

Judges 08-07-18b

Let's resume our study now in Judges chapter 14. I suggested just before the break that we pay a little bit more attention to the episode with the lion. It gets pretty short shrift, surprisingly, in the commentaries that I have checked.

It mainly just people say, well, they're just telling this story so that it explains how he comes to ask this riddle. But this riddle plays a really big part in this portion of the Samson story. The origin of it, the telling of it, the resolution of it.

And it's interesting to me. Now, I am always trying to be careful about allegorical interpretation or reading too much into a passage and seeing all kinds of fantastic things that maybe God never intended to be there. But if you look at the repetition in this story, the things that the text itself emphasizes by that means.

And if you step back and realize that God has had his plan for salvation, he has had his plan for the nation of Israel from before the foundation of the world. And whether or not Israel knew it, whether or not people in David's day or in Isaiah's day or in Ezra's day or in any other day ever knew it, God has known it from the beginning. And I think some of us enjoy subtle things, subtle humor.

Sometimes you make a remark, at least I do. I'll say something or make a comment or remark and nobody gets it but me. I just entertain myself because I know what it means.

And this happened recently. I was in a discussion with a guy who was trying to make a point that someone had used an indefinite article improperly and talking about, well, someone said, atheists don't want to believe that there is a God because that would entail consequences. And some third party made this comment.

Atheists don't want to believe there is a God because then they would have to deal with the consequences. Well, an atheist responded and said, well, this person misspoke because he should have said, atheists don't want to believe in God, not a God, because a God could be anything. It could be Zeus or Rhea or Gay or GE or whoever.

It could be anything. It could be anybody. And I said, no.

I said, you know, this individual, we'll call him Fred, that made the original remark, I said, you know, Fred may not be a William F. Buckley, but he did not use the article improperly. And nobody got it but me because I had just proved that you can refer to a specific individual with an indefinite article and it is still definite even though it's indefinite. How many William F. Buckleys have there ever been that were, I mean, there's only one.

He's unique. He's one of a kind. You say, well, you know, and I also, somewhere else in my same thing, I said, well, yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus.

And that's sort of a double funny because how many Santa Clauses are there? Well, there's one, but there's a million, you know, at Christmas time. And so I just entertain myself. I say these things.

I know what they mean. Nobody else gets it, just like tonight. But I just found it to be entertaining because there was a truth in it.

You know, if someone says, do you believe there is a God, and A is a capital G, you know, there's no doubt that you're talking about the one and only God, the God of Abraham, the unique God who, of course, is three in one, and it's like Santa Claus. He's one, but he's, anyway, it's, but I think God does this. My whole point in bringing that illustration up is God does this.

God can put whatever he wants into his scripture, and God knows what's going to happen before it happens. He identifies himself to Israel in this way. You remember in the prophets, he says, what other God is there that tells you what's going to happen before it happens? This is how you know it's me.

I tell you things before they happen. A virgin will conceive and bear a son. And before the child, and this was not Mary, boy, you want to talk about getting labeled a heretic.

You go to Isaiah 7.14, behold, a betula, a young maiden, will conceive and bear a son. And before he knows his right hand from his left, certain things are going to happen in Israel. That's not Mary, and it's not Jesus.

It foreshadows, it pictures ahead of time what's going to happen, where a true virgin is going to have a unique son, the Son of God. But the sign in Isaiah 7.14 is a woman who is alive in Isaiah's day. She's in the court, and she has this son.

And before he's old enough to know his right hand from his left, before he eats the curds and whey, or whatever it is, all of these other things happen. It was a sign. He says, this is going to be a sign in this day, in this age.

It's a current event that foreshadows future things. And people get so mixed up on that. You go to Isaiah 7.14, you want to quote that.

You want to put it in a transcript. And somebody says, well, that son needs to be capital S, because that's Jesus. Look in your New King James.

I haven't looked, but I'll bet you it's capitalized. You look at Isaiah 7.14, I bet it's capital S. Bet you a nickel. It shouldn't be.

The first reference is not Jesus. It was a little boy that was born within a few months of the prophecy. And before he got old enough to know his right hand from his left, God resolved certain issues.

This was a sign to the king. The prophet says, king, what kind of sign? Well, I'm not going to ask

a sign. I'm not going to tempt God.

He says, well, look, God's going to give you this sign. Well, I say all of that to say this. In Judges chapter 14, this episode with the lion is its own thing.

It certainly is the basis for the riddle and so on. But God knows what he's doing. And the reason he spends time on this is it is a picture.

It is a picture of Israel in its perpetual condition of falling short. Israel, very few generations in Israel ever get it right, because they are short of some of the things that God has given you and me. The Holy Spirit was not yet given.

They had to rely on external things. God is making a point with Old Testament Israel. You cannot please God in your own strength.

You cannot please God apart from what God provides. And you've got to be dedicated to the things that God has provided. His sacrifices, his priesthood, his provision.

And if you don't rely on what God provides and you start relying on your own strength, what does Paul say in Romans? Israel, not grabbing hold of the righteousness of God and seeking to establish their own, has fallen short. That's a paraphrase. Well, here's what I would like to suggest to you.

Samson is the strength of Israel, but it's like Jacob wrestling with the man until dawn. Jesus talked about this in the New Testament. From long ago times, the kingdom of God has been offered, and men have been trying to force their way into it.

They've been trying to take it by force. Jacob tried to take a blessing by force. I will not let you go until you bless me.

I will work, I will struggle, I will wrestle, and I will get a blessing out of you. I will get a blessing by my own strength. Samson decides he wants certain things, and he's going to get them by his own strength.

It is a paradigm. It's symbolic of everything that's wrong in Israel, that they keep trying to establish righteousness by their own efforts. They want to obtain blessing by their own efforts.

They want to make life good for themselves by their own efforts. We do this today, and charlatans and false Christianity play right into this. Why do you think the prayer of Jabez was so popular? Because it's something you have to do.

You've got to learn this prayer. You've got to decipher it and decode it, and you've got to pray it, and you've got to work it into your thing. Why is experiencing God so popular? Because you've got to go and join God, find where God is at work, join God in his work.

And by your efforts, that's why I told you, look at the cover of the workbook for experiencing

God. Whose picture is on the cover? Moses. Because it's the works of the law.

You couldn't have picked a better cover. If I was picking a cover for the experiencing God workbook, that's exactly what I would pick. It's very emblematic.

It's the works of the law. Scripture says, by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. And yet God commanded Israel to obey.

But it was not in the doing. It was the attitude behind the doing. They missed it.

Samson is doing things to the Philistines, but what's his attitude behind it? Is he being a thorn in the side of the Philistines because he's trying to fulfill God's commission? Is he looking to God and down on his knees and putting out a fleece? Does Samson ever, until the very end, does he ever pray? Does he ever consult? No, he's, I want a woman. Dad, get me a woman. I'm put out.

You're angry. I'm angry. Tie things together and set fire to stuff.

He doesn't care anything about the plan of God. He doesn't care that he's a Nazarite. He doesn't care anything about anything.

And yet God is still going to use him. Now, step back and look at the sweep of human history. Think, for example, of the fallen angels, the third of the angels that followed Satan in rebellion and put themselves in the uncircumcised category, so to speak.

Think of them as the Philistines. Think of God using his people, Israel, even in their disobedience, even in their messed up attitude, God uses them to make a point. And initially, Satan and the fallen angels thought, you know what? This is going to work out great because Israel is so messed up and God's going to try to send his son into the world and I'm going to thwart this whole... whatever it is God's up to, I'm going to thwart it.

And I've got ready pawns right here in the nation of Israel. I've got the Pharisees and the Scribes and the Sadducees and the Zealots. I've got a lot to work with here.

This is going to be easy. And Satan gets into the heart of Judas. Satan gets into the heart of Peter to disrupt the plan and the purpose of God.

And he thinks he has succeeded when Christ ends up on the cross. Here comes the lion and Samson, in his strength, divides him. And he's dead.

Samson comes back by sometime later and this dead carcass, where you would think there would be only decay and awfulness, defilement, there is instead something new, something alive, something beneficial. I've talked about some of the unique things that we eat. Salt is an inorganic thing that we eat.

I can't really think of anything else that's not an organic product of some sort except salt. Salt is a mineral that we directly eat and people have for centuries. I can't really think of anything else.

We don't sprinkle sulfur on our food. We don't use iron filings. We don't get calcium or potassium or something.

But salt we use, and it's been used from the very beginning. And it represents, as I said, permanence. But honey is also unique.

What is it that Samson pulls out? It's honey. My daughter pointed this out to me not long ago. Almost any other thing that you eat from the animal or vegetable kingdom, something has to die or something has to not ever come alive.

You eat an egg. Well, that could have been a chicken, but now it's not. You eat meat.

You eat plant life. Something has to die. Dairy, that's still something that really belongs to an offspring and we're sort of diverting that somewhere else.

But honey is made by insects and it isn't a part of the life cycle of any other creature. Nobody has to die. Beekeepers, their bees all thrive and they just get some of that out and the bees don't die.

It's kind of unique in that regard. And of the sweeteners, of the things that are sweet, it's one of the healthiest. Fruit sugars are not bad for you and honey is not bad for you the way that processed and refined, sugarcane and sugar beets and that.

So there's a lot of uniqueness here where here is a sweetness that has come out of this carcass. And remember, Samson's a Nazirite. What is the cardinal thing that Nazirites are supposed to avoid? Defilement.

Don't be defiled. Don't touch grapes. Don't touch grape seeds, raisins, anything fruit of the vine.

Avoid defilement of any kind. Now, Samson is reaching into the corpse of a dead animal, but what do his hands contact? Is it rotting flesh and decay? No, it's nourishing. This is what Jonathan uses later to strengthen himself in the midst of the battle.

Remember that whole thing? Honey is mentioned quite a few times in Scripture and it's always good. So what happens as a result of the death of the lion of the tribe of Judah where you would think that nothing but bad is going to come of it? Israel is going to benefit in spite of themselves, aren't they? Israel is going to come away with the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises even though they slew the Lord of Glory. But God is going to work that together for good.

And Samson comes away and not only does he have his, literally it says his palms are full of honey, but he gives it to his mother and father. And this is the one, the only time you ever see Samson benefit his parents in this whole story is when he gives them this honey. It's something that he didn't earn or deserve.

It surprised him. He wasn't expecting it. His action was one of destruction and dismemberment

and death.

But from it comes something nourishing. Out of the eater comes forth something to eat. And out of the strong comes forth something sweet.

So it certainly at least suggests from our vantage point at this late date in history what God is going to do in the Lord Jesus Christ. You would think, well, he is going to tear apart this wicked man. We have other episodes in the Bible where beasts of prey come out and tear people apart for malfunctioning.

Go up Old Bald Head and here come the bears and tear the children in pieces. The wicked princess who tried to have Daniel slain gets thrown in the lion's den and they are shredded to pieces. You would expect that if Samson meets a lion, he would be shredded.

This is what happens when people meet lions in lonely places. But God's operation and God's supernatural deliverance is pictured in this instance. When is the next time a guy is going to slay both a lion and a bear? Just about 100 years in the future or less? Maybe 50 years in the future at this point? You are going to have David with his hands slaying a lion and a bear because the Spirit of the Lord is upon him.

Interestingly, the Spirit of the Lord comes upon Samson here to slay this lion. Why would the Spirit of the Lord energize this? Is it self-defense? Well, it's a part of God's plan. And God wants this episode to be in Samson's mind.

He wants this riddle to be told and answered and so on. So it's full of meaning. It's not something to skip lightly over.

It signifies something. And there's a pattern here that out of what you would think is negative, God works good. God works benefit, even to people who don't deserve it, who haven't earned it and aren't even looking for it.

Because God's got a larger thing at work. So, he went down to verse 7 and talked to the woman. She pleased him.

He sees the swarmed beast. He takes the honey. He did not tell him that he had taken the honey out.

So now in verse 10, his father went down to the woman and Samson gave a feast there for young men used to do so. This was customary. You're celebrating.

You bring a bunch of people. This is like, it's not exactly the bachelor party tradition, but it's close. You're having a big celebration in anticipation of the wedding.

As it happened, when they saw him, they brought 30 companions to be with him. 30 companions. Samson said to them, these 30 Philistine companions, right? These are not Israelite companions.

These are Philistine companions. Let me pose a riddle to you. If you can correctly solve and explain it to me within the seven days of the feast.

It's a seven day feast. Now think about these numbers. We've studied numbers before.

Seven is the number of completion. How long is human history? 7,000 years. God is making a point.

He is demonstrating to the angels and to human beings a lot about His character, His plan and His purpose in this week. Now, where in the week did the Lord Jesus appear? What is the summation, the climax of the ages when the Lord Jesus comes? What mark in the thousands of years? 4,000 years from Adam to Christ. He comes at the 4,000 year mark.

How many days was the Passover lamb kept up to be observed? Four days. A day with the Lord is 1,000 years from the time that God gave the prophecy to Adam in the garden, the seed of the woman, to the Lord Jesus Christ, the unfolding of prophetic revelation about the Lord Jesus began at that point and it unfolds. He's more and more visible.

He's more and more evident. I see Him now, but not near. Balaam says, Behold, star will arise.

And smite the brow of Moab and so on. These unfolding revelations get very specific by the time you get to Ezekiel and Isaiah and some of these other larger prophets. So, 4,000 year mark, Jesus comes, right? And the whole unfolding of God's plan and purpose spans that 7,000 years.

How many pieces of silver did Judas get for betraying the Lord? Thirty. How old was Jesus when He began His earthly ministry? It's a significant number. Let me pose a riddle to you.

If you can explain it within the seven days of the feast, I will give you how many linen garments, how many changes of clothing? Thirty, because there are thirty companions. If you cannot explain it to me, then you shall give me thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing. This is not just shirts off the rack.

These are nice clothes. So they said, pose your riddle that we may hear it. So He said to them, out of the eater came something to eat and out of the strong came something sweet.

And if you read this entire passage, when you get down to the answer, look down at verse 18 when they finally wheedle the answer out of His bride there. What's the answer? What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion? This is like Jeopardy, isn't it? His riddle is not a question, it's a statement. And the answer to the riddle is a question.

It's just like Jeopardy. Those guys probably came to this passage and thought, hey, that would make a great game show. We'll give answers and make somebody come up with the questions.

So that's what's going on here. So He makes this statement. Out of the eater came something to eat and out of the strong came something sweet.

And the real question is, what am I talking about? What question is that the answer to? Now, for three days, they could not explain the riddle. They thought about it for three days. Couldn't figure it out.

Made no sense to them whatsoever. These are the Philistines. And in our step back and look at the big picture, who do the Philistines represent? These are the forces of evil.

You could think about the fallen angels. Israel represented by the mother and father, the leadership in Israel represented by Samson. And, of course, you have the people sort of in the background, but they are standing forward as representative of that group in this time, in this scenario, right? And the forces of evil who would love to overrun and extinguish Israel are the Philistines.

So, for three days, they could not explain the riddle. Where are we in human history in the days of Samson? How much time has passed? We're pretty close to 1,000 B.C., right? How many years from Adam to Christ? 4,000. So, if you're at 1,000 B.C., how many years have passed? 3,000 years, give or take, right? So, about three days have passed when Samson, Eli, Samuel, David, that whole thing, we're right at that mark.

God is about to do a radically new thing in Israel, isn't He? With bringing in the monarchy through Samuel and Saul and David and Solomon. We're right at that mark. This deliverance is beginning with the judges.

Deliverance from the Philistines is beginning with who? And who does it end with? David. Who begins whipping up on the Philistines? Who creates the conflict that now we're in armed opposition instead of accommodation and compromise and intermarriage? Samson. Who finishes that job? You never hear the Philistines again after the reign of David.

There are no Philistines left. He has wiped them out. They are gone.

The most you ever see are the Karathites and the Pelathites. Karathites and Pelathites. That's about it, because that civilization is defunct.

So, for three days they could not explain the riddle, but it came to pass. Now, your Bible says on the seventh day, cross it out. It's the fourth day.

The explanation of how this got changed is really kind of interesting, because the Hebrew words here for fourth and seventh only differ by a tiny little letter. And it just got scrambled. The Septuagint and the Syriac have it right.

If you go to the Septuagint, it's the fourth day. If you go to the Syriac, the Syriac Prashida goes back to some ancient manuscripts that the Masoretic guys weren't using. And this is the fourth day.

On the fourth day. You'll see why this makes sense later on. It's the fourth day.

Seventh is wrong. Flat out wrong. Easily discernible as wrong.

I don't know why. The New King James guys are usually pretty good, but they really messed this one up. It's the fourth day.

If you have a New American Standard, it says the fourth day. On the fourth day, they said to Samson's wife, Entice your husband, that he may explain the riddle to us, or else we will burn you and your father's house with fire. Have you invited us in order to take what is ours or not? Is that not so? It just means or not.

Have you invited us in to take what is ours or not? So Samson's wife wept on him and said, You only hate me. You do not love me. You have posed a riddle to the sons of my people, but you have not explained it to me.

He said to her, Look, I have not explained it to my father or my mother. Why should I explain it to you? And then in verse 17 it says, Now she had wept on him the seven days while the feast lasted. Well, there is no had wept.

There is no past perfect in Hebrew. You've only got a limited number of ways to talk about the past. This is interpretive.

What it's really saying is, She wept on him for the rest of the seven days. She asked the question on the fourth day. It certainly doesn't make sense that she asked him on the seventh day.

Because how could this lengthy weeping take place if it's the last day? She asked on the fourth day and she wept all of the fourth day, all of the fifth day, all of the sixth day, and she wept on the seventh day. She wept on him the rest of the seven days of the feast. It says while the feast lasted.

I won't take time to explain the Hebrew, but it's not while the feast lasted. It's the last part of the seven days of the feast is what it's trying to say. The last of the seven days of the feast.

In other words, day four, five, six, and part of seven. She wept all over him. So it happened on the seventh day he finally relented.

He was sick of it. She'd been weeping on him for three days. And he said, alright, alright.

Woman, enough. I give. And so he told her.

She pressed him so much. So, of course, she immediately goes and explains it to the sons of her people. So the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down, just under the wire, what is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion? And he said to them, if you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have solved my riddle.

And that needs no real explanation. You know, everybody's supposed to hoe his own row. You're supposed to have your own ox.

It wasn't uncommon. People say, well, it should have been a bull or an ox or something. People plowed with whatever, you know, bovine assets that they had.

But you didn't go grab somebody else's and plow with it. You're supposed to have your own. And this is kind of like, you know, Grand Theft Auto.

You've taken my tractor here and plowed with it. So he says, if you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have solved my riddle. So then the Spirit of the Lord came upon him mightily, and he went down to Ashkelon.

Remember, this is another one of the cities of the Philistines, but it's far enough away that the news wouldn't get up there for a while. He went down to Ashkelon, killed 30 of their men, took their apparel, and gave the changes of clothing to those who had explained the riddle. So his anger was aroused, and he went back up to his father's house, and Samson's wife was given to his companion, who had been his best man.

Well, there's a lot going on here, and I don't want to press the, step back and look at the big picture thing too far, but if you think about this, what has God accomplished here? It used to be people were intermarrying, people were accommodating, people were getting out of each other's way, and oh well, let me not give offense, you Philistines, I'll move eight miles to the east, and you can live in Timna, and oh well, that's fine, I didn't really want those crops anyway. People were just kind of getting out of the way and trying not to be stepped on, and well, can't we all just get along? Well, I'm sure you meant well, and all of this diplomacy and accommodation, and oh well, they are uncircumcised, but that doesn't mean I won't contract a marriage if my son really presses me. Now, people are dying.

Now, there is anger. Now, there is fury. Now, there is disruption, and marriages are no longer being contracted, and the woman that was promised is given to someone else, and there is breach of contract, and there are 30 dead men in Ashkelon, and you go back to that episode with the lion, God is going to do some slaying, and things are going to get ugly, and it's going to look bad, but out of this is going to come something sweet.

Out of this is going to come something nourishing. Out of this is going to come something good. Something that will be beneficial to Israel.

And even if the leadership is messed up, that's not going to keep God from benefiting the mother and the father with the honey. They become the means to an end, and Samson doesn't have to know what he's doing. He's going to be used in spite of himself, and we talked about this at the beginning of this story.

There are times, and God would certainly prefer to use us when we are thoroughly equipped for every good work, when we know what we're doing, when we are people of prayer, like the Lord Jesus was, when we are people filled with the Holy Spirit and able to be used as were the apostles, like Peter and John and Paul. That's the ideal. But God is going to get His will

accomplished either through us or in spite of us.

And we can either be ascending in a chariot of fire, or we can be descending under a pile of Philistine brick and rubble, but God is going to get His work done. Jesus says, I am a rock and a stone. You can either fall on that stone and be broken, which is a good thing, or the rock can fall on you and grind you to powder.

And we know how Samson's going to end up. He is not falling on the rock and being broken. His pride, his self-will, his self-indulgence never really does get fixed.

And so he is going to literally be under the rock and get ground to powder. But it doesn't keep God from accomplishing His purpose. Now, what is the application of this for you and me? A lot of things go wrong in this life.

A lot of people fail. A lot of people come short. A lot of people are disrespectful of God and of their responsibilities before God.

A lot of people will be false. A lot of people will betray God and the things of God and the people of God. Judas, of course, is the most notable example in history.

Did Judas' betrayal of the Lord Jesus hinder the plan and purpose of God? When you look back at it, it seems like it's almost an essential piece. God's counting on it, in the same way that God's counting on the hardness of Pharaoh's heart. And God is counting on Samson being the rebellious, angry, impulsive guy that he is.

God works all things together for good, and He brings life out of death. He brings honey out of the carcass. And that's what we rely on.

That's where our faith rests. God will never suffer the righteous to be moved. The psalmist says, I have never seen the righteous go hungry or his seed begging bread.

It doesn't matter the oppression. It doesn't matter the economy. It doesn't matter what they do overseas.

It doesn't matter what the stock market does. It doesn't matter how the election turns out. It doesn't matter what the terrorists do.

It doesn't matter how the war goes. It doesn't matter what the Koreans are up to. It doesn't matter who's got nukes and who doesn't.

In this world and in this life, whether it is near at hand and it's the people in our periphery, or whether it is in the world at large, don't sweat it. God is weaving all things into the fabric of His plan, and all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. We only have to ensure that we are in that category, that we recognize the call, that we hear the call and we respond to the call.

Many are called but few are chosen. Why? Because of the many that are called, not many respond. There are two roads, the wide one and the narrow one.

Which one do we choose? When there's a fork in the road, we take it. Which way do we go? Wide gate, broad way, leading to destruction or the narrow way and the straight gate that leads to life. Few there be that find it.

We make the choice daily. We don't have to wait for a big episode. We don't have to wait for a crisis.

We don't have to wait for a ministry opportunity. It's day by day by day. We are what we think.

We are inscribing records in the pages of God's books. There is a book of life. Those who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, honor and immortality, God will grant to them eternal life.

This is not salvation. It's not eternal life. Talking about salvation, it is life that partakes of God's eternality.

It is the life that partakes of the covenant of salt. Such a tragedy that the term eternal life is so misunderstood and it's used as a synonym for salvation from the lake of fire. Most places in scripture, that's not what it means.

Almost never is it a synonym for mere salvation. Eternal life is the entire meros, the inheritance, the portion that God wants to give his people. So that's what's being pictured here.

Think about it. Samson is going to Timnah. He's going in the wrong direction.

He ought to be heading east. He could be going to Judah and finding a wife from the daughters of his people. He's going west into Philistia to get this Philistine woman from amongst the uncircumcised.

Even his parents realize that there's something wrong with this, although they end up going along with it. He's on the wrong road. A lion comes and he kills it.

And he doesn't tell anybody. But from that comes this sweetness. And from it comes this thing that confounds the Philistines.

They can't figure it out. And when they do figure it out, and they think that they have tricked this great man in Israel, it ends up hurting them. They say, Aha! We won 30 changes of clothing.

Well, yeah, but you lost 30 guys in Ashkelon. Right? Is this a credit or a debit in the overall accounting, the overall Timnah in Philistia? This is the beginning of the end for the Philistines, and they don't even know it. They think that they've won a bet, but this is the beginning of losing the war.

Because this is the beginning of death. It's the beginning of armed conflict between Israel and Philistia. And they don't know it.

They think they've won, but they've lost. Satan thought he had won at the cross, but he lost. That's the picture.

And it is a principle throughout Israelite history, throughout human history, and in our lives today. Sometimes it looks like we have lost, but we've actually won. Many of us have had the experience of having a job, and we thought, Boy, this is a great job.

I really like this job. I hope I don't lose it. Well, you lose it.

One way or another. It was there, and now it's gone. And you think, Oh, well, this is a bad turn of events.

And you get a certain distance down the road, and you say, You know what? I'm really better off. Now I've got a better job, or I'm in a better place. If I hadn't lost that job, I wouldn't be where I am now doing what I'm doing.

This actually, what I thought was a curse, was actually a blessing. What I thought was bad actually was good. We're in a relationship.

We think, Oh, this is great. The relationship blows up and goes south or something, and ultimately you think, You know what? This actually worked out better than I thought it would. Many times.

All of us can think of examples. We thought something was bad. It ended up being good.

You get a cold. You think it's bad. You go to the doctor.

He says, Well, guess what? While I was checking you out, I found this other thing. It's a good thing we caught it. We're going to fix that.

And wow, I'm kind of glad I went down there for that cold. I'm glad I got that cold because they caught this other thing that would have been far worse. This is the principle.

God works all things together for good. So what should our attitude be when we experience tribulation, when we experience suffering? Trust God. Operate in hope.

Hope is our motivation. Whatever is happening to me, I know God is working things together for good. This seems bad.

I don't understand why this is happening. It seems like this is a carcass and it's starting to stink in the hot sun. But I'm going to wait.

God will work this together for good. I don't need to panic. I don't need to fall apart.

I don't need to abandon my spiritual life. I need to rest in the promises of God. I need to walk by faith and not by sight.

Israel is about to experience one of the two great deliverances of Old Testament times. There are two times when Israel is truly and greatly delivered and blessed by God. What are they? Coming out of Egypt and the kingdom of David.

Those are the two high points for Israel. The origin of their national identity in fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And the pinnacle of their possession of the land under David when they finally get rid of the Philistines.

And they finally expand their borders to the kingdom that Solomon will preside over and enjoy. And for about a hundred year period there, Israel is at its peak and at its pinnacle. And it is a foreshadowing.

It is a reflection of what the millennial kingdom will be like when the throne of David is established once again. And the fallen tent of David is raised up as it says in the prophets. And all of those mere shadows are fulfilled.

It seems bad in the days of the judges. Everyone is doing what's right in his own eyes. But God is working this together for good.

God will use this conflict for benefit. It seemed bad. Think about the disciples and what they were going through.

The two men on the road to Emmaus after the Lord Jesus was crucified. You couldn't imagine a worse outcome. This is the victory of the ages.

The Lord Jesus Christ is triumphing over sin and over death. The redemption and the reconciliation and the propitiation that every human being who has eternal life will enjoy has just been accomplished. And everybody thinks this is just the worst possible thing that's ever happened.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Not seen. These look like dismal days in Israel.

But it is the beginning of God's deliverance. And he's going to do it through the most unlikely source you could ever imagine. What do you think the people in Israel are saying when they hear about Samson's antics? Oh, we thought things were bad, but they're just going to get worse.

Those oppressive, uncircumcised Philistines are going to get angry. What do people say about us going over and messing with Al-Qaeda and the Koreans and all these other people? You're just making them mad. We've got more enemies now than we ever had before we started the war.

Have a little faith. God will work all things together for good. Well, this is a good place for us to stop.

We'll begin in chapter 15 next week. Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you for the beautiful and graphic way that the truths are illustrated that the Holy Spirit can use to lead us and guide us and enable us to live the life to which we have been called for the time that remains to us on this earth. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress these things on our hearts. May our lives reflect your glory and the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We ask it in his name. Amen.