

Early Signs of Troubles Ahead

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[0 : 00] Judges. Go ahead and turn to the book of Judges tonight.

We're going to get back to that.! I think we've, what, been away from it for a couple of weeks. Just two? I don't think we've been here for two weeks. Huh?

22nd? Yeah. Three weeks. Well, something like that. It's been a while anyway, and I know that we started to look at Samson, and we're going to continue with Samson tonight.

So Judges 14, by the way, chapter 14. And our text for the night will be verses 1 through 9. So we're just going to move along with Samson.

It may take us a few weeks. There's quite a bit to his story, though in some ways it's sadly the same story for Samson as you kind of go throughout his life.

[1 : 03] And yet one of these somewhat unexplainable things, at least from our perspective, that God could so mightily use him and even allow him to make some of the really horrible decisions that he made.

And yet God allowed that and used that to judge the Philistines, the enemies of Israel during this time. So Samson is our subject tonight.

The last of the judges mentioned in the book of Judges, even though there's quite a bit of the book of Judges left after we finish with Samson. We started to look at Samson's birth.

In fact, that's what we looked at last time, whenever that was. And so tonight we're going to be kind of beginning the rise of Samson as judge over Israel.

And he is judge, even at this point. Judging Israel, God had raised him up for that very purpose. There might be some question as to whether Samson knew that.

[2 : 09] I think he did. And yet some pretty troubling things about Samson here even early on in his life as a judge of Israel.

And I titled the message tonight, The Early Signs of Troubles Ahead. And so with that in mind, let me go ahead and read the text.

It's chapter 14, verses 1 through 9. Now Samson went down to Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines.

Excuse me, Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah. Get this closer to my eyes here. Do you understand that? Let me start over.

Now Samson went down to Timnah. That's where he went. And saw a woman of Timnah, of the daughters of the Philistines.

[3 : 09] 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 his father and mother said to him, 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?

And Samson said to his father, Get her for me, for she pleases me well. 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.

For at that time, the Philistines had dominion over Israel. So Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother and came to the vineyards of Timnah. Now, to his surprise, a young lion came roaring against him.

And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him. And he tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat, though he had nothing in his hand.

[4 : 17] But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done. Then he went down and talked with the woman, and she pleased Samson well. After some time, when he returned to get her, he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion.

And behold, a swarm of bees and honey were in the carcass of the lion. He took some of it in his hands and went along eating. When he came to his father and mother, he gave some to them, and they also ate.

But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion. So his father went down to the woman, and Samson gave a feast there, for young men used to do so.

So we'll stop right there. In fact, we're really going to just go through verse 9. Really just part of the story. We kind of have, from God's perspective, the story kind of set up for us.

And the set of circumstances are set. You know, with the lion and the honey and all that stuff. And then we find out, and we'll find out next week, the result of all of that.

[5 : 25] How all that turned out. All right, now, I've often wondered about Samson. You know, obviously, and I think this is probably true of most of us.

Samson is the most well-known of the judges. I mean, we think of Samson possibly even before we think of Gideon. Maybe Gideon is, you know, your number one judge in your thoughts.

But Samson is usually the one we think of. And so Samson is very well-known. And, you know, we know pretty much about the story of Samson. Though we're going to really kind of look in depth at a lot of movements to the story.

Even though it's somewhat redundant. So, we know the story of Samson. And I've often wondered, you know, what kind of judge could Samson have been?

You think about it. I mean, what could he have been? And he clearly accomplished some pretty incredible things. Some very impressive acts of strength.

[6 : 31] And he did all these things in spite of his very dubious character. And his failings and so forth. Then, of course, we're quick to realize that God was the one who did all those things through Samson.

We're not forgetting that. But still, what could he have done for the Lord? And what could he have been for the Lord as a judge of Israel?

And so, what we have in this passage is kind of early warning signs. Early warning signs concerning Samson's life.

And they're not just signs for us so that we kind of have an idea of what's coming. The path he's going down and so forth. But I'm talking about this. Signs that we can see that Samson should have seen early in his young life as a young adult.

Signs that clearly reveal Samson's life and character. What it was headed to be and developing, shaping up to be.

[7 : 42] And they're signs that Samson should have seen that Samson was utterly oblivious to. Now, you know, we have warning signs in our life.

And we have them all over the place. Everywhere we go, we have warning signs. There are warning signs out on the roadway, you know. And you'd better not ignore them. Or you're going to get a ticket.

Or injured. Or maybe even worse. If you don't heed the warning signs that are out there on the highways. And you wish that everyone else would heed those warning signs.

And then we have warning signs in our physical bodies, don't we? That just kind of, you know, going to raise a flag or turn on a light and say there's something wrong here. And if we ignore those warning signs, then we can experience some serious illnesses.

And, again, maybe even death. So those are warning signs. And, you know, God's gracious to actually give those things to us.

[8 : 45] You know, whatever that warning sign might be. And we ought to pay attention to them. You know, a lump in the wrong place. Or fever when you don't have any explanation.

You know, just warning signs. We ought to pay attention to them. They're warning signs in our own minds, our thinking. We begin to think wrongly or maybe darkly.

And if we ignore some of those warning signs, then we can experience some serious depression, perhaps. And other things like that.

We ought to pay attention to warning signs. And there are warning signs in our flesh. I'm not talking about our physical body. I'm talking about that part of us. That part that's polluted with sin.

The flesh. The carnal. There are warning signs there. And if we ignore them, then we can begin to follow a path that will lead to ruin spiritually.

[9 : 41] And I end with that one because that's exactly what we have, I think, exemplified in Samson's life. Some warning signs for him that he should have paid attention to.

Samson kind of manifests all the signs of a man who has started down the wrong road.

And it's the road to ruin. Even though Samson, God's going to use Samson to accomplish some pretty incredible things. And use Samson mightily as a judge, even in spite of himself.

Samson's life. And, you know, he's going to end well, in a sense. I mean, he's going to die. But he's going to, in a sense, end well.

Even though that's true. Samson really exhibits these signs. That God, in his grace, allows to be propped up in front of us.

[10 : 35] And he should have paid attention to them. Because they were warning him against a road he had started his journey on. And it's a road to ruin.

Now, what were these early warning signs? Warning signs of troubles ahead. Warning signs that should have stopped Samson in his tracks.

When he saw these things, or he should have seen them. Warning signs that should have sent Samson back in the right direction. What are they? Well, here's the first one. Samson's desires. And this is the way it always begins. The desires of the flesh. When the desires of the flesh become prominent, controlling.

Those desires lead you, rather than the Holy Spirit leading you. Samson's desires. Do you ever... I shouldn't ask this question, but...

[11 : 40] Do you ever have sinful desires? People looking down. Well... It's kind of a personal question to ask you. Do you ever have sinful desires?

Anybody want to give a testimony? No. Well... And you wonder, where do they come from? Have you ever had that experience? Where suddenly, it just seems like out of the clear...

Just out of nowhere. You have this awful, terrible, sinful thought. Or desire. Am I the only one?

All right, Wes. Wes rated... I could count on Wes. All right. At least he didn't say, amen. Anyway, you know, we do.

We wonder, where did that come from? And we might even entertain the thought, that's just not me. And yet it is. Now, I'm really offending you.

[12 : 42] It is. It is who you are, who we are in the flesh. We have the potential for the most evil and, you know, incredibly sinful thoughts and desires.

We have that potential in every single one of us. And we're appalled by that. Now, when that happens, and it does happen, when that happens, it's not necessarily a bad thing.

Because, you see, it's not sin yet. At least not yet. I mean, just the sudden kind of raising up or a sinful desire coming to mind.

That's not the sin. Yet. In fact, something very positive can come from a sudden sinful desire. I'm serious about this. It's kind of like a thermometer, you know. A thermometer telling you of perhaps the onset of something wrong physically.

[14 : 05] That there's something not quite right. And so, these desires that suddenly come to mind and we think and are maybe even somewhat drawn toward desires.

They're warning signs of something that is wrong spiritually. That needs to be dealt with. I'm afraid to say, though, that Samson missed all that entirely.

In fact, really by this time, I think he'd gone way over beyond that. But this is where it begins.

Samson's desires. And look at what Samson desired. Number one, he desired a woman.

He desired a woman. Is that the bad part of this? Well, in this case, it was. But see, listen. Verse 1 says, Now Samson went down to Timnah.

By the way, I think went down might even be a literary indicator. The author went down. Samson's on his way down. He went down to Timnah.

[15 : 18] And Timnah was a village in his own territory. A village belonging to the tribe of Dan. And Samson was of the tribe of Dan.

But it was being occupied, wasn't it? Occupied by the Philistines. And so, apparently, this particular village had been totally occupied by the Philistines. And the Philistines, remember, were the oppressors.

And we're going to keep that in our minds here. They were the oppressors. They were the ones that God allowed to come in and judge Israel. And they're the enemies. They're the ones that need to be dealt with and driven out.

And Samson is the judge to lead Israel to do that. And so, this is the setting. So, Samson, he goes down to Timnah. And in verse 1, he saw a woman in Timnah.

A woman of the daughters of the Philistines. So, she's a Philistine. And I just think about this as the story unfolds. The Bible says that Samson saw her.

[16:27] That's an important word there. It doesn't say that he heard about her. Someone recommended her to him.

Or that he met her. It doesn't say that he knew her. He knew her. It just says he saw her.

And I think the implication is he didn't have any idea who she was. It didn't matter. She's very appealing to his eyes.

He saw her. She captured his eye. She appealed to him visually. Do I need to explain that? Happens every day.

Verse 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.

[17:27] That's all it took. Just saw her. She's for me. Now, the pronoun her is emphatic. That's the form of the word.

It tells us it's emphatic. And it appears twice. Here in verse 2 and also in verse 3. Get her. Her. It's emphatic. And it's emphatic because we know that because the word her actually is at the beginning of the sentence.

Her. Get her for me. Her. And no one else but her. You see, the depth of his desire. Got to have her.

You see, Samson's eyes were in control. And this is always a problem. It really is. If that's what... That's the problem because the eyes are connected to the desires of the flesh.

It wasn't a heart thing, even a mental thing. It was just simply his lust. The lust of his flesh. And his eyes saw her. Eyes will very often get you into trouble.

[18:40] Careful little eyes, what you see. I remember when I was a little boy and I put too much food on my plate. I'm a big boy now and I still do that.

I put too much food on my plate and then I couldn't finish it all. My grandmother would say, Donnie. Don't come up to me afterward and call me. Donnie, your eyes are bigger than your stomach.

Have you ever heard that expression? How many of you have never heard that before? Jerry? Okay. Your eyes are bigger than your stomach. That's what I wanted with my eyes.

My stomach couldn't handle. See, eyes will get you into trouble. And by the way, Samson's eye for the women. That's how we could put it.

That was his struggle all the way through his life. In fact, there were three women. And it ultimately led to his downfall. I mean, we have this first one, this first woman, this woman in Timnah, this Philistine woman.

[19:44] And then the second one, we have a harlot from Gath. She's also a Philistine. And then finally, Delilah. And we know what happened with Delilah. Okay.

But now, if only Samson had recognized this first warning sign. See, let's let Samson be an example for us.

Example of the opposite of how we ought to respond when we have desires that are purely flesh. It's a warning sign that God is putting up.

That there's something not right. And you're going in the wrong direction. There are things ahead. You'd better be warned.

But not only did he have a desire for a woman. Notice also that Samson desired his way. His own way. He had to have his own way.

[20:49] These two things. There are two things Samson says that stand out here. He said, get her for me. And she pleases me well. Crystal clear indicators.

Samson is totally ruled by his flesh. His fleshly desires. And he's going to have his way. And you know, you just want to say, Samson, would you just stop and listen to yourself?

Listen to what you're saying. Now, you parents have said that maybe to your kids. Would you just listen to what you're saying? You know, they're speaking something just totally cockeyed.

I mean, it's just totally wrong thinking. Any of your kids ever do that? Would you just listen to what you just said?

And a lot of times I wish I had a recorder with me. I could just run it back. That's what you said. I didn't say that. Yes, you did. If Samson could just listen.

[22 : 01] You know, when Samson saw her, Samson wanted her. And nothing would prevent Samson from getting her and having her.

Not his parents. They gave him wise counsels. We'll see in a minute. Not his people, his own people. Israel, this certainly was not in Israel's best interest.

Think about it. He's the judge of Israel. The enemy, the Philistine. And I don't know, but what a conflict of interest for, you know, the judge of Israel to marry a Philistine woman and then proceed to be able to do his job as judge to drive out to deliver God's people from the Philistine.

This doesn't make any sense. He's going to have his own way, though. And not his parents are going to dissuade him, not his own people, Israel, not even God, because God had already forbidden this kind of marriage.

You get her for me, he said. For she pleases me.

[23 : 12] Me. He desires his way. And I'm saying as bad as that is, I mean, it is bad. But we ought to take instruction here that this is a warning sign to Samson, that there's trouble ahead.

And, of course, we know the rest of the story. And Samson didn't heed any kind of warning.

Trouble, he kind of went after trouble head on. God has built, I think, built this into our lives, into our spirits as his children.

We, you know, when we begin to desire things that God forbids, then it is then a sign, it ought to be a sign to us, that we're headed for trouble. And so the desire to gratify the lust of the flesh, that is a huge roadblock put up, erected in our lives, a flashing warning light, warning us of danger just ahead.

You know, Samson was an incredibly strong man physically, wasn't he? Perhaps the strongest man who ever lived. I really think he was. But his spirit was wantonly weak, wasn't it?

And he did not control his desires. His desires controlled him. Proverbs 16, verse 32 says, He who rules his spirit is better than he who conquers a city.

[24 : 48] So Samson's desire. Second, Samson's disrespect. Samson's disrespect. Verse 3, Then his father and mother said to him, Is there no woman among the daughters of your brethren that would be your own tribe or among all my people that would be a reference to Israel that you must go and get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?

Meaning, she's a pagan and unbeliever. That's what his father and mother said. And good for them. Good for them. Can you think of anything more natural for a loving, caring, believing, God-honoring mother and father? Can you think of anything more natural than that?

Samson's parents encouraged him to marry a godly girl. Right? Is there anything wrong with that? No, it shouldn't be any other way.

And also to warn him that he's making a huge mistake. He is about to marry an unbeliever. And he's about to dive in head first to a life controlled by his own flesh.

[26 : 09] Now, we don't have everything that they said here. But this, in effect, is how they're warning their son.

And, you know, this is what parents should do when they see their children heading the wrong direction. Wrong direction according to God's word. And they should do it early.

And they should do it when their children are young. But they don't have to stop when their children get older. Do they? No.

They may not appreciate it. But you still put that roadblock up there, that warning sign. Imminent danger ahead.

God uses parents to place those warning signs in the lives of their children. So, that's what Samson's parents were doing here. Did he see it? Did he care about it?

[27 : 13] Did he appreciate it? Did he heed the warning? Well, no, he didn't. He did not respect his parents. He didn't respect them.

Verse 3, And Samson said to his father, Get her for me, for she pleases me well. Which, by the way, means literally, she is right in my eyes.

I don't care what you think. That's what Samson is saying. I mean, he starts out by saying, Get her for me.

She, you know, I want her. And mom and dad said, But now, wait, let's just think about this. And gives the warning.

And he says, She is right in my eyes. You're wrong. I don't care what you say. It's disrespect. You know, when your own desires rule your life, and this is all very natural, there's just a progression

here.

[28 : 16] When your own desires rule your life, you will always disrespect the wisdom of others. When desire rules, all the wisdom of the world is like water rolling off the back of a duck.

Disrespect. You'll disrespect your parents, disrespect godly friends, disrespect spiritual counselors that God brings into your way, disrespect God.

And when you begin, when you see that beginning to happen in your life, it is a warning. It's a warning sign. Big trouble is just ahead.

See, we learn something from Samson. Samson's desire, Samson's disrespect, and then third, Samson's disobedience. And that's the third natural step.

Desire to disrespect to disobedience to actions. And in the next few verses, we're going to have the first example of Samson's great strength. We've already known that about him, but we haven't read anything yet about that.

[29 : 28] And so, in these verses coming, not just in the passage we have, but in the very next one that's attached to what we're studying here tonight, we're going to see Samson reveal himself as the strongest man on earth.

Of course, it's God, the Holy Spirit, moving in him and through him. And so, you know, he's going to go to Timnah to see this woman, the woman of Samson's desires, and Samson apparently wanders off by himself.

We know he's by himself at this point, not with mom and dad, and he's walking through a vineyard. And he's attacked by a ferocious lion, or at least he's confronted by one, whether the lion actually attacked him or not.

But he certainly felt he had to deal with that, and so Samson kills the lion with his bare hands, you know, tears it apart as if, you know, it were some plush toy lion.

That's not what the Bible says. It says a young kid, a little goat, a little baby goat. Same thing. So, incredible strength.

[30 : 37] Now, verse 4 is a bit of a problem for us. I'm just going to interject that here. But his father and mother did not know that it was the Lord.

What was the Lord, or what was of the Lord? Samson's fleshly desires? Well, no. No, it's not his desires that's of the Lord. Not at all.

But rather, that Samson would get this woman in Timnit. God allowed that. Why would he do that? Verse 4, it says, that he, that's the Lord, seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines.

For at that time, the Philistines had dominion over Israel. this is part of God's design. It's difficult to explain this. And we're going to have to wait until next week to see how all this plays out.

But suffice it to say that God can use any means he desires to defeat the enemies of Israel. even a flesh-controlled man like Samson.

[31 : 43] He can work through that and move through that and even use that. Don't forget, God using, kind of, several places in the Bible, in Genesis 38, you have Judah sinning against Tamar, and God uses that to further the line of Christ.

I can't explain that, but that's, that's, that's what God did. God used David's sin with Bathsheba to bring Samson into the, Samuel into the, Solomon into the world.

I'll get the name right here in a minute. And how about this one in the New Testament? God used the betrayal, the betrayal of Judas to get Christ on the cross. Get him to Calvary.

Now he could do it any way he wanted to, but, does that mean that God made Judas to sin in this terrible way? No, certainly not. But God is sovereign and even our sinfulness does not hinder him or thwart him from his plans.

He does not make us sin. He does not condone our sin. And, Samson surely paid for his sin. He was responsible. But, God uses our sins sometimes, our sinful activity to accomplish his own purposes in the lives of people and in the world and in us and so forth.

[33 : 12] We'll just have to leave that there for now. Samson had multiple warning signs. That's what we want to get out of this here tonight. Multiple warning signs going up all over his life personally that he should have paid attention to.

And so now his disobedience, his disobedience from desire to disrespect of authority of counsel, godly counsel to disobedience.

And first, there's, you know, there's a carelessness. There's disobedience that came through carelessness. Samson is in a vineyard. You say, how is that carelessness?

Well, was Samson a Nazarite? Remember, we studied that last time. Not a Nazarene, but a Nazarite.

Came with certain vows, certain prohibitions in a man's life. And so he had no business being in a vineyard because according to Numbers chapter 6, verses 3 and 4, Nazarites are not to eat from, drink from, or even touch anything from the fruit of the vine.

[34 : 25] I'm not trying to explain why God would put it that way, but that's the way it is for a Nazarite vow. Samson had no business being there. Now, it doesn't say that he drank or ate or touched or any of those things, but the point is he's being careless.

He put himself in a place of temptation. And we're headed for trouble when we place ourselves in proximity to the temptation to sin or in certain situations or occasions or locations or sets of circumstances where we might be tempted.

It's careless. Also, came a callousness, a callousness to God and to his word and to God's command upon his life.

It just became callous to sinful activity. Verse 8, After some time, when he returned to get her, he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion.

Behold, a swarm of bees and honey were in the carcass of the lion. He took some of it in his hands and went along eating. This is blatant, isn't it?

[35 : 39] I mean, what is Samson doing touching a dead carcass of a lion? I mean, he's gone from carelessness to now out and out sin. He's broken God's command upon his life.

It's a Nazarite. Number 6 and verse 12, a Nazarite is to never touch any dead corpse, whether man or beast or animal. Not to touch.

There's a prohibition against that. It's a Nazarite. Carried with it a penalty. Carried with it acts that had to be done to remedy that. Now, do you suppose Samson ever caught himself thinking at this point, you know, how did I get to this place?

How did I get so low? You know, sometimes I think a believer and it's a good thing can come to that place just gradually bit by bit one little step here one little point of carelessness then callousness kind of sets in and we get further and further down the path away and by the grace of God we say, wait a minute.

How did I get here? Well, it didn't happen overnight, did it? And thankfully, God by his grace can allow us to look back and see, well, this is the road I've been going bit by bit, step by step, turn by turn.

[37 : 06] You think Samson ever came to that place? How did I get so far away from God? I don't think he did. There's nothing that bears that out until he got to the very end and he's chained to those pillars in the pagan temple and finally, I think, I said, how did I get here?

It was just too late. We could have told Samson how it happened though because it's the same way it happens to us.

First comes the controlling desires of the flesh. Then comes disrespect of all counsel, God's word, God's counselors, other authorities that God has placed in our lives.

The disrespect for the truth and then comes disobedience. We're headed down that path and it's so easy to miss these warning signs when you get to this point because then comes deception.

Samson's deception is the final thing here and it's a self-deception. Samson became self-deceived. Samson is so filled with self-deception and you see, he mistakenly interpreted God's mercy for God's permission.

[38 : 52] The fact that God did not right away deal with Samson when he took that first step away from God and towards sin and he took that next step and nothing happened.

Well, I guess I'm okay so far and he kept going and going because God's judgment was not immediate and very rarely is. God is so long-suffering and so patient but we can misinterpret that. and think that this is God allowing us, permitting us that maybe it's not sin as we once thought. You see how the, how it starts, how it can run its course.

It's a self-deception. And so Samson walked through the vineyard and God did not do anything to him about it. And so, in fact, when the lion attacked him, God gave him the power to destroy it with his bare hands.

And so, well, I guess I'm above all of this. And then he touched a dead carcass and God did not punish him. And he ate the honey from the carcass and nothing bad happened to him.

[40 : 15] And he gave some of it to his parents and nothing bad happened to them. We say, well, why would it happen? Well, the same vow was on them as it was on Samson as a Nazarite according to Numbers 19, 11 to 13, they too were not to have anything to do with a dead carcass, dead things.

But Samson gave them some, almost like he's saying, let's see what happens here. Nothing. So Samson, bit by bit, is thinking that he's above all of this.

That he's immune to this and that, you know, others might not be able to get by with this, but I can. I'm special. I mean, it's just ridiculous thinking, but it's a self-deception.

And then he deceived his parents in not telling them where the honey came from, the dead carcass, and he seemed to get away with that. In fact, God kind of strung him along all throughout his life, didn't he?

God has delayed his judgment of Samson until the very end because God used Samson to be judge of Israel.

[41 : 33] And Samson totally misunderstood that thinking that God allowed him to sin. It's the deception of sin. Now, we're going to see all of these things continually cropping up in Samson's life.

I mean, this is just the, these are the, kind of the early warning signs of what's to come. The trouble that's ahead for Samson.

And that's all well and good as part of the story, but it also stands as an example for us and a warning for us that we ought to be looking at our desires, who's in control and so forth.

These are warning signs, early warning signs of trouble ahead. Thank you.