

Judges 08-07-11b

Let's resume our study now in Judges chapter 13, valiantly struggling to get into chapter 14. So we've seen this element of sacrifice and what it represents, and the things that are left out. The things that should be there that aren't.

And what is the result of this? Well, God is still going to get his purpose accomplished. God is not limited by human failure. And there's an application for us because we tend to look around and think, well, this person has failed.

This person has failed me. This person has failed their family. This person has not stepped up.

There's been a grievous error made. This person is actively doing destructive things. And so that's just an insurmountable obstacle.

No, it isn't. God will always accomplish his purpose. All things will work together for good to those who love God.

That's the key. Those who are wise enough, perceptive enough, who love God enough to bring the olah. Who is it that loves God? Those who can do the Romans 12, 1 and 2 thing.

Who remember to do it day by day by day. My famous favorite quote by Theodore Roosevelt, we can strive valiantly and still err and come short again and again and again. We are out there in the arena and the bull is just trampling us all over the place.

You've seen these great videos where guys are in the rodeo and they can't get their foot out of the stirrup or their hand gets caught in the bull rope. I feel that way sometimes. I feel like I did something wrong here and I'm just being flailed and pummeled.

I did this. I messed up. But the grace of God, it's like that hymn, grace greater than all our sin.

It doesn't matter how we fail. What matters is what we do after we fail. We can either avail ourselves of God's grace or we can sit there in a pool of self-pity and wallow in it and start actually being arrogant and self-important because we make so much of our problem.

What we need to do is focus on God, get our eyes back on the Lord and on His plan and on His purpose, dust ourselves off and move forward. Leave that stuff. You think about the apostle Paul who actively prosecuted and persecuted and hounded and imprisoned Christians, dispossessed them of their property, separated them from their families, did horrible things to believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and come to find out he's destined to be an apostle.

How do you live with yourself with a history like that? Paul says, forgetting those things which are behind, I press toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. I can't let myself be ensnared, laying aside every weight, the sin that besets us and entangles us, surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, by so many great examples, by so much scripture. We can't

afford to sit there and moan and groan.

It doesn't matter how badly we messed up or somebody else messed up. It doesn't matter how bad things are in Israel in Manoah's day. The only thing that matters is where there is a particle of faith, God can and will work.

God is going to accomplish his purpose. God is laying the groundwork right now for future generations. He is laying the groundwork for Samson to pick up the fallen spears and javelins and swords and shields and go against the Philistines.

Saul is going to pick it up and carry it a little further. And David is going to pick it up and he is going to smash them. He is going to destroy them.

He is going to eliminate them as a force in Israel. But Samson is going to begin the deliverance. Remember, Eli and his sons are already alive.

Samuel is a little boy at this point. These things are already in the workings of God's plan and purpose. It's already happening.

God is working in national Israel. What does national Israel in the Old Testament represent for us, for you and me? It's our individual life. We can look around the devastated landscape of our souls sometimes and think, oh, this is just terrible.

It's like Israel in the days of the judges. We've been doing what's right in our own eyes. We've gotten busy with other things.

We've either been apathetic or we've been inconsistent or maybe we've been doing pretty well and then we suddenly made a catastrophic mistake. Whatever it may be, we find ourselves looking at the tatters and shreds of what should have been living in and possessing God's blessing. Forget it.

Pick up. God's grace is sufficient. If we are alive... A pastor taught me in my early days used to always say, if you are still alive, God still has a plan for your life.

It is never too late until you quit breathing and your heart quits beating. Then it's too late. That's when your record is closed.

But any of us that are alive and breathing good air, God has a plan for our life and it's time to get with it. It's time to pick ourselves up by God's grace, transform ourselves, renew ourselves, experience the washing of water by the Word, the enablement of God's Holy Spirit. That is power.

No other philosophy, no other tradition, no other religion, no other approach to life has divine enablement. And we know how it works. A lot of people can go to church on Sunday and people say, God has power.

Christians have everything, victory in Jesus and all that, and go away on Monday and just get flattened. And on Tuesday get stepped on. And on Wednesday fall into a pit.

And on Thursday get slapped around. And on Friday get stomped to death. And on Saturday be devoured by a roaring lion.

Go to church on Sunday, victory in Jesus, and then start the whole thing over again. And it's very depressing. I've been through that.

It gets so frustrating to me. What is the big deal about being a Christian if my life turns out just as crummy as everybody else's? I don't have any more power than my friends who can't find which end of the Bible to hold up. What's the difference? We know that the power of God comes into the life of the believer.

We know specifically how. It's not by prayer. It's not by wishing upon a star.

It's not by climbing on our knees up a long flight of stairs like some of the Catholics do. It's not by making a pilgrimage. How does the power of God come into the life of the believer? It is through the Word of God and through the Spirit of God.

How do we get the Word of God? We do what we're doing right now. We open the pages of the Word, find somebody who's got some tools to explain it, to dig out the truth that is contained therein, and we learn it. What is the other essential part without which knowledge of the Word is useless? It's the Spirit of God.

How do we make sure that the Spirit of God, who is ever-present, He is the seal for every believer, but how can He be in a position to do His work? We have to acknowledge our sins. Psalm 51, 1 John 1.9 Against thee and thee only have I sinned. Purge me.

Wash me. I homologeo. I recognize and acknowledge my sin.

He is faithful and just. He forgives us. He cleanses us.

Now we can walk in the light. If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, what does it mean to walk in the light? Well, don't do dumb things. We have fellowship.

What is the light? The light is the guidance, the truth, the illumination, the perspective of God's Word. Is this an important thing I'm doing? What would be a better use of my time? What should my priorities be today? What should my values be as I look at things that I'm trying to assign an importance to? What should my goal be? What should my goal be for the day? Goals, values, and priorities ought to be established in the light of God's Word. That's walking in the light.

And God the Holy Spirit speaks to us through the Word if we let Him. And all we have to do to let Him speak is keep the decks clear of sin and want to hear His voice. Prophets came to Israel.

The Lord Jesus Christ came to Israel. All they had to do was listen. All they had to do was have an open heart and an open mind.

All they had to do was to be asking and seeking and knocking. God is waiting to answer. He is waiting to open.

Well, this is everything that's lacking in Israel at this time. But there's a couple. The husband, like many husbands, like many of us, is goofing up.

His wife's got more on the ball than he does. God comes to the wife. This pattern has been established clear back in the days of Deborah.

The men in Israel, nobody could lead his way out of a wet wineskin. So they've got to use a woman to lead. And it's a rebuke.

It's a reminder. What's the matter with the men in Israel? Same thing here in a condensed way. So, the angel of the Lord does this miracle.

And it is labeled a miracle. He did a wondrous thing. The word there in Hebrew means it's a miracle.

He did a wonder. Obviously, going up in the smoke, that's a pretty good trick. It's a wondrous thing.

Why does the Bible explicitly label it a wonder and a miracle, even before it happens, before it's described? Because we are to understand that the purification of our insufficient and partial and imperfect obedience, God's purification of it, God's rendering it acceptable, is a miracle. It's a wonder. God does it.

God sent his messenger into this screwed-up situation, this screwed-up couple with a completely backwards understanding. And they mess up their *ola*. They mess up their *minkat*.

None of it's right. There's no frankincense. There's no salt.

We don't know if there's any oil involved. They get a few of the elements on a rock. And it's the closest anybody's come to an *ola* and a *minkat* in a long time.

God says, you know what? I'll take it. I'll work with it. My messenger will go up with the smoke.

And his acceptability makes the smoke and thereby the entire offering a sweet-smelling savor. God sees that smoke ascending toward heaven. He sees his messenger in its midst.

And his messenger has been faithful. And that purifies the whole thing. And it's a foreshadowing.

The angel of the Lord is not Jesus Christ. But this angel of the Lord foreshadows the ministry of Jesus Christ. He is going to come to Israel when it is in much the same condition.

1,100 years from now. Jesus is going to come. And he is going to be God's messenger.

Hebrews 1. Many parts, many ways. God spoke in times past. In these latter days, he has spoken to us by a son.

The son is God's messenger. And the son is going to come. And he is going to speak God's truth.

And any response in Israel, he is going to render acceptable by his very presence in its midst. So, the flame went up toward heaven from the altar. Notice that the rock has become an altar.

It started out a rock, but because the angel has gotten into the smoke, now that rock is an altar. In the same way that when Jesus touched the leper, it didn't render Jesus unclean. It rendered the leper clean.

This sacrifice, because the messenger has gotten into the smoke, that has purified the sacrifice, and the sacrifice has purified the rock. This rock isn't qualified to be an altar. Go look up the specifications for an altar in Israel.

This isn't it. But it's recognized by God as an altar, and it's called an altar. And it's all because God's holy messenger has sanctified and purified this whole operation.

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. They recognized if they had been rationalizing or thinking, well, maybe this is just a man of God or a prophet or something.

Well, now there is no doubt. This is a supernatural visitation from heaven. And they recognized that seeing this messenger is just like seeing God.

What is it like to see Jesus Christ? What did he say about himself? If you've seen me, you've seen the Father. Manoah and his wife, and again, this is one of the reasons God chose them. They mess a lot of things up here.

But there are some things they know. Manoah knows if you see the messenger, that's as good as seeing God. If you hear the messenger, you've heard God.

And he just gets the two freely confused, as many expositors and commentators have done since who think that the angel of the Lord actually is the pre-incarnate Christ. It's an easy confusion to make because he does prefigure and foreshadow ministries of Jesus Christ. But he's not.

Read Hebrews 1. To which of the angels did he ever say, sit at my right hand? Jesus is not an angel. He's never appeared as an angel. He's never taken on angelic form.

And this is an angel. But this angel is closely identified. He prefigures and represents and symbolizes things that Jesus will do.

So the confusion, while it's sad that it happens, it's understandable. So, when Manoah and his wife saw it, they fell on their faces to the ground. This is the classic posture of people who realize that they are in the presence of God.

Ezekiel does it. Moses does it. Jacob does it.

Abram does it. People that have ever come into the presence of God or the angel of the Lord typically end up on their face in the dirt. Sadly, you don't see this attitude of reverence toward God and the things of God and the message of God at large in the church today.

We've got a lot of real casual T-shirt and flicks reverence for God. We have a lot of familiarity. We have a lot of people saying that God is awesome, but they don't have an awe of God.

If there is one word... If I had the power to subtract one word from the English language, God comes down from heaven and says, Sam, I'll tell you what, pick a word and I'll erase it from the brains of everybody that speaks English. You know what word I would pick? Awesome. I am so caught in picking, sick of hearing everything in the world described as awesome.

It is overused. It is overworked. Do people even stop and think what awe is supposed to be? A-W-E? A-W-E? This is something that ought to be reserved for God and His holy presence and a respect and a reverence for God properly understood will put us on our face in the dirt.

People got this little toe-tapping tune, Our God is an awesome God. It's kind of a little jumpy tune. It doesn't sound like an awesome... Maybe it's just cultural or it's my personal taste.

If people like that song, that's fine. But I don't like that song because to me it's like jazz versions of Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed? I actually heard this on the radio one Sunday. There's a brass jazz band that does hymns and it's like, Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed? And Did My Sovereign Die? You want to talk about slaughtering a song, I mean slaughtering it.

Slitting it from throat to crotch and eviscerating it. That's what that does. It's horrifying.

Where is the awe of God that used to put people on their face just to see God's messenger? Even in the presence of a prophet, people would be down on their face. We seem to have largely lost that. Manoah and his wife have the good sense to recognize when they see a wonder from God, it's time to be on your face.

It's time to have a holy fear. So much so that Manoah, as soon as the angel of the Lord is gone, Manoah knew he was the angel of the Lord. Not just a man of God.

Not just a, oh, send that guy back for a message. This is a visitation from heaven. And Manoah recognizes it and it strikes fear into his heart.

So Manoah says to his wife, we shall surely die because we have seen God. It just got through telling us he knows it's the angel of God. But in his mind, he has seen God.

How does that work? Well, I've given you this analogy many times. In the ancient world, amongst the Hebrews, amongst the Israelites, it's like the telephone. If you get a call, you're talking to the person.

I mean, technically speaking, someone would walk in, some aborigine from some uncivilized place would come in and say, well, he's talking to that object in his hand. He's talking to that little thing with the shiny buttons on it. And you're talking on a cell phone.

He would say, well, you're talking to that box. You're talking to that device. Well, you're actually talking to a person and the device is just a link.

But in our minds, I'm not talking to a phone. I'm talking to my wife or my daughter or my brother or my mother, whoever. It's on the other end.

And the phone disappears because it's a conduit. It's a channel. It's just a way of getting the message back and forth.

And it actually disappears. That's how it was. Angels and prophets in the ancient world disappeared.

And to hear the Word of God was to be in the presence of God. And that's how Manoah understood it, even at this late date. But he draws a wrong conclusion.

And thankfully, his wife has got a little bit more going on upstairs than he does. Just stop and think about this for a moment. And this is another point of application.

We need to think about what we know. It's not enough to know things. Manoah knows that he's seen an angel of the Lord.

And he knows that no man can see God and live. Right? This has been well known. There's lots of references to this in Scripture.

You've probably got some cross-references there in your New King James to talk about other places where... Jacob says he calls the place Peniel. I've seen the face of God, and I'm still alive. Several occasions like this.

Well, Manoah knows this. And so he says we shall surely die because we've seen God. It's not enough to know a thing.

You've got to put your knowledge together. This is a large part of what goes on in junior high and high school. You spend elementary school and the early part of junior high teaching children facts.

You spend the latter part of junior high and high school teaching children how to assemble facts into a structure from which they can draw conclusions. That's why you have so many story problems. You know that rate times time equals distance.

You've got your rate-time-distance formula. And how do you apply that? How do you put that knowledge together to figure out the train from Chicago and the train from Detroit or wherever it is and how fast they're going and when they're going to meet and how far they will have traveled? Well, you know the rate-time-distance formula and you know the facts that are given in the problem. And the whole exercise is to teach you to think and use the facts that you know.

Manoah's got two pieces of information here. He knows that he's just seen the angel of the Lord and he knows that this angel of the Lord has brought them a message that they're going to have a son and he has been specifically instructed by the angel to make sure that his wife follows the Nazarite code. Did the angel not say to him, be sure that she does this? Well, if the angel has said, Manoah, be sure that your wife follows this code, he can't very well do that if he's dead.

And it seems like an absurdly obvious conclusion for us, but Manoah doesn't put those two pieces of information together. Now listen, you and I know a lot of things from the Word of God. I could ask you, I could give you a quiz, you could cite them, you could give me, in some cases, the verse from which they come.

But it's our job, we've got to stop and think. And this is why meditation is so important. This is why people who simply look at Bible class as their spiritual life always fail.

Churches that encourage and foster the idea that if you come to Bible class enough, you're going to be a great Christian, you're going to have a great spiritual life, are going to eventually be split open to reveal a hollow center. Why? Because your spiritual life is not what you learn. Your spiritual life is what you think.

Your spiritual life is not what you know. Your spiritual life is what you conclude and what you decide in the light of those conclusions. And you can't leave your notebook on your chair.

You can't stick your Bible on the shelf until the next time it's Bible class. What you know is not going to be judged at the judgment seat of Christ. What is the basis for the great white throne judgment? The books are opened and men are judged according to their thoughts, according to their knowledge.

They are given a multiple choice test. What happens at the judgments? Any judgment of God, any evaluation, any bema, any judgment seat. What is the basis for evaluation? Works.

This is the book of James. I was just talking to my dad this morning and we were talking about the book of James and Martin Luther had some things to say about the book of James. It's a tough book.

A lot of people have believed that there's a great amount of tension between Paul's gospel of grace and James' gospel of works. James says, you show me your faith, I'll show you my works. You show me your faith without your works, I'll show you my faith by my works.

There's thought to be some sort of tension. Part of that is a misunderstanding of the book of James. But, here's the point.

Faith without works is dead because it has no fruit. And this is a different use of the word faith. Faith in the active sense is implementing what we know of God's truth.

It's looking at it and saying, well, that's true, therefore. I've always used the example of faith and hope. You have a favorite set of relatives or a favorite somebody, somebody you love, somebody you know, somebody you really look forward to seeing and they're at a distance.

And arrangements are made and they're going to come visit. And you say, well, next Friday, so-and-so is going to be here. Well, you're immediately full of anticipation and you spend the whole next several days, everything you do, it isn't long before your mind returns to that thought.

You think, well, there's certain things I want to get done. I want to be sure and get certain groceries. I want to get this room cleaned up.

I want to have this squared away. I want to be sure that this and that and the other are done because this day is coming up and this visit is about to happen. And not every single waking moment, but frequently during the day, your mind returns to the idea that this thing is coming up.

And you have goals and values and priorities all during that week that are conditioned by this expectation. Well, that's the closest analogy I can think of for the way we ought to live our lives as believers. Frequently during the day, it ought to return to our mind, we're going to be reunited with the Lord Jesus Christ.

We're going to be living in the eternal future. The things that we're doing now are laying up treasure in heaven. They are making preparation.

God is building capabilities and opportunities and assignments and wonderful things for us based on how expectant and how hopeful we are right now. Well, Manoah has this information and he doesn't put it together. It doesn't affect his viewpoint.

He says, we're going to die now. We've seen the angel of the Lord. You know what they say, see God and die.

So, we're going to die. And he doesn't think, well, come on. The guy said you're going to have a son and you've got to be sure.

Did his wife see the angel also? Is she going to die too? It's going to make it pretty tough to have this son. If she's dead and he's dead, what's the point of the visit of the angel? Just to kill them? It doesn't make any sense. But listen, it is no less silly than what we do.

We have knowledge from God and we ought to know better than we do. We're fearful when we

shouldn't be. We are worried when we shouldn't be.

We are angry with one another when we shouldn't be. We are insecure. We are distracted when we shouldn't be.

Because we've got pieces of information that we have not synthesized into conclusions. We're back in elementary school. We're getting facts, but we're not skilled at putting them together and living in the light of them and solving problems because we know them.

So his wife, thank heaven, is smarter than Manoah. His wife says to him, If the Lord had desired to kill us, he would not have accepted an olah and a minkah from our hands. And notice, she recognizes that God accepted this offering with all of its flaws.

No Levites, no tabernacle, no altar, no frankincense, no salt, no oil, all of these things. God accepted it and she knows that. She says, look, God accepted our offering.

That angel went up in that smoke. That was an acceptable offering. He didn't step 15 paces to the left and then go up and say, don't get me near that smoke because God's going to sneeze when that one hits heaven.

She says, God accepted that. We're accepted in God's sight. So he's not going to kill us.

And think about it. Why would he have shown us these things? Why would he have given us this message if he was going to kill us? So this is a wrong conclusion to draw from your one fact. Put the rest of your facts with it and your conclusion will be different.

This is why we have to try to comprehend the whole counsel of scripture when we're looking at any given idea. People say, God is sovereign. Look at Romans 9. Vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, etc.

Listen, you can't go with one passage, one set of facts, and get a correct conclusion. You've got to synthesize everything that bears, everything that pertains. You want to talk about vessels that are for common use or vessels that are for holy use? Go to Paul's other passage where he's talking to Timothy and he says, people that may have been messed up, if they cleanse themselves from sin, they can make themselves into vessels of honor.

It's the very same phrase he uses in Romans 9. Now, if God is all sovereign and he determines who's a vessel of wrath and who's a vessel of honor, and it's all in the counsels of the immutable decrees of God in eternity past, then why does that same author tell Timothy men can cleanse themselves and make themselves into vessels of honor? You've got to get all of your facts together so that you can draw a right conclusion and live in their light. You don't sit back and say, well, I sure hope God decreed that I'm going to be a faithful believer because, you know, efficacious grace. I'm just waiting for God's work in me to be willing to do.

Well, I kind of feel like sitting here and potatoing out today. So, I guess God just didn't decree

that I would be a great warrior of the faith. Maybe tomorrow He'll decree it.

And there's an inevitable sloth and there's an inevitable screwiness that gets into Christianity because people take one fact and say, well, God's going to kill some of us and He's going to take the rest of us to heaven. That's all there is. You don't want to be Manoah.

You want to be Manoah's wife. Let's put our facts together. We have a responsibility.

God has given us something to do and we've got to get with it and do it. And she figures that out. God would not have accepted our offerings.

He would not have shown us these things. He would not have told us such things as these at this time if He was going to kill us. Sure enough, the woman bore a son and called his name Samson.

And the child grew and the Lord blessed him. Do you see anything odd in that verse? The woman bore a son and called his name Samson. And the child grew and the Lord blessed him.

Normally, the man would name the sons. Any time you see the women naming the sons, there's something bad going on. When's the last time you can remember women assigning names to sons? Jacob.

You've got Leah and Rachel and Bilhah and Zilpah. And you've got Rachel and Leah giving all these names. That was a big problem.

God still worked it together for good. You've got 12 tribes in Israel. That's what God wanted.

But God had to turn cursing into blessing. God had to work in spite of people instead of because of them. And when you see women taking men's roles, that's a problem.

Manoah should have named this son. But the woman names him. And what does she name him? Shimshon.

Shimshon. That's S-H-M-S-H-N in Hebrew. Those are the consonants.

You've got a sheen, a maim, a sheen, and a noon. Shimshon. Take out the consonants.

It's Shimshon. Well, take off the N and what do you have? S-H-M-S-H. Shemesh.

Shemesh is the Semitic word, the Hebrew word, for the sun. These people live pretty close to the town of Beth Shemesh. Beth, house of the sun.

There is a house in Israel called Beth Shemesh. It's not in New Orleans. It's not rising.

It's just Beth Shemesh. It's the house of the sun. And so you think, well, why would she name him Shemesh? Shemshon.

The N just means he's kind of derived from or associated with of the sun, from the sun, son of the sun, son, son, come here, son. That's kind of how it would work. Why would she call him that? Well, remember what Malachi talks about? The sun rising with healing in his wings.

The prophecy of Zacharias, a lot of places where you have the imagery of the sun, the direction of the east is the direction of hope because that is where the sun rises and the day dawns. God's mercies are renewed when? At midnight? Every morning when the sun rises and the darkness is dispelled. What does the sun do? It drives out darkness.

It creates fertility and fruitfulness and hope. It warms things. It is the engine that drives everything in nature.

And she says this is our hope. This is something new. This will drive out the darkness.

She names him Shemshon. He's of the sun. The child grew and the Lord blessed him and the spirit of the Lord began to move upon him at Mahana Dan between Zorah and Eshtoel.

I've only got time to cover one more point here. The child grew and the Lord blessed him and the spirit of the Lord began to move upon him at Mahana Dan. Mahana just means camp, the camp of Dan.

Well, this typically, when you talk about the camp, this is the people on the move. They're supposed to be settled. They're supposed to be in towns and villages and farms and houses.

Why would they be in a camp? The camp of Israel is what they had in the wilderness for 40 years. The camp is where the soldiers are when they go off to battle. Mahana is a temporary dwelling.

Even now, you're going to go out to the national park or something and camp. Well, you're not going to live there. It's temporary.

So he's gone from being in this area of Dan and this clan of Dan and this town of leprosy to the camp of Dan. He's at the camp of Dan. He's between Zorah, leprosy, and Esh Taol.

This is a real tough one to figure out, but this is basically, I think, and it's not in the lexicon, but I think this is a combination of two words. Esh means tree and the rest of this word, I won't go through all the lexical stuff, but the verb from which this is likely derived has the idea of making a decision, of choosing. And there are many places where there's like a tree of decision.

The burning bush was a tree of decision for Moses. The oaks at Mamre and the oak of Moreh and the terebinth tree in Hebron, at Bethel, all of these different places, there were trees and they were decision points. And so you get the idea that Samson is between the walking death of Zorah and Esh Taol, which is not just a decision place, but I think, and there's some lexical difficulties trying to figure out where the Esh part of this came from.

There's Esh and then there's Sha'al. And how does the T get in the middle of it? Well, there's Esh

Tamoah, it has a similar derivation and there's an Arabic influence here. There's an influence from outside.

But here's the point. Where is Samson when the Spirit comes on him? He's between these symbolically named places. One represents that which is leprous, that which is a walking death.

And the other, I think, is the tree of decision. God, the Holy Spirit, comes on and Samson's got to make a choice and the Spirit of God comes upon him. The word here doesn't mean to come upon or to move upon.

It literally means, it kind of means it's stepped on him. It's a word that means to tread or to step. It means to stir.

It's the Hebrew word Paam, P-A-A-M, and it's two different A's. It's Paam, actually, the longer A and the shorter A. Paam. It means basically to thrust or to propel something, to impel something.

But it was used a lot of walking. It was used of beating on an anvil. We talk about, well, I've got to beat feet.

Here she comes snapping her fingers and shuffling her feet. You slap your feet on the ground and this impels you. This moves you.

This thrusts you forward, moving your feet. It has the idea of taking steps, of a repetitive pounding. That's what Paam is.

Paam, Paam, Paam. It's almost onomopoeitic. It's like left, right, left, right.

One, two, one, two. And it has this idea of movement in impulsive steps. It was used in Judges 5, talking about the mother of Sisera.

You remember when J.L. pounds a peg through his head and his mother is looking out the window waiting for him to come home from the battle. Why does this chariot delay in coming? Why do the hoofbeats of his chariot tarry? And the word hoofbeats is from this Paam. How come I don't hear, even before I can see him, why don't I hear the rumble? Why don't I hear the pa-pa-pa-pa-pa of those horses' hooves? In Psalm 57.7, enemies have prepared a net for my steps.

My soul is bowed down. I'm trying to work my way forward. I'm trying to beat feet.

I'm trying to pound ground. I'm trying to go forward. I'm trying to march.

And the enemies have prepared a net and they're knocking me off stride. It's a very pregnant word. The Spirit of the Lord begins to pound on him and pound in him and cause him to take steps.

It impels and it propels him. There's a lot of other passages I could give you on this, but here's the point. The Spirit is there.

What's he going to do with it? Is he going to be a great hero of the faith? Is he going to pray? Is he going to find a prophet? Is he going to appeal to the Urim and Thummim? Is he going to look to God? Even Gideon looks for a messenger from God and puts out the fleece and seeks guidance from God. How do I do this? How do I know that my mission is from You? Think about the story of Samson. We know this story.

Does Samson ever turn his eyes heavenward? Does he ever inquire of God? Does he ever question what his purpose is or what his mission is or why he's there? He's a Nazarite. He's been marked with the external, visible features of somebody that is designated by God for special tasks. He doesn't care.

He's not interested in it. Look at chapter 14, and we're finally there. Chapter 14, Samson went down to Timnah and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines.

Where is he looking? What appeals to his eye? A woman of the Philistines. You know, there are certain things that you have to try to... Laurie knows this. At school, there's an old navel saying sailors need to keep their eyes in the boat.

If you've got oarsmen and they're rowing a long boat, it used to be when you actually had to row these things instead of drive them between a sailing ship and the shore, you'd have oarsmen. You might have three on a side, four on a side. You've got the captain sitting in the stern sheets.

You've got the coxswain up in the front, and he's making sure this boat goes where it's supposed to go. Well, these guys have got to keep their eyes on each other and on the guy up front to make sure the strokes are even and the boat goes in a straight line. If you start looking around, oh, look, a seagull or a pelican.

Look at those porpoises or something. Well, the first thing you know, you're going to be stabbing the guy in front of you in the kidneys with the butt of your oar. He's going to be thrown off.

You can actually capsize a boat by not keeping your eyes on the boat, which is a metaphor for keeping your mind on your business, looking in the right place at the right time. Focus on where you need to be focused. Don't let your attention wander into places that it shouldn't.

Keep your eyes on the boat. Samson lives in the camp of Dan. He's in a temporary place.

He's going to either move toward Philistia or he's going to move toward Israel. He's either going to move toward the things of God or he's going to move toward the things of the uncircumcised. Well, he sees a woman in Timnah.

He's spending his time down in Timnah. This is a town of the Philistines. So he went up and he 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. Get her for me as a wife. Can you think of another relatively famous individual in the earlier history of the Bible that got a wife not of his own people? And his brother was very careful to get not one, but two wives from his own people.

He got sent up there by his mother. Jacob goes up. I want you to get a wife from our own people.

Abram sends his servant to get his son Isaac, a wife from their own people. Rebecca sends Jacob up there to get a wife from my brother's house. Who in that whole family didn't marry a wife from his own people? Esau.

And now Samson purposely... He's going to go through the motions. Marriages were arranged by the parents. And the parents put up sort of a token resistance here.

His father and mother say, 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? Why uncircumcised? A lot of the Canaanites, the Shemites, the Semitic people, had a tradition of circumcision. So did the Egyptians. You can go to secular history.

The people in this region who did not practice circumcision were the Philistines. It separated them. It marked them out in this day.

Later on, it's going to be many others. The Babylonians and Assyrians and so on. But right now, all of these Shemitic, all of these Semitic peoples practice circumcision, which tells you that this is something that predated Abraham.

It goes all the way back to Melchizedek. It goes all the way back to Shem. And they still practice it, even though it has lost all meaning.

Why are you going to the uncircumcised Philistines? Samson said to his father, notice, he started out going to his father and mother, Who do you think said, Is there no woman among the daughters of your brethren? Who was speaking when he was talking to his parents? His mother. So his mother doesn't go for this. So who does he know is the weak link in the chain here? Who's the old softy that will do what he wants? Who's the man made of mush? It's Manoah.

It's old, we're all going to die. So he goes to his father, Get her for me, for she pleases me well. And this phrase here, She is good in my sight.

It's the exact same phrase that's used for God, when something is pleasing in God's sight. It's the exact same phrase. She is good in my sight.

Get her for me. His father and mother did not know. The father is going to fall for it.

The mother is against it. Neither one of them know that this is going to happen and God is going to work it out. He's seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines.

The Philistines had dominion over Israel. So Samson is going to make this thing happen. But our concluding point for tonight is this.

We have the Spirit, just like Samson did. We can move toward the tree of decision, toward the place where we have the opportunity to make daily decisions in the power of the Spirit that give us possession of eternal things. It's small things.

It's patience. It's peace. It's long-suffering.

It's gentleness and goodness. Humility and self-control. Small daily decisions accrue.

It's like interest on an investment. If you keep it in the right place, if you keep your assets in the right place, they earn interest. Our faith, our daily small decisions are like the APR.

And we accrue treasure in heaven. We accrue possession. And these possessions go beyond just some sort of physical thing like, well, gee, I've got an extra room on my mansion.

We are going to have opportunities. We are going to have capabilities. We are going to have special things that are beyond our comprehension.

We earn them. We move into the categories. We are going to be in neighborhoods in the New Jerusalem.

I mean, you just can't even comprehend what small daily decisions are going to do in the eternal future. Buddhists can't do that. Hindus can't do that.

Pagans can't do that. New-agers can't do it. Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit and the Word of God move themselves into eternity.

We have this opportunity by Christ, by faith, by the power of the Spirit, by the Word of God. We stand right where Samson stands. We're in the camp.

We can move one direction or the other. Well, we'll pick up here and see what Samson chooses and what the results are and whether or not the plan of God is thwarted next time. Father, thank you for the truth of your Word.

Thank you for the wonderful and graphic way that it is illustrated throughout your Old Testament and New. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress these truths on our hearts. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.