



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Judges 14:1-20

“The Providence of God”

TRANSCRIPT

[prayer has been removed from audio]

[Message] This is the second of our series of studies in the life of Samson. And the story of Samson is found in four chapters of the Book of Judges, chapters 13 through 17. And in our last session together we studied the chapter that has to do with the supernatural reference to the birth of Samson, the angel of the Lord visits Samson’s mother and Manoah his father, giving her and him the promise of the coming child who would begin to deliver Israel. The chapter concluded with the birth of Samson and reference made to some of the beginning ministry of the Holy Spirit who began to influence him in some of his activities as a young man. Now we pick up the story in chapter 14 and our Scripture reading this morning will be Judges, chapter 14, verses 1 through 20. So if you have your Bibles turn to Judges, chapter 14 and listen as I read these verses,

“Then Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath one of the daughters of the Philistines. So he came back, and told his father and mother, I saw a woman in Timnath one of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me as a wife.

Then his father and mother said to him, Is there no woman among the daughters of your relatives, (or literally, brothers) or among all our people, that you go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines? But Samson said to his father, Get her for me; for she looks good to me. (that personal pronoun “her” here is very emphatic in the Hebrew text and we could with some accuracy render it, “get her and her alone for me, for she is right in my eyes”) However, his father and mother did not know that it was of the Lord, for he (that is the Lord) was seeking an occasion against the Philistines: now at that time the Philistines were ruling over Israel. Then Samson went down to Timnath with his father and mother, and came as far as the vineyards of Timnath: and, behold, a young lion came roaring toward him. And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him mightily, so that he tore him as one tears a kid, though he had nothing in his hand: but he did not tell his father or mother what he had done. So he went down, and talked to the woman; and she looked good to Samson. (she was right in his eyes) When he returned later to take her, he turned aside to look at the carcass of the lion: and, behold, a swarm of bees and honey were in the body of the lion. So he scraped the honey into his hands, and went on eating as he went, when he came to his father and mother, he gave some to them, and they ate it: but he did not tell them that he had scraped the honey out of the body of the lion. Then his father went down to the woman: and Samson made a feast there; for the young men customarily did this. And it came about, when they saw him that they brought thirty companions to be with him. Then Samson said to them, Let me now propound a riddle to you: if you will indeed tell it to me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty linen wraps and thirty changes of clothes: (incidentally these were rather expensive garments and so this was quite a wager) But if you are unable to tell me, then you shall give me thirty linen wraps and thirty changes of clothes. And they said to him, Propound 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. But they could not tell the riddle in three days. Then it came about on the fourth

day, (it is you'll notice how our New American Standard Bible has fourth day, and the translators have accepted a reading of some of the ancient versions rather than the Hebrew text which has the seventh day here. I think this can be explained under either reading but we'll let the text stand as it is, as far as the message goes today) Then it came about on the fourth day, that they said to Samson's wife, Entice your husband, that he may tell us the riddle, lest we burn you and your father's house with fire: have you invited us to impoverish us? Is this not so? (by the way this was no idle threat because we read in the next chapter that that is exactly what they did do for other reasons. We read in verse 6 of chapter 15, “So the Philistines came and burned her and her father with fire.” So, she probably realized that they were not anything but serious) And Samson's wife wept before him, and said, You only hate me, and you do not love me: you have propounded a riddle to the sons of my people, and have not told it me. And he said to her, Behold, I have not told it to my father or mother, so should I tell it you? (that tells us a great deal about this marriage that he was contracting [Laughter]) However she wept before him seven days, while their feast lasted: and it came about on the seventh day, that he told her, because she pressed him so hard: she then told the riddle to the sons of her people. So the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down, (they waited until the last minute in order to enhance the joy of their triumph over Samson and so just as the time is about to expire they give Samson the conclusion, the solution rather, to the riddle) What is sweeter than honey? And what is stronger than a lion? (now you'll have to grant that Samson was a man who was quick with the words because he responds immediately in a form of poetry) If you had not plowed with my heifer, you should not have found out my riddle. 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. But Samson's wife was given to his companion, (this may be a reference to the man who served as his best man in the

wedding, or it, and it may have also been his rival for the affections of this young Philistine maiden) Samson’s wife was given to his companion, who had been his friend (or had been his best man at the wedding).”

May the Lord bless this reading of his word. The subject for today is divine providence and the dangers of ungodly allowances. Samson’s name was sunny, or sun hero. His strength lay in his hair. As the sun’s strength is in its ways. The thing that strikes you as you read through the life of Samson is that he was a very genial kind of man. He was even a witty man. And yet at the same time, he was a wily, bloody prankster. So in the midst of his wittiness and in the midst of his genealogy there also was a streak of cruelty. And in the midst of all of that, it is evident that he was a man of God and a man of prayer. Now that will particularly come out in the last story or chapter in his life. But I think there are evidences of it all the way through.

One of the commentators, or one of the men who has written on the life of Samson, has said that I think as he sometimes laughed his enemies, to scorn, his laughter was sometimes “rich as woodland thunder. Sometimes like a singing brook that bubbles as it passes, sometimes like a suffocating wheeze. Sometimes like that shriek of a loon. Sometimes like the screech of a rusty hinge. Sometimes like a happy fountain splashing in the sun.” Dean Stanley said that, “Samson was the most frolicsome, the most irregular, the most uncultivated creature that nature ever produced.”

He lived in rather strange days because, not simply that Israel was in the hands of the Philistines, but it seems clear that both the Philistines and the Israelites were cowardly people at this time. It’s even possible that Samson was the only really brave, absolutely fearless man in both the nations. And he stalks among them like some titan. He was a strange man. He was a remarkable man. He never led Israel into sin like Gideon. He did not offer up human burnt sacrifices like Jephtha. He never went into idolatry like some of the other men. The one sin that he committed in the breaking of his Nazarite oath was a sin for which he bore the penalty and in his penitence and in his prayer he found

forgiveness. He was a truly great man. I know why he is in the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews as one of the men of faith. So we greatly misjudge him if we count him simply a prodigy of physical strength. He was a faithful man but a mixed up man in some ways. His life story is the man of a great potential, but who had incomplete success. In fact I think you could probably write a one word biography of Samson. It's the word that the angel said in chapter 13 and verse 5 about him, “He shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines.” That's the word for Samson, “begin.” He did not accomplish the work, but he certainly made a beginning.

There are men whose biographies are written in a sentence in the Bible. There was Saul who said, “I have played the fool.” That's his biography. And then there is the Apostle Paul who said, “I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” That's Paul the apostle, but Samson, a beginning, “He shall begin to deliver Israel.”

The reason for Samson's strength and his failure lay in the central feature of his life, he was a Nazarite. Remember, God said he should be a Nazarite from his birth. Now the vow of a Nazarite was the vow to abstain from fleshly lusts. The details are insignificant for us right at the moment, but it was a vow to abstain from certain fleshly lusts and to live for God. Now his physical strength was only a symbol of his spiritual strength. It was not that Samson was strong naturally. He was strong supernaturally. He was strong because he was a man of God and God's power, through the Holy Spirit, worked in him. If you saw Samson bounding over the hills in Palestine, and saw the seven locks of his head flowing in the breeze, the impression that you got as an Israelite would have been, there goes a man who is obedient to Jehovah. There was crystallized in Samson the strength that comes from obedience to God. That's the impression that his life was to have in the nation Israel. So the secret of his strength lies in his submission to the will of God. And the secret of his failure lies in the same thing, his failure to have God as the central power in his life, and when he breaks his oath, or when he removes himself from his position as a Nazarite, he becomes like any other man.

Well the first chapter in his life is not a very happy chapter. We read in chapter 14 and verse 1,

“Then Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath, one of the daughters of the Philistines. And he immediately came back and told his father and his mother, I have seen a woman in Timnath one of the daughters of the Philistines, now therefore get her me for my wife.”

It was the Oriental custom for fathers to arrange for the marriages of their children. This one evidently, is a modified kind of marriage because, while the father is evidently involved in the arrangements, the arrangements did not ultimately lead to the kind of life together that normally married people had. Because evidently, it was a kind of relationship in which the woman was married to Samson but she remained with her family in Philistia, whereas Samson lived with the children of Israel in Zorah. So it was a marriage almost a marriage of convenience, so it's a rather strange type of thing. Now the important thing to notice immediately is that she was one of the daughters of the Philistines. That might seem of inconsequence, but in the light of the teaching of the word of God, which Samson was familiar with, it was a very significant thing. If you turn back to Deuteronomy chapter 7, you need not turn, I'll read the verses, but if you turn there you will see that God has a word to say about marriage with Philistines, “When the Lord your God shall bring you into the land (Moses wrote) where you are entering to possess it, and shall clear away many nations before you, the Hittites, and the Gergashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and stronger than you; And when the Lord your God shall deliver them before you; and you shall defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them; you shall make no covenant with them, and show no favor to them: Furthermore you shall not intermarry with them; (notice that, you shall not intermarry with them) you

shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons. For they will turn your sons away from following me, to serve other gods: then the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you, and he will quickly destroy you.”

Now I think I can understand where this man Samson is failing. He comes back and he says, “I’ve seen a woman she’s one of the daughters of the Philistines now therefore get her me for a wife.” But Manoah and his wife are those who follow Scripture and so they say to him, “Is there no woman among the daughters of your brethren or among all our people that you go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?” Samson says, “Get her for me, I want no other one but her, get her for me. She’s right in my eyes.”

Now you know the Bible speaks very plainly on these matters. The word of God was very clear. Samson knew what the word of God was. We read in the New Testament that we are not to be yoked together with unbelievers. The Apostle Paul says in case there has been a breaking of a marriage and the other party marries, they are to marry only in the Lord. It is specifically stated in the word of God. Samson is beginning a course of direct disobedience to the word of God.

“A man who can receive a Philistine into his bosom,” one of the commentators has said, “Cannot be an uncompromising witness against them.” And so the minute that Samson takes this Philistine woman to himself, how can he stand against the unbelief of the Philistines, or the Philistines? How is it possible for him to do that? The moment that an issue comes up between Philistia and Israel then there is a division in that marriage. It cannot stand.

Now in the New Testament times, we have the plain teaching of the word of God. How can it be possible for two people who have two different fundamental loyalties to unite together in holy matrimony and have a happy marriage? When the decisions of life come and one is guided by the fundamental principle of the Lordship of the triune God, and the other is guided by the fundamental principle of human reason, how is it possible

for these two to have harmony? There can only be harmony if there is a yielding. “Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers” the Scriptures say plainly. Samson is disobeying the word of God. And the person who disregards the teaching of the word of God in the New Testament is following in the steps of Samson and it inevitably leads to the distress and to the catastrophe that came to this man who should have been an ideal man of God.

Now notice what he says too. He says it twice, “She’s right in my eyes. Get her for me for she’s right in my eyes.” Later on in verse 7, “So he went down and talked to the woman and she looked good to Samson” or “she was right in Samson’s eyes.” Now the Scriptures in the Book of Judges say that one of the difficulties with the people who lived at this time was that every man did that which was right in his own eyes. That was God’s condemnation of this particular age. And here is the Nazarite, the man of God, saying “She looks good to me, she’s right in my eyes.”

Now anyone who has been a Christian very long knows that there are Christians who say, “I was faced with a certain decision and I have decided to do this because the Holy Spirit appears to be leading me to do this.” But there are statements in the word of God that directly contradict that particular line of action. There can be no guidance from God the Holy Spirit that is his guidance that is contrary to his word. And when the word of God has spoken, that is his guidance. There is no need to get down upon our knees and say, “Oh God give me guidance” when the word of God is staring you in the face with its express pronouncement from him. So often Christians speak, “The Lord guided me, I have peace in my heart about this.” but that is disobedience when the word of God has spoken.

Now I can just imagine Samson saying, “She’s right in my eyes, I have peace about this.” But the Scriptures had spoken plainly and Manoah was right. “Why is it that you have to go to the Philistines for a wife? Aren’t there women among the Israelites?” “She pleases me well.” The characteristic thing about a Nazarite should have been self-denial,

but here is an obvious self-indulgence on the part of Samson, the man who should not please himself, but please the Lord as our Lord Jesus Christ, decides that he wants to please himself.

You know in the Book of Genesis in the 2nd chapter in a passage that we often refer to in marriage ceremonies, in chapter 2 and verse 18 the Lord says, “It’s not good that man should be alone.” Someone has said, “It’s not good that man should be alone, but it’s often a great relief.” [Laughter] Now here was a time when Samson should not have paid any attention to those words for himself. I can just imagine him saying at his parent’s objection, “Well it’s not good for a man to be alone.”

Now fundamentally lying back of all of this though is something else, and it’s a rather strange thing. Did you notice that 4th verse? Samson has said, “Get her for me and no one else. She looks good to me. However, his father and mother did not know that it was of the Lord, for he (the Lord) was seeking an occasion against the Philistines.” Now it’s possible to understand that as a reference to Samson. But the majority of the commentators have understood it as it is understood in the New American Standard Bible, by the capitalizing of that “he,” it is God who seeks an occasion against the Philistines. In other words, he wants to stir up difficulty between Philistia and Israel in order that through Samson he might deliver Israel. Now isn’t that an interesting thing? The preceptive will of God stands very plainly in Scripture, “You shall not intermarry” with any of the other nations. But the decretive will of God, that will of God by which he determines all things that come to pass, that will is; Samson shall marry the Philistine woman in order that through this there may be conflict between Philistia and Israel and I may through Samson, deliver Israel from the Philistines.

Yes, the Bible does teach that God uses evil for greater good. Now if you debate that question, I refer you to the cross of Jesus Christ, where wicked men crucified our Lord Jesus, violating his preceptive will. But what took place, Peter says, was “according to the determinate council and foreknowledge of God.” When the brothers of Joseph

sold him into slavery it was a violation of the preceptive will of God, they were disobedient. But Joseph later says, “You meant it unto me for evil, but God meant it unto me for good.” that by this means he might deliver Jacob and his descendants from the Egyptians.

So, “They did not know that it was of the Lord for he was seeking an occasion against the Philistines.” Now then, the parents evidently, have had to yield to Samson and we read in verse 5 and following of the incident of the lion, which plays such a big part in this chapter, “Then Samson went down to Timnath with his father and mother, and came as far as the vineyards of Timnath; and behold, a young lion came roaring toward him.”

Did you notice in verse 1 the Scripture says, “Then Samson went down to Timnath,” in verse 5 it says, “Then Samson went down to Timnath.” You know when you get out of God’s will, it is always down. It’s remarkable how often the geography of the Bible agrees with the spiritual truth lying back of it. When Abraham went to Egypt it was to go down into Egypt. When God spoke to Jonah and said, “Jonah I want you to go to the Ninevites and I want you to preach against them,” we read, “Then Johan as he turned from the will of God went down to Joppa.” When you get out of the will of God in the Bible it almost seems that the geography’s trying to teach us some lessons. It’s down, always down when you move from the will of God.

So, Samson goes down to Timnath, down to the Philistines. And there is an interesting confrontation that takes place. He evidently took a little short cut, he was with his parents, but he took a short cut. And you can see him bounding off, his seven glorious locks in the breeze. And he cuts through the vineyards, which belong to the people of Timnath. It was customary, I understand, for individuals who had vineyards in those days, to have a lion as a kind of care taker to discourage individuals from trespassing and taking their produce, and I can imagine that would be pretty good discouragement. It’s bad enough to have a dog, a vicious dog, but to have a lion

protecting the vineyards, I don't imagine they lost a single grape. [Laughter] But Samson is unafraid. And so he bounds through the vineyards and there's the lion. And the lion stands before him and the lion says, so one of the preacher's says, "This is my path." Samson says, "No this is my path." and the lion says, "It's my path" and he said it with a little emphasis, perhaps a little bit of a roar. And Samson said, "You're mistaken, it's mine. And furthermore, my beloved is down below in Timnath, gang way." [Laughter] And with that, he comes, the lion confronts him, he takes the lion, he deals with it like it's a little calf, for the Spirit of God had come upon him and supernaturally, he destroyed the lion, leaves it over in a part of the vineyard. He comes back, he doesn't even tell his parents about it. You can see the humility of this man, in the midst of the supernatural strength that was his. Samson went down to Timnath for a wife and he met a beast. Well they're not really the same thing, but. [Laughter]

Now then, we read in verses 8 and 9, "When he returned later to take her," you see he went down, they made the arrangements, and then later on he came back in order to take his bride. When he came a little later he thought, "I think I'll go see what's happened to the lion." And so he goes off into the vineyard "to look at the carcass of the lion; and behold, a swarm of bees and honey were in the body of the lion." Now, dead bodies in that part of the world dry rapidly, and so there was no putrefaction at all. One characteristic thing about bees is that they will never make a nest near putrefaction. But they had made a nest in the carcass of this lion, and you can just see this by the ribs of that beast. And so Samson sees and he sees the honey and he reaches down, does the bees off like this, I presume, takes the honey and begins to eat it, comes back to the pathway, gives to his father and mother. This raises a question incidentally, of whether in this Samson violated his Nazarite's oath, because part of the oath of a Nazarite would be that he should never touch the body of a dead person. Whether this was a violation or not, the scholars dispute, it may or it may not have been. Some think that it was not a

violation of his Nazarite oath. But he gives his parents some and then they go down to Timnath in order to have the marriage.

Now we read in verse 11, "And it came about when they saw him, (that is the Philistines) that they brought thirty companions to be with him." Evidently the report of Samson's prowess has reached the Philistines and so they felt it necessary to have thirty groomsmen at this wedding, for self-protection probably. "Then Samson said to them," and it was customary for them to have a feast of seven days and so the feast is taking place, Samson's father having arrived previously to warn the woman that Samson was on the way. And so when the feast takes place, Samson stands up in order to give his little speech. I think they combined all kinds of things like rehearsal parties, and everything else in this one week.

And the time came for people to say something and it was customary for them to entertain one another with riddles and puzzles. Now Samson had one that he was sure was absolutely unsolvable, because no one knew anything about his encounter with the lion, he'd not even told his parents about it. And so he propounds a riddle and he propounds it in poetic form. He says, by the way, I'm going to propound to you a riddle and if you can solve it I'll give you thirty linen wraps," those were expensive garments incidentally, "and thirty changes of clothes. But if you cannot solve it, then you have to reward me similarly." And they agreed to the wager and he propounded his riddle to them, "Out of the eater came something to eat, and out of the strong came something sweet." You can just see him smiling as he gave his riddle. He was the Mohammad Ali of his day in that respect. [Laughter] Perhaps Samson incidentally saw an omen in what had happened, in the fact that he had slain the lion and the Holy Spirit had come upon him with such power. It is possible that he saw in this an omen of what he would do to the Philistines. So it had made a deep impression upon him.

But this clever riddle was something that the Philistines could not possibly solve. And so we read, "they could not tell the riddle in three days." Now whether they came to

Samson's wife on the fourth day or whether they waited till the seventh day, and how many days she moaned and groaned to Samson, we're not absolutely certain. There is more than one way to solve the chronological difficulties of this particular passage. But at any rate, it's clear that what happened was that Samson's wife was determined, as a result of the warning from the Philistine men, to get this riddle and its solution from Samson. So operation whimper begins to take place. She cries, she pouts, she sulks and the words of Scripture are so true to life. Now mind you, this has never happened to me. [Laughter] It's just that I know this happens to other people. "You don't love me, Samsey."
[Laughter] "You hate, you really hate me. [Laughter] You've propounded a riddle and you won't tell me, your wife, the solution." And this goes on constantly and the Scriptures have a great deal to say about nagging wives, incidentally. I don't have one, you understand. It's just purely from observation that I see these things. [Laughter] But you can just imagine that this began to just grate on Samson until he could hardly stand it at all. There's a saying, "Give a woman an inch and she gets the idea she's a ruler."
[Laughter] And this woman, so far as we know, was a very beautiful woman, but everything else seems to be bad. And so finally, she pressed upon him sore, so sorely, that Samson has to tell the riddle.

Now she immediately went to the Philistine men and told them the riddle, because after all her life and her house was at stake. And so she tells them, but they wait until the sun's just about to go down, because Hebrew days ended, remember, in the afternoon. And so these men, they are confident now, "We've got the solution to the riddle, it's very simple, it's understandable." And so they waited until just the last little bit of the sun is showing in the sky and Samson is relishing victory, and then they come out with the solution and just as the sun's going down they say, "Samson, what's sweeter than honey? And what's stronger than a lion?" Well, you have to say this for Samson, he has a good sense of humor, because he replies to them on the spur of the moment evidently, in poetic fashion. And I want to give you a little better rendering, "If you had not plowed

with this heifer of mine, You would not have found out this riddle of mine." So he enters into the spirit of it but he is a wily prankster and he knows that he has the strength within him to get those thirty linen wraps and those thirty changes of clothing from the Philistines themselves. And so he goes down to the Philistine city of Ashkelon and there he kills thirty of the Philistine men. And as a result of that, takes their possessions and pays the wager to the Philistines with their own garments, a rather interesting fellow.

[Laughter]

Now we read in the 19th verse of the slaughter of the Philistines. And you will notice too that in this there is the sovereign work of God fulfilling his purpose, because he is, through Samson, he is seeking an occasion by which a struggle may develop between his chosen people Israel, and these unbelieving Philistines. And in this struggle he will deliver the children of Israel from the Philistine yoke. And finally the chapter concludes with, "But Samson's wife was given to his companion who had been his friend." What a sad end. The parents had told Samson, "Samson, don't you see what you're doing? You are violating the word of God. You are going contrary to holy Scripture. There are women among the Israelites." But instead, Samson disobeyed his parent's advice, and in the end he justified their objections. Because the result is told there in that verse, "But Samson's wife was given to his companion who had been his friend."

May I conclude by just mentioning a couple of things by way of application? It is evident that the principle lesson that comes out of this chapter is the need of the believer's separation from entangling alliances. Now of course we could make a great deal over the fact that Samson didn't choose his wife for the right reasons. As far as the Scripture says, all Samson knew about this Philistine woman was that she was beautiful. She had a beautiful exterior.

What poor grounds upon which to choose a wife. Many young people make that mistake. Young ladies, look at some handsome young man, and they say, "My, he is

really luscious.” [Laughter] and they fall head over heels in love. They know nothing about him, except that he’s handsome. And then there are men who look at young ladies, beautiful young ladies, and they fall head over heels in love. They haven’t got the slightest idea whether they could cook a pancake, fry an egg, they know nothing about how they keep a house, they know nothing about the inner man, they know nothing about their spirituality, they know nothing about their relationship to the Lord, they know nothing about the training that they have had in the home, they know nothing about her family, and her grandparents, and her great grandparents, and her great, great grandparents, that’s not bad information by the way. I don’t always recommend that you engage in genealogical research if you’re thinking about marrying someone [Laughter] but it’s not bad, it’s not really bad. There is such a thing as good stock in human beings as well as is in the plant life.

Well what I’m saying is that it was a foolish ground on which to marry. But many young people do that. Fundamentally, the relationship to the Lord, the relationship to the parents, the relationship to their friends, these are far more important than the outward beauty of face and figure. Those things change with the years. But the other things develop and mature.

But I’ll lay that aside because that’s not really the most important lesson here. The most important lesson is the need of the believer’s separation from entangling alliances. Why was it bad? Well the first place, the language of the Philistines was different from the language of the Israelites, the tastes of the Philistines were different from the tastes of the Israelites, the habits of life of the Philistines were different from the habits of life of the children of Israel. The only thing that Samson had in common with this woman was his admiration of her beauty and her admiration of his admiration for her. What makes you think that you can possibly be happy with someone whose basic fundamental attachment is contrary to yours? Do you not realize, my Christian friend, that if you are a Christian man or woman, your attachment is fundamentally to the God of the holy Scriptures. And

every issue that arises in your life touches your basic attachment. You cannot expect to be happy, you cannot expect to be the kind of person that God would have you to be, if right at the beginning of your life you violate the teaching of holy Scripture.

What was the result? Well it was a betrayed husband, a deserted wife, discord, strife, bloodshed and death. And Samson, mind you, had a beautiful illustration of a happy home in his own father and mother, Manoah, a godly man, his wife a godly woman, who loved the Scriptures and loved the God of Israel, whose home was a happy home. And in spite of that, this man went down and saw the Philistine woman and lusted after her for his wife.

What a great thing it is to have a gentle clear sighted woman to restrain us, to guide us, to sympathize with us, to counsel us. Men, let me say, there can be no greater more significant decision in your life, than a decision to marry a godly woman. There isn't a man that I know who doesn't need the counsel of a godly woman. The things that we seek to avoid are often the things that we need. My wife is a great preacher. If she could preach behind the pulpit as she does at home, [Laughter] there would be great decisions, or maybe not, I don't know. I think she might say otherwise. She has been lecturing me for years. I told her just the other day that you need not give the whole sermon, [Laughter] because I know your very sermon, just say, “Number one” [Laughter] “Number four.” [Laughter] But I want you to know that I deeply appreciate those words of counsel that I have received through the years. I would not be the kind of person I am, and I do not say this in any sense of braggadocio, but I would be much worse as a human being were it not for my wife, who as a godly companion, has admonished me, instructed me, counseled me, encouraged me. What a tremendous thing it was, what a tremendous thing it is, to have a godly woman. And the first step in Samson's life, that step down to Timnath when he saw that woman and the yielding to the impulse, is the step that opens the way to all of Samson's subsequent failure.

I do think that there is a possibility that we have the story of salvation told in what happened to Samson here. When Samson, by the power of the Holy Spirit overcame the lion and destroyed the lion, we cannot help but think of the words of the New Testament. It is Satan who is a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour. It is our Lord Jesus Christ through the shedding of the blood on the cross at Calvary who has overcome principalities and powers and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in the cross. It is our Lord Jesus Christ who took to himself human nature, went to that cross and destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil, that he might also bring us to the knowledge of himself, for it is by sin that Satan has had man in his kingdom. One of the fundamental theories of the atoning work of the Lord Jesus relates to how the Lord Jesus has overcome Satan and made it possible for us to go free. And so when the struggle between the man of God, Samson, and the lion we see a beautiful illustration, and it may be intentional of how our Lord Jesus Christ has overcome sin and Satan and made it possible for us to go free. Someone has called this, incidentally, “the gospel of the Philistines.” If you’re here today and you have never believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, we invite you to turn to the lion of the tribe of Judah, the Lord Jesus, who has shed his blood, that men might have deliverance from sin and from Satan, have forgiveness of sins and justification of life, may God speak to your heart to that end. Let’s stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] We are grateful to Thee Lord for the lessons that have come to us from the Old Testament Scriptures, so to the point in the 20th Century. Father, deliver us from entangling alliances. Enable us in our most fundamental nature, in our most fundamental being, to be subject to Thee, by Thy grace. If there should be Lord, someone in this meeting who does not know Jesus Christ as Lord and savior, through the Holy Spirit reveal to them their need. And may oh God, they flee to the cross of Christ for the

forgiveness of sins. May the grace, mercy, and peace, which our Lord so freely gives, be
ours. For Jesus' sake. Amen.