THE HIGHS & LOWS OF MOTHERHOOD (Judges 13, 14)

A. Today we’re going to discuss the mother of Samson, but we’ll begin by introducing Samson.

1. He was the 12th judge God used to protect & deliver Israel from God’s enemies.

2. Samson was gifted with extraordinary physical strength, & yet he was a weak individual morally.

3. He was unpredictable & undependable because he was double-minded (Jas 1:8).
   a. He was strong before men – but weak in the presence of women.
   b. He was empowered by the Spirit of God – but yielded his body to the flesh of man.
   c. He was called to fight the Philistines – but fraternized with the enemy.
   d. He fought the LORD’S battles – but disobeyed His commands.
   e. He was born “Samson” (sunny, bright) – but died in darkness (blind to the world around him).

4. But it was in the darkness that he, like Saul, “saw the light” & reached his greatest level of faith in God, his highest degree of understanding the will of the LORD.

5. Samson’s ongoing feud with the Philistines -- while serving God’s purpose -- was rooted in personal animosity rather than in a passion to free his people.

B. It is clear from the Book of Judges that Samson’s unspiritual character was of his own doing.

1. His parents were chosen by God; they were godly people who did their best to teach & guide him.

2. His mother could have been a strong influence in righteous living -- But Samson had no interest in good & wholesome things.

C. Sermons about Samson are hard to do when families are struggling with rebellious children; at times like that, the nerves & emotions are on edge.

1. So lessons like this one are easier to do when the home life is calm - giving us a clear head to consider things that may help us in our families.
D. We’re not given the name of Manoah’s wife or Samson’s mother; in that way she was like Lot’s wife -- But what great differences between the two!

1. Lot’s wife is remembered, not for the beautiful children she bore, or for being a loving spouse, but for her love of THIS world, & her refusal to heed God’s warnings.

2. Samson’s mother, on the other hand, is remembered for her faithfulness to God in the face of the many great difficulties & challenges of Motherhood.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A. Much had happened to Israel after their conquest of Canaan (Judges 2:7-10; 17:6; 21:25; Deut 12:1-8-14).

Judg 13:1 – Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord so that the Lord gave them into the hands of the Philistines forty years.

1. The Philistines were perpetual enemies of Israel.

2. They were not conquered as they should have been, & thus they became God’s means of testing Israel’s faithfulness to Him (Judg 3:1-4).

[Read Judges 13:2-10. Since it was not customary to put off childbirth, I suspect she was unable to have children; that is until she was selected by God to carry out His will.]

I. MOTHERHOOD IN DEVOTION

A. Notice, the angel did not appear to Manoah first, but to his wife.

1. That fact indicates that God did not consider her to be merely someone to carry the child; she was a person of significance to God.

2. The LORD knew her to be the kind of woman who would devote herself to His purpose from the start.

   a. The Nazarite vow began from the womb (13:5), meaning she had to live by it herself (Num 6).

3. The LORD also knew her to be the kind of woman who would continue to devote herself to Him throughout the rigors of motherhood.

   a. And no child put a mother through more rigors or difficulties than Samson.
B. The challenges Samson’s mother faced are truly the challenges of motherhood for a Christian?

1. 1st - To devote herself to the Lord (Jesus) by devoting herself to her child’s spiritual training - even from the moment she conceives that child.
   
a. Some new mothers think they don’t have to get serious about that until later, still wanting to play.

b. But every passing moment must be used to shape a child’s character (emotionally & intellectually) into a mold that the Lord can use later in His service.

2. 2nd - To continue to devote herself to the Lord even when the outcome becomes unpleasant, & things don’t work out as you had hoped.
   
a. The lesson from Samson’s mother: When that happens it’s not a time for despair, hopelessness, & a doubting faith, but a time for greater faith & trust.  

Eph 5:8-10, 15-17 –  
8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, & truth), 10 finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.... 15 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, 16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

[I think those were words that Samson’s mother lived by; she was taught similar words from the Law (Deut 4:5-8).]

But more specifically, as a new mother on a mission for God, she would be interested in all that Paul says in these verses.]

II. MOTHERHOOD IN EAGERNESS

A. Samson’s mother didn’t object to what she was called to do; in fact, she seemed eager to get started.

1. Do you remember the response Zacharias gave when the angel of God told him that John would be born?

a. Let’s put it this way, he seemed less than eager about the whole matter. In fact, he really didn’t believe it (Luke 1:18-20)!  

b. So the Lord helped him develop a sense of eager-ness by making him mute until John’s birth.

1) This might make a case for the advantage of God speaking to wives before husbands: Hannah (Samuel) & Mary (Jesus).

2) Sometimes it takes a hardship to get a man to do what he ought to do, when godly women are more willing to yield in submission to God.

B. The eagerness of Samson’s mother is a fine example for Christian mothers today.

1. It’s not for mothers to doubt, question & criticize God’s purpose for your child.

2. It’s for mother to raise that child that he or she may recognize, revere & serve Him (Eph 6:4).

3. (It has been known to happen that Christian mothers will drive their children toward secular goals when they see they have certain capabilities. But Samson’s mother was eager for him to fulfill God’s purpose.)

2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15
5 when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois & your mother Eunice, & I am persuaded is in you also. 3:15 And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

[What mothers can learn from Samson’s mother is that no matter of how trivial or difficult they might think God’s will is (in the matter of bringing a child up in the discipline & instruction of the Lord) they must be eager to carry out His word to the letter.]

III. MOTHERHOOD IN TRUST (14:1-3)

A. Samson’s mother had done her best to teach him the law of God & to set before him a proper example.

1. But he was adult now & doing things his own way; sadly guided by his passions & not the godly wisdom & respect for God he had been taught, & his poor choices ultimately caused his confinement & death.

B. The trust of Samson’s mother is seen in that she would have to wait for a brighter day for Samson.

1. Mothers can offer advice & pray for their adult children, but they cannot make their choices.
2. That’s where trust comes into the picture.

3. Godly mothers (parents) need strength from the Lord & trust in Him to live with things they cannot change & to hope that God’s purpose will be fulfilled.

Psalm 127:3-4 (Solomon) – Behold, children are a gift of the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children on one’s youth.

[Children need guidance, much like a Bowman making a shot. Without guidance, the arrow will miss the target.

However, even with proper guidance, once the arrow leaves the bow, there is no guarantee it will hit the target.

Christian mothers, like the Bowman, may do their best to aim the arrow in the right direction, & ensure a proper release, but the rest is up to the arrow & the influences that affect it!]

CLOSING

A. Samson’s mother (Manoah’s wife) can teach us many valuable lessons.

   1. She was a faithful wife, an obedient woman, & a good mother who stood ready to serve God w/out doubt, question, or criticism.

B. And Samson, in the end—humbled himself, & made a request of God—as his mother had taught him to do—and God granted that request.

   1. For this reason, Samson is remembered as a hero of faith & not the unruly child that he was most of his life.

C. Children make poor choices; you can remember a few of your own.

   1. Christian parents & mothers in particular have to remain strong in faith & prayerful during those times, trusting that the Father will grant your request & bring about the fulfillment of His good will.

D. Can we see God’s ultimate plan to redeem sinful man through Jesus Christ in our study today?

   1. Foreshadowing: The announcement to Samson’s mother that she would bear a son to lead Israel is a foreshadowing of the announcement to Mary of the birth of Christ.

      a. God sent His Angel to both women & told them they would “conceive & bear a son” (Judges 13:7; Luke 1:31) who would lead God’s people.
2. **Foreshadowing:** God’s compassionate delivery of the Israelites despite their sin & rejection of Him presents a picture of Christ on the cross.
   
   a. Jesus died to deliver His people—all who would ever obey in Him—from their sin (Rom 7:24; Gal 1:4).

3. **Application of Judges:** Disobedience always brings judgment.
   
   a. The Israelites present a perfect example of what we are not to do. Instead of learning from experience that God will always punish rebellion against Him, they continued to disobey & suffer God’s displeasure & discipline.
   
   b. If we continue in disobedience, we invite God’s discipline, not because He enjoys our suffering, but “because the Lord disciplines those he loves, & he punishes everyone he accepts as a son” (Heb 12:6).

4. **Application:** Though we may be faithless, God remains faithful (Tim 2:13).
   
   a. Faithful to save & preserve us (1 Thess 5:24).
   
   b. Faithful to forgive when we seek forgiveness (1 John 1:9).
   
   c. “He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful” (1 Cor 1:8-9)