

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS
Commentary by Michael Sigler
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Walk in God's Path

Judges 13:1-8, 24-25

Key verse: "The woman bore a son, and named him Samson. The boy grew, and the Lord blessed him. The spirit of the Lord began to stir him" (Judges 13:24-25).

Samson was the last of the major judges. His life story is colorful, at times inspirational, and ultimately tragic. Samson was called by God from before his birth, as evidenced by his birth to a mother who had been unable to bear children (13:2) and by his angelic birth announcement (13:3).

God set apart Samson "to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines" (13: 5). A part of Samson's "set-apartness" was his Nazirite vow, which involved abstaining from alcoholic beverages and cutting of his hair (13:4-5) as well as other requirements. Nazirite means "separated" or "dedicated." The Nazirite vow should be understood less as a set of prohibitions and more as a total devotion of one's life to God for His purposes.

Bible interpreters see in Samson one whose life story typifies the nation of ancient Israel. Like ancient Israel, Samson was called by and set apart to God for special purposes. Like Israel, Samson was given special blessings. Like ancient Israel, Samson often did great and mighty things through the strength that God gave him.

However, Samson was like Israel in some tragic ways. Samson chased after foreign women, even prostitutes, until he was eventually enslaved. In a similar way, Israel during the period of the judges prostituted herself to the Canaanite gods and became enslaved by foreign powers.

Samson's story also highlights the role of the Holy Spirit in Old Testament times as it compares to the Spirit's role in the New Testament and today. Samson's work as a judge/deliverer begins with this statement: "The Spirit of the Lord began to stir him" (13:25).

His exploits in Judges, whether killing a marauding lion (14:5-6) or striking down a thousand Philistines (15:14-16), are usually prefaced with the words, "the Spirit of the Lord came upon Him." The key difference is this: In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit normally came upon *individuals* for specific tasks. In the New Testament and today, the Holy Spirit is given to *all God's people*. For example, on the day of

Pentecost, Peter said the time had come when God would “pour out my Spirit on all people” (Acts 2:17).

The tragic aspect of Samson’s life speaks to us today about the importance of both *gifting* and *character*. Samson had great gifts, especially his supernatural physical strength. But Samson failed to let God’s Spirit develop godly character in his life. The results were tragic. Samson’s life speaks to us about the importance of letting God *gift us* for ministry but also *grow us* in godly character.

The New Testament teaches that God gives every believer *gifts of the Spirit* with which to serve God. See for example Romans 12:4-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:1-11. God also wants every believer to have *fruit of the Spirit*—“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22).

Without the gifts of the Holy Spirit, Christians are unattractive and ineffective witnesses for Christ. Without the fruit of the Holy Spirit—Christ-like character—Christians become victims of moral compromise and its tragic results. Since the Holy Spirit is available to every believer, let’s ask God to gift us for service *and* grow us in the fruit of the Spirit—that is, in Christ-like character!

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