

A Hero Will Rise

The Book of Judges

Text

Judges 13:1-25

Topic

Manoah and his barren wife are promised a son and are instructed that he is to be a Nazirite from the womb

Title

“Make Womb for Samson”

I ran across a list of Rules to Live By. Here is a sampling:

1. Before you criticize someone, you should walk a mile in their shoes. That way, when you criticize them, you're a mile away and you have their shoes.
2. If at first you don't succeed, skydiving is not for you.
3. Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach him how to fish, and he will sit in a boat and drink beer all day.
4. If you lend someone \$20 and never see that person again, it was probably worth it.

I have a rule of life: **Just Google it.** Why ask someone, and wait for their response, when you can search for it and have your answer in mere seconds?

Winston Churchill was once asked his rule of life. His answer isn't what you'd expect. (Or maybe it is, if you know anything about him!).

Churchill said, “My rule of life prescribed as an absolutely sacred rite smoking cigars and also the drinking of alcohol before, after and if need be during all meals and in the intervals between them.”

Why am I talking about rule of life?

In our verses, the Angel of the Lord appears to Mrs. Manoah and tells her she will become pregnant, and that her son will be the Judge for Israel against the Philistines. He further tells her that her son will be a life-long Nazirite, and is to live by that rule of life.

His rule of life is that of a Nazirite; his work is to be a Judge.

Mrs. Manoah tells her husband about the encounter, but he wants to talk to the Angel of the Lord himself. When he does, even though the Angel has already told them, Manoah asks, “What will be the boy’s rule of life, and his work?”

It seems redundant, at the very least, since the Angel of the Lord was so specific.

As I was thinking about the clear instruction and Manoah’s dullness of hearing, I started to wonder if I might not be just as dense in my Christian life.

Has the Lord given us a rule of life? If so, what is our work?

Those are good questions that will put us into this story. As we work through the verses, let’s ask, #1 Have You Discovered Your Rule of Life and Your Work?, and #2 Have You Delighted In Your Rule of Life and Your Work?

#1 Have You Discovered Your Rule of Life and Your Work?

(v1-14)

I get a lot of requests to listen to, or to watch, Bible studies. I don't mind. Trouble is, they are always so long, and it takes the speaker forever to reveal his point.

Rather than keep you in that kind of needless suspense, let me tell you our rule of life.

The apostle Paul told us in his letter to the Galatians:

Gal 6:14 But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Gal 6:15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.

Gal 6:16 **And as many as walk according to this rule**, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

What's the "rule?" It is that you and I are "a new creation"; or as he puts it elsewhere, "If anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (Second Corinthians 5:17).

To expand that a little, every Christian is crucified with Jesus Christ, and then raised with Him a "new creation" who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit and no longer bound to observe rites and rituals, diets and days.

The "rule" we walk according to - our rule of life - is not a rule at all. It is to enjoy a relationship with Jesus by His indwelling Spirit.

Because we are in a relationship with Jesus, our “work” is not really work at all; it is to produce fruit - the fruit of the Spirit - as we enjoy the Lord.

One commentator called it the New Creature Rule. He described it like this:

By faith we are to reckon on the fact that we are new creatures in Jesus Christ, united with Him in a wondrous union, partaking in His death and partaking in His resurrection life. By faith we are to reckon upon what God has already accomplished at the cross.

Samson would be born into his rule of life and his work. As most of you are aware, he pretty much did his own thing, walking in the flesh rather than yielding to the empowering Spirit.

- Like Samson, Christians are born-again into our rule of life and our work.
- Like Samson, we too, can do our own thing, walking in the flesh rather than yielding to the indwelling Spirit.

This story just got a whole lot more interesting.

Jdg 13:1 Again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.

The “evil” they did has been previously explained. They adopted the gods and practices of the surrounding nations, committing what amounted to spiritual adultery. God gave them over to the people they were wanting to imitate. In this case, it was the Philistines, who would prove to be an especially tough opponent.

Jdg 13:2 Now there was a certain man from Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had no children.

Children were seen as a blessing. Barrenness was a severe trial. It was the proverbial double-whammy - oppressed by the Philistines, with no children.

The Manoah's must have wondered, "Why us?"

Jdg 13:3 And the Angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, "Indeed now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son.

Jdg 13:4 Now therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or *similar* drink, and not to eat anything unclean.

Jdg 13:5 For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines."

The Angel of the Lord is a recurring character in the Book of Judges. It is none other than Jesus appearing to the Israelites before His incarnation. I'm just going to call Him Jesus from here on.

Jesus tells Mrs. Manoah she must live like a Nazirite until her son is born, because he will be a life-long Nazirite.

According to one source,

The Nazirite vow appears in Numbers 6:1-21. By definition, the Hebrew word *nazir*, simply means "to be separated or

consecrated.” It is taken by individuals who have voluntarily dedicated themselves to God. The vow is a decision, action, and desire on the part of people whose desire is to yield themselves to God completely. The Nazirite vow has five features. It is voluntary, can be done by either men or women, has a specific time frame, it has specific requirements and restrictions, and at its conclusion a sacrifice is offered.

The three special obligations of a Nazirite include: (1) avoiding any grape product, including wine (later expanded to strong drink), (2) not cutting one’s hair, and (3) avoiding contact with a dead body.

Her son was going to be Israel’s judge to “begin” to deliver them from the Philistines. Israel would not be completely free from them until the reign of King David.

One thing to note before moving on is that the Nazirite vow was normally something you volunteered for, not something you were volun-told to do. We’ll return to that in a moment.

Jdg 13:6 So the woman came and told her husband, saying, "A Man of God came to me, and His countenance *was* like the countenance of the Angel of God, very awesome; but I did not ask Him where He *was* from, and He did not tell me His name.

Jdg 13:7 And He said to me, 'Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. Now drink no wine or *similar* drink, nor eat anything unclean, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.' "

Mrs. Manoah wasn’t sure if this person were a prophet, or if it was the Angel of the Lord. Either way, His words carried weight. She *was* sure about his promises and his instructions.

Jdg 13:8 Then Manoah prayed to the LORD, and said, "O my Lord, please let the Man of God whom You sent come to us again and teach us what we shall do for the child who will be born."

- On the plus side, Manoah believed his wife, received the promise of a child, and went straight to God in prayer.
- On the minus side, they had already been told "what [they] shall do for the child."

Jdg 13:9 And God listened to the voice of Manoah, and the Angel of God came to the woman again as she was sitting in the field; but Manoah her husband *was* not with her.

Jdg 13:10 Then the woman ran in haste and told her husband, and said to him, "Look, the Man who came to me the *other* day has just now appeared to me!"

Why not appear directly to Manoah? I don't know; but one thing it does is demonstrate for us that this couple was likeminded. Mrs. Manoah knew her husband had prayed to see this man, so rather than talk with him herself, she ran to retrieve her husband, that it might be a shared experience.

Jdg 13:11 So Manoah arose and followed his wife. When he came to the Man, he said to Him, "Are You the Man who spoke to this woman?" And He said, "I *am*."

Jdg 13:12 Manoah said, "Now let Your words come *to pass!* What will be the boy's rule of life, and his work?"

His rule of life, and his work, could not have been put any plainer. He would be a life-long Nazirite whose work was to judge Israel against the Philistines.

Jdg 13:13 So the Angel of the LORD said to Manoah, "Of all that I said to the woman let her be careful.

Jdg 13:14 She may not eat anything that comes from the vine, nor may she drink wine or *similar* drink, nor eat anything unclean. All that I commanded her let her observe."

Mrs. Manoah was to go on the Nazirite diet so that her son, not yet conceived, would be a Nazirite from the womb forward.

I used the coined word, "volunteer-told," a moment ago. One of the brothers used it this week; I'd never heard it before, but it's a great way of expressing the voluntary things you are told to do.

What is striking about this is that Mrs. Manoah was volun-told to go on the diet; and that her son would be a life-long Nazirite without being given any choice.

Part of us immediately objects to that. It seems so restrictive, and to violate free will.

First, let's see if there were any other life-long Nazirites. Turns out, there were two (that we know of) - one in the Old Testament, and one in the New.

The prophet Samuel was a life-long Nazirite; so was John the Baptist. You don't hear them complain, do you?

Jesus said of John, "Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11). He had the singular honor of being the person who would announce that the Messiah of Israel, the Savior of the world, had arrived.

Being a Nazirite wasn't something Samuel and John the Baptist resented, because it was forced upon them. It was a blessing to have been so chosen by God, in light of their work.

Most of us are already familiar with Samson's exploits. He one-by-one denies the prohibitions of his Nazirite vow. Do we applaud him for it? Do we celebrate his free will to choose the flesh over the Spirit?

Of course not. We wish he had simply followed the plan; and we'd like to think we would have been better Samson's.

Once you are born-again, **your rule of life and your work is thrust upon you.** Remember what we said was our rule of life, and our work:

- The "rule" we walk according to - our rule of life - is not a rule at all. It is to enjoy a relationship with Jesus by His indwelling Spirit.
- Because we are in a relationship with Jesus, our "work" is not really work at all; it is to produce fruit - the fruit of the Spirit - as we enjoy the Lord.

It sounds great, and it is. But simultaneously we find remaining within us a propensity to say "No" to God, and to walk according to the flesh rather than the Spirit.

When we choose the flesh, we're Samson - denying our rule of life and our work.

We are to go on discovering that our best life is one lived in submission to God, by yielding to His indwelling Spirit.

Our real freedom is in dying to self, in picking up the Cross on a daily basis, on reckoning ourselves dead to sin but alive to God.

Our free will is best exercised by surrendering to Jesus so He can produce fruit *in* and *through* our lives.

#2 Have You Delighted In Your Rule of Life and Your Work?

(v15-25)

Manoah knew his future son's rule of life and his work. Nevertheless he asked the Angel of the Lord, "What will be the boy's rule of life, and his work?" (v12).

One reason we might propose for his question was that it all seemed too simple. Surely there must be more to this hero-stuff than the three prohibitions of the Nazirite vow?

In Manoah's defense, the choosing of Samson was unique. **No other Judge had been chosen from the womb.**

Shouldn't there be training? If he was going to go up against the mighty Philistines, perhaps he should have special-forces training... Be physically fit... Go to the best scholars and strategists.

Some scholars think Samuel may have been a contemporary of Samson. Maybe they should get together to strategize.

Surely there must be a degree program for Judges somewhere in Israel. Jesus' instruction did not seem sufficient.

It was sufficient. All Samson need do was to live by it.

This is maybe the most important thing I will say today. **If you are a Christian, the indwelling Holy Spirit Who can constantly infill you is sufficient for you in every circumstance you find yourself in.**

- You can say “No” to sin *right now*, empowered by Him.
- You can bring forth His fruit *right now*, empowered by Him.

Instead, we tend to go around asking God, “What is my rule of life?” “What is my work?”

We don’t put it that way, but that’s what we are doing. Wander through the shelves of the average Christian bookstore and you will find book-after-book that attempt to add to the simplicity of you being a new creature in Jesus Christ. Each of them is the author’s attempt to bring you to a place of victory in your life.

But to get there, you must do, or be doing, something a certain way. If by your will power you can stick with their program, you might find the strength to overcome.

Listen: **You are an overcomer right now, if you are a new creature.** The Christian life is always a one-step program - reckon yourself dead to sin and alive to God indwelt by the Spirit Who raised Jesus from the dead.

As we continue in our text, we’re going to see two ways of approaching God - one that makes sense to Manoah, and the one that is prescribed by God.

Jdg 13:15 Then Manoah said to the Angel of the LORD, "Please let us detain You, and we will prepare a young goat for You."

Jdg 13:16 And the Angel of the LORD said to Manoah, "Though you detain Me, I will not eat your food. But if you offer a burnt offering, you must offer it to the LORD." (For Manoah did not know He *was* the Angel of the LORD.)

Manoah's first instinct was to cook a meal for the Lord. While in other passages of Scripture we might discuss our relationship to Jesus as supping with Him, that's not what I see here.

I see Manoah wanting to "detain" the Lord in order to get more-and-more clarification about his future son's rule of life and work.

All his questions had been adequately answered - twice. He was still thinking there must be more.

Instead of the long, drawn-out preparing of a meal, and eating it, Jesus told Manoah he ought to offer a sacrifice. Quick and more to the point.

"Offer it to the Lord," Jesus said. Instead of doing something *for* the Lord by cooking Him a meal, do something that acknowledges what the Lord has done *for you*.

It is a basic principle of the new creature life that we ought to think more about what the Lord has done for us than what we must do for Him.

Jdg 13:17 Then Manoah said to the Angel of the LORD, "What *is* Your name, that when Your words come *to pass* we may honor You?"

Manoah just could not quit thinking there was something more he must do than follow a few simple restrictions of the Nazirite vow. Give him props for effort... But therein lies the problem. He would not simply rest in God's promises and provision. He thought he must be doing something.

Jdg 13:18 And the Angel of the LORD said to him, "Why do you ask My name, seeing it *is* wonderful?"

"Wonderful" is variously translated as *mysterious*, or *beyond comprehension*, or *secret*.

Jesus might be implying that Manoah need not have asked Him His name because He had already enough evidence from their conversation to know Who He was.

I mean, wasn't everything Manoah had been told so full of wonder that only the Lord Himself could bring it to pass? He had spoken not as a prophet, for the Lord; He had spoken as the Lord.

When we approach God's Word, I don't think we wonder if He inspired it. We receive it as His Word.

But we can think it is insufficient to address our circumstances. We sometimes want more than His wonderful word, and His indwelling Spirit, and we seek it from secular sources.

The biggest example of this in my Christian lifetime has been the fascination among Christians with embracing the philosophies of secular psychologists. The godless principles of men like Freud and Jung and Skinner and Maslow are given Christian titles and then used to supposedly help believers work-through their issues.

Is that wonderful? No, it is not. It is defeating. It shouts, “God can’t help you.”

Jdg 13:19 So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering, and offered it upon the rock to the LORD. And He did a wondrous thing while Manoah and his wife looked on -

Jdg 13:20 it happened as the flame went up toward heaven from the altar - the Angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar! When Manoah and his wife saw *this*, they fell on their faces to the ground.

Goat and grain would have made a great meal. It made for a better sacrifice.

I have a devotional thought about this verse. I think sometimes we want to keep having *meals* when we ought to be on *mission*.

For example, there is nothing wrong with starting a Bible study. But if you’re already being well-taught, it might be better to start an outreach to nonbelievers.

It is at least possible on some occasions that we want to eat when we ought to be feeding others. And by “others,” in this case I mean ministry to nonbelievers.

Jdg 13:21 When the Angel of the LORD appeared no more to Manoah and his wife, then Manoah knew that He *was* the Angel of the LORD.

Manoah was a little slow, spiritually speaking. He prayed and all, but it took him a while to see things.

I can totally relate to him; really. I don't know how many times Pam has had to explain to me what was really going on in a situation.

Jdg 13:22 And Manoah said to his wife, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God!"

Jdg 13:23 But his wife said to him, "If the LORD had desired to kill us, He would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering from our hands, nor would He have shown us all these *things*, nor would He have told us *such things* as these at this time."

Mrs. Manoah was a good biblical counselor. Nothing Manoah had done could nullify the promises Jesus had made to them. It wasn't a test that they could pass or fail.

God's promises to you are true, and you should embrace them - not wonder if you've somehow nullified them.

The example I'd use is when a trial hits you. You immediately think you deserve it, for something you've either done or not done.

Yet you're told, specifically, to not think it a strange thing when a trial hits (First Peter 4).

Here's another way of applying this. The other morning, Greg Laurie's daily devotion was on Job 1:8, "Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that *there is* none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?"

One of the brother's joked with me about the trials that were about to be unleashed.

That's a Christian inside joke, is it not? That if you read Job, you may as well go sit on the ash heap, because trials are at the door?

After joking back-and-forth, I realized that the encouragement in that verse is wonderful. God was bragging about Job - and God can and does brag about you, because you are in Jesus Christ.

Jdg 13:24 So the woman bore a son and called his name Samson; and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him.
Jdg 13:25 And the Spirit of the LORD began to move upon him at Mahaneh Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

I ask you: Was the Nazirite vow a duty? Or was it a delight?

It was a delight because "the Spirit of the Lord began to move upon him." There was no downside to the restrictions of the vow when you see the upside of having God's Spirit.

For us, there's no downside to saying "No" to sin by yielding to the indwelling Spirit. It isn't a burden to be crucified with Jesus and share His resurrection life. It's what new creatures are born for.

Have you seen *Wonder Woman*? The Amazon who is training her keeps defeating her in their practice. She tells her, "You are stronger than this."

You are stronger than you sometimes act. You can, in fact, "do do all things through Christ who strengthens" you (Philippians 4:13).