

Judges 13:24-14:20
The God Who Works Through People
Sermon Outline

Introduction: The end of Judges 14 reads like a news report from Afghanistan: “Religious zealot uses car bomb to kill thirty in neighboring town.” What makes the story so troubling is that the God of the Bible is behind the whole thing. How are we to understand this? What can we learn about God from this story?

I) God works through people

A) Samson did not stop being Samson

A man of his time

- Redemptive history
- Jesus and his sword

A man with weaknesses

- Willful
- “Thinking” with his eyes and hormones
- Temper driven by personal insult

B) Meaning for us

Not machines

Why does God operate this way?

II) God loves his church—even when we would rather be left alone

A) *Yahweh was seeking an opportunity against the Philistines (v 4)*

Samson—the perfect embodiment of his people—assimilation

Yahweh loves Israel too much to let them stay in deadly peace

Genesis 3:15: I will put enmity between you and the woman...

B) Meaning for us

1) Sometimes God “blesses” in ways we don’t want.

2) One of the reasons we struggle to understand difficult circumstances is that we view our lives through too narrow a lens: “me” rather than “the church”.

III) God works, in the end, through one man

A) Samson and Jesus

B) Meaning for us

Questions for Reflection this Week

- 1) God does his will not only despite people but through them. What is God's aim in Judges 14 (see v 4) and how does he use Samson's historical context (theocracy) and character flaws to accomplish his purposes?
- 2) Compare demon possession to filling of the Holy Spirit. How is God able to change us without over-running us?
- 3) Reflect on the ways in which God has made good use of your background and personality. Spend some time thanking him. Confess any ways in which you have used your background and personality as an excuse for sin.
- 4) The reason why the Lord had to "seek an opportunity against the Philistines" (v 4) is that his people were not interested in doing so. They had assimilated. God therefore "blessed" them with a blessing they did not want. He up-ended their easy relationship with the Philistines. Has God ever done this to you, using difficulty to pry you loose from too comfortable a relationship to a bad decision or unhealthy relationship? What happened?
- 5) One of the reasons we have difficulty understanding some of the difficult circumstances we encounter is that we view our lives through too narrow a lens. We often ask only one question: "Why is God doing this to *me*?" We may need to ask a broader question: "What might God be doing to the *church* and through it because of my difficult problem?" Recall a difficulty and the ways in which God used that difficulty to bless the church and make the church a blessing to others.
- 6) The jarring and disturbing discrepancies between Samson's origins and calling on the one hand and Samson's character weaknesses and ineffectiveness on the other are no mistake. Samson was a real deliverer, but he was not *the* Deliver. How is Jesus a better deliverer than Samson? Compare Judges 13:5 to Matthew 1:21.
- 7) Reflect on the following: "We are all like Samson. There is always something not quite right about us—even at our most spiritual moments, even in our most sacrificial deeds. This troubling fact need not paralyze us. We can and should carry on because we have in Jesus a Champion who makes all things right. He took our sins upon himself and disposed of them forever. What is more, he is now in all who believe, throwing down the power and presence of sin. He who 'began a good work within us will bring it to completion for the day of Christ' (Phil 1:6)." Spend some time in thanksgiving.