he would play...even if somewhat unwittingly, a part in the redemption of Israel...*again, even if unwittingly!* Note that verse 5 says though that he would "*BEGIN*" to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines." "Begin" is the key word here! Because the people would not repent and Samson would ultimately lose his way on his life journey, and would eventually end badly. His pride and his desires would be his undoing. Verse 25 says the "spirit of God stirred within him." So he had the 'stuff.' He had not only God's calling, but as always in such situations, he had God's empowering.

You see, Samson understood that he was to be separated *from*, but he never got the whole concept! Being separated *from* means little if you are not clear on the *separated to*. He followed the rules strictly, he just never had the "mo" behind that obedience. He didn't have the reason to obey! He lacked the love for his God that would motivate his obedience to a purposefully and spirit led end!

Many of us do the same. We *don't* do a lot of things out of religious exercise. But that is merely negative separation unless we are being separated **unto** something! This is not an issue of isolationism. That would be clear-cut and almost easy once I separate myself off from society, after I 'move into the compound.' But then I would then fail to be obedient in my missional calling! Am I drawn **too** God's side, or out of self power and self-righteousness am I simply rejecting society? Because I can be quite safe in the lions den if Jesus is beside me to protect me. Perhaps then it is not where I am, but who is with me?

Jesus prayed to the Father in John 17:15-17 "*I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. They do not belong to this world any more than I do. Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth.*"

Godly separation is not simply about avoidance and rejection. There may be aspects of that. But all of that is balanced righteously when we simply pursue a life *separated wholly unto Christ, His kingdom, His priorities and pursuits*. To “*seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.*” (Matt 6:33) That passage goes on to say that because we do, “*all these things are given to us in return.*” What things? All the other stuff we need and pray for...food, drink, clothes, etc...all our needs and frankly an awful lot of our wants!

The bottom line in this matter is that “separation” ...*sanctification*, only comes through the truth. It is not a religious façade or a matter of rules and regulations. It must be based on truth...*facts*. If we live in spiritual fantasy, or wishful worldly thinking where we imagine the world to be either “pie-in-the-sky” or the other side, a monastic exclusionary life, we will fail just as Samson will eventually fail. John 17:17 says again “Sanctify ...*separate them, by Your truth.*”

What are you basing your faith walk on today? Emotions? Wishful thinking? A ‘Mayberry’ ideal where we all can play nice church together? Or are you willing to seek the truth, and stand on the facts? To be honest with yourself as well as those around you?