

“Not Peace but a Sword”
Judges 14
(Preached at Trinity, July 12, 2015)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. We've been slowing unfolding the life of Samson. His was indeed a remarkable life. He is one of Israel's best known judges but was could hardly characterize his life as an example to follow. He was self-willed, easily drawn under the influence of the women he was attracted to. He was vindictive and given to great displays of anger. As we view his antics we wonder how this could be the man God has raised up to deliver His people.
2. In order for us to understand this portion of the Book of Judges we have to understand just how desperate Israel's condition had become as they dwelled in the midst of the Philistines.
 - A. If you go back to Egypt and witness Israel's oppression in this pagan land and hear their cries you can't help but pity them. They cried out for deliverance and God heard their cry.

Exodus 2:23-24 NAU - "And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of *their* bondage rose up to God. ²⁴ So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."
 - B. We've seen in the Book of Judges Israel suffering under various enemies who vexed them until they cried out to God for mercy.
 1. The king of Mesopotamia
Judges 3:8-9 NAU - "Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, so that He sold them into the hands of Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia; and the sons of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim eight years. ⁹ When the sons of Israel cried to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the sons of Israel to deliver them, Othniel the son of Kenaz"
 2. The Moabites
Judges 3:14-15 NAU - "The sons of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years. ¹⁵ But when the sons of Israel cried to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for them, Ehud the son of Gera"
 3. The Canaanites
Judges 4:1-3 NAU - "Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, after Ehud died. ² And the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; and the commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-hagoyim. ³ The sons of Israel cried to the LORD; for he had nine hundred iron chariots, and he oppressed the sons of Israel severely for twenty years."

God then raised up Deborah

- C. This was the pattern: Israel sinned, God judged them by turning them over to their enemies, and they cried out for deliverance.
3. But as I've pointed out, it is different in this section of Judges. Israel sinned, and God delivered them over to the Philistines.
Judges 13:1 NAU - "Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, so that the LORD gave them into the hands of the Philistines forty years." BUT THERE IS NO CRY FOR GOD'S DELIVERANCE!
4. The Philistines were living among them. They were a part of them. They were beginning to share their customs and intermarry with them.
 Compare this to the faithful captives in Babylon – the likes of Daniel.
Psalms 137:1-6 KJV - "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. ² We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. ³ For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us *required of us* mirth, *saying*, Sing us *one of the* songs of Zion. ⁴ How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land? ⁵ If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget *her cunning*. ⁶ If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."
5. As we come to **Chapter 14** it is very instructive as to the condition of Israel
- A. **Verse 1** – "Then Samson went down to Timnah" – Timnah was only about 20 miles from Jerusalem. The Philistines were living normal lives in the midst of them. Samson found a Philistine girl in his own neighborhood. While our attention is turned to the lustful sin of Samson we must not miss the fact that paganism was in the very midst of Israel.
- B. Samson took mom and dad to Timnah to make preparations for marriage. They were free to move about in the midst of the Philistines. Although the Philistines were ruling them Israel was perfectly comfortable with the situation.
Judges 14:5 NAU - "Then Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother"
1. Samson held the customary 7 day feast and thirty Philistine companions were invited. Samson was perfectly comfortable celebrating his upcoming wedding with these Philistines. He was perfectly comfortable with their customs.
Judges 14:10 NAU - "Then his father went down to the woman; and Samson made a feast there, for the young men customarily did this."
 2. The word for "feast" literally refers to a drinking feast.
Esther 7:8 NAU - " Now when the king returned from the palace garden into the place where they were drinking wine"
 3. This is significant in light of Samson's Nazirite vows.
 Samson had no problem with having a seven day drinking feast with these pagan Philistines
 4. In **Verse 20** we have to assume that Samson's best man was also a Philistine.
6. The point we must see in all of this was the situation in Israel. The Philistines were living among them. They had been among them for 40 years – a whole generation. While Samson's parents were displeased with Samson's choice of a bride, Samson was perfectly comfortable with it.

7. Israel had made a complete moral and cultural accommodation with the Philistines. They had completely accepted their values and had made peace with their idols. The Israelites had forgotten who they were as God's particular people and were on the brink of being completely assimilated by the Philistines. Left unchecked, within a generation they would have lost their identity altogether as God's covenant people and God's redemptive purpose would have come to an end. While Israel had forgotten God's covenant God had not. This was the point of Israel's deliverance from Egypt.
Exodus 2:23-24 NAU - "And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of *their* bondage rose up to God. ²⁴ So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."
8. The whole point of the Samson narrative was God's intervention in protecting Israel from being absorbed by the Philistines.
 God's solution for Israel was to bring about division. Instead of peace between Israel and the Philistines God would bring a sword.
Judges 14:4 NAU - " However, his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD, for He was seeking an occasion against the Philistines."
9. I set before you last week the mystery of God's Sovereign will. God does not always reveal to us what He is doing but He always works according to His divine purpose. Samson went down to Ashkelon and struck down 30 men and took their garments. The text tells us that this was of the LORD. It provides clarification to **Verse 4**. God led Samson to Ashkelon.
Judges 14:19 NAU - "Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily, and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of them and took their spoil and gave the changes *of clothes* to those who told the riddle. And his anger burned, and he went up to his father's house."
10. God's design is to mark a clear demarcation between His people and the people of this world.
11. Now for the application. This speaks loudly to us. God will not allow us to be absorbed back into the world. His command is clear:
2 Corinthians 6:14-18 NAS - "Do not be bound together (*unequally yoked*) with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? ¹⁵ Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ¹⁷ "Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord. "And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you. ¹⁸ "And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty."
- I. First of all, this means we must maintain a strict separation from this world
- A. Paul described it in **Romans 12**
Romans 12:1-2 NAU - "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

1. Paul was talking about a life of consecration – separation from this world
 2. Usually the word translated “world” is the word κόσμος.
But here we find the word αἰών which literally means “age.” Here it is referring to this present age – this present fallen world.
 - a. It is the age that Jesus referred to as “a wicked and adulterous generation”
 - b. It is the same age that we are living in now
 3. What does it mean to be conformed to this world?
 - a. Being conformed to this world is to see the world apart from God. It means to be drawn into its ways and customs—to be a part of it
 - b. **Romans 11:36** presents the Christian worldview
Romans 11:36 NAU - "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen"
God is the Source, the Accomplisher, and the Goal of all things. And all things ultimately have but one purpose: To display God’s glory.
 4. The person conformed to this world lives as though God doesn’t exist. Or at least His existence doesn’t affect how he lives.
 5. Those conformed to this world live in a world void of purpose. Many professing Christians fall squarely in this category
They don’t see their life in the context of purpose. If you don’t see your life as having a Divine design and each day as being filled with purpose it is easy to get swallowed up in the mundane – watching TV, playing video games, surfing the internet
 6. Human beings are born into this world - this present age, and it consumes them. In their spiritual blindness they become a part of the collective voice of a world without God. There is a collective way of thinking.
- B. The only way to escape the suffocating snare is through a complete transformation. Paul describes it as a metamorphosis – like a caterpillar changing into a butterfly. “but be transformed by the renewal of your mind”
1. This describes the Christian life
 2. It describes life apart from this world. It describes the Christian life
1 John 2:15 NAU - "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."
James 4:4 NAU - "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."
 3. The Christian life is a life of separation from the world. It is a life lived above this world.
Colossians 3:1-3 NAU - "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³ For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

4. Scripture describes it in various ways to demonstrate the radical distinction
 - Darkness and light
 - Sheep and goats
 - Wheat and tares
 - Righteousness and lawlessness
 - Alive and dead
 - Lost and found
 - Wise and foolish

II. Such separation will often bring us into conflict

- A. This was at the heart of God's purpose in Samson's life
 1. God was beginning to put a difference between Israel and the Philistines
God was about to stir conflict between Israel and the Philistines
 2. It might have started small with only 30, yet the division began
Judges 14:19 NAU - "Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily, and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of them and took their spoil"
 3. **Chapter 14** ends with Samson's betrothed being taken from him
Further division was about to begin.
Judges 15:3 NAU - "Samson then said to them, "This time I shall be blameless in regard to the Philistines when I do them harm."
 4. Samson caught 300 foxes (or jackals) and used them to burn the crops of the Philistines. This brought about further division
 5. Israel quickly began to feel the pressure
Judges 15:9-11 NAU - "Then the Philistines went up and camped in Judah, and spread out in Lehi. ¹⁰ The men of Judah said, "Why have you come up against us?" And they said, "We have come up to bind Samson in order to do to him as he did to us." ¹¹ Then 3,000 men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam and said to Samson, "Do you not know that the Philistines are rulers over us? What then is this that you have done to us?" And he said to them, "As they did to me, so I have done to them."
 6. Do you get the point? God brought a distinction between His people and the pagans. But it only paints for us a faint picture. We need to see it in all its brilliance.
- B. God puts a division between us and unbelievers
 1. Jesus taught this clearly so that we do not misunderstand the nature of discipleship
Matthew 10:34-37 NAS - "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ "For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; ³⁶ and a man's enemies will be the members of his household. ³⁷ "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."

- a. This seems like an unbelievable statement. Isn't Jesus the Prince of Peace?
Isaiah 9:6 NAS - "For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace."
How can the Prince of Peace be the bringer of conflict?
- b. Although those in Christ have found the peace that passes understanding they have also been made at enmity with the world. We are in a state of conflict.
- c. The KJV reads:
Matthew 10:35 KJV - " For I am come to set a man at variance against his father"
The word for "variance" is διχάζω - to cut into two parts, cleave asunder, sever
- d. This describes our condition in this world
- 2. Such division strikes even at our closest relationships
Matthew 10:34-37 NAS – "a man's enemies will be the members of his household."
- 3. We must understand. God has purposed this conflict!
 - a. Sometimes Christians experience conflict of their own doing; by their foolishness, by their pride.
 - b. But there will always be conflict between God's people and this world
John 16:33 NAU - "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."
Luke 6:22-23 NAU - "Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. ²³ "Be glad in that day and leap *for joy*, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets."
 - c. God often raises up the conflict to keep us separate.
Judges 14:4 NAU - "However, his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD, for He was seeking an occasion against the Philistines. Now at that time the Philistines were ruling over Israel."

III. God gives us the power in Christ to endure the conflict of this world

- A. He has sent the Holy Spirit to indwell us
Acts 1:8 NAU - " but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."
 - 1. He is saying that we are sent forth into the world as His witness. We are in the very midst of those who hate Him. But He will empower us to stand before them boldly
2 Timothy 1:7 ESV - "for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control."

2. We are never without His presence. This is the ultimate picture at the end of Samson's life. In spite of his sinful actions God maintained the distinction and delivered Israel.
- B. We have the accomplished work of the cross
1. Jesus goes with us
Matthew 28:18-20 NAU - "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
 2. Nothing shall separate us from His love

Conclusion:

1. We are God's covenant people.
Leviticus 26:11-12 NAU - "Moreover, I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject you. ¹² 'I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people."
2. May God empower us daily to maintain our separation as His holy people.