

Introduction

Opening Scripture: [Psalm 139:13-16](#)

Sanctification

Theologians, especially after the Reformation, frequently say that we are **justified** at the moment of faith, **sanctified** throughout our lives, and **glorified** at Christ's return. Each of these terms refer to various aspects of our covenant relationship with the Lord.

But this timeline distinction does not match Scripture. We have already been sanctified **and** we are currently being sanctified. [Hebrews 10:10](#) "10 And by that will we **have been sanctified** through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." [Hebrews 10:14](#) "14 For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are **being sanctified**."

Sanctification refers to devotion. By Jesus's death, I have been separated from my wasted life and devoted to God. Yet in my daily struggle with sin, I must continue to pursue sanctification. I must daily separate from sin and devote myself to the Lord.

Samson

What I hope is apparent in [Judges 13](#) is that devotion to God is a **human responsibility** that is accomplished by **divine initiative**.

Samson was devoted to the Lord. His parents were instructed how to raise him. Samson was instructed how to live in devotion to the Lord. Samson and his parents bore the responsibility of his devotion. Yet, his devotion was a work of God. God set him apart before he was born, before he had done good or bad (see [Rom 9:11](#)). God empowered him for devotion by giving him the Holy Spirit.

Set apart before birth

God set Samson apart before his birth.

Israel's Rebellion

[Judges 13:1](#) "1 And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, so the Lord gave them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years."

Why did God allow the Philistines to oppress them? God **gave** Israel to the Philistines. He didn't just allow it; He instigated it. He gave them to the Philistines because they "did was was evil in the sight of the Lord." According to [Judges 10:6-7](#), this refers to Israel submitting to false gods.

Promise of Samson's birth

[Judges 13:2-5](#) “2 There was a certain man of Zorah, of the tribe of the Danites, whose name was Manoah. And his wife was barren and had no children. 3 And the angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, “Behold, you are barren and have not borne children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. 4 Therefore be careful and drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean, 5 for behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb, and he shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines.””

What does Scripture tell us about Manoah? He lived in Zorah. He was from the tribe of Dan ([Jdg 13:2](#)).

Who appeared to Manoah's wife? The angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah's wife ([Jdg 13:3](#)).

In verses 2-3, what was unique about Samson's birth? Samson's mother was barren. *Who else in Scripture was barren, but was given a child by the Lord?* Sarah was barren ([Gen 11:30](#); [21:1-3](#)). Rebekah was barren ([Gen 25:21](#)). Rachel was barren ([Gen 29:31](#); [30:22-24](#)). Hannah was barren ([1 Sam 1:5-20](#)). Elizabeth was barren ([Luke 1:7](#), [13-17](#)). Each of these highlight God's sovereignty. They could not have children, but God chose to give them a child (see also [2 Kgs 4:14-17](#)).

What restrictions were given to Samson and his mother? His mother could not drink wine or strong drink (alcohol). She could not eat anything unclean (which should apply to every Israelite). Samson could never shave his hair.

What was God's plan for Samson (in verse 5)? God set Samson apart for the purpose of **beginning** to save Israel from the Philistines.

Nazirite

[Numbers 6:1-4](#) “1 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2 “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When either a man or a woman makes a special vow, the vow of a Nazirite, to **separate himself** to the Lord, 3 he shall separate himself from wine and strong drink. He shall drink no vinegar made from wine or strong drink and shall not drink any juice of grapes or eat grapes, fresh or dried. 4 All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, not even the seeds or the skins.”

What was the purpose of the Nazirite vow? The Nazirite vow was a vow of separation to the Lord ([Num 6:2](#)).

What things was the Nazirite to abstain from in verses 3-4? He could not drink wine, strong drink (alcohol), or grape juice. He could not eat grapes or raisins, including the seeds, the skin, or anything made from grapes.

[Numbers 6:5](#) “5 “All the days of his vow of separation, no razor shall touch his head. Until the time is completed for which he separates himself to the Lord, he shall be holy. He shall let the locks of hair of his head grow long.”

What restriction does verse 5 describe? He was not allowed to shave his head during the days of his vow.

What was the purpose of letting the hair grow long? The hair would be an outward sign of the vow. The length of the hair would also indicate the length of one’s vow.

[Numbers 6:6–8](#) “6 “All the days that he separates himself to the Lord he shall not go near a dead body. 7 Not even for his father or for his mother, for brother or sister, if they die, shall he make himself unclean, because his separation to God is on his head. 8 All the days of his separation he is holy to the Lord.”

What was the Nazirite to avoid in verse 6? He could not go near a dead body. *Whose funerals could he not attend?* He could not even attend the funeral of family members.

Why did God not allow them to attend family funerals? There was a vow of devotion to the Lord. There cannot be exceptions to our devotion to the Lord. We cannot say, I will be devoted to the Lord, except when I am on vacation, then I will go wild. I will be devoted to the Lord around my Christian friends, but I can relax around my non-Christian friends. **Part-time devotion is not devotion.**

Who else in Scripture were lifelong Nazirites? Samuel was a lifelong Nazirite ([1 Sam 1:11](#)). John the Baptist was a lifelong Nazirite ([Luke 1:15](#)). Interestingly, all three mothers were barren before these men were born.

Summary

Notice that Samson was set apart by God before he was born. Paul said the same thing about himself ([Gal 1:15](#)). God set apart Jeremiah before he was born ([Jer 1:5](#)). God set Jacob apart before he was born ([Rom 9:10-13](#)). [Romans 9](#) explains that such events are evidence of God’s mercy. Samson was not set apart because he had devoted himself or because he had done anything good. God devoted Samson before he was born because He is gracious and merciful.

God’s Word

The basis of Samson’s devotion would be God’s word.

Manoah hears the message

[Judges 13:6–7](#) “6 Then the woman came and told her husband, “A man of God came to me, and his appearance was like the appearance of the angel of God, very awesome. I did not ask

him where he was from, and he did not tell me his name, 7 but he said to me, ‘Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. So then drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.’ ””

How does Manoah’s wife explain the man of God who appeared to her? She said that he looked like the angel of the Lord. She did not find out where he came from or his name. Both of these details come up later.

[Judges 13:8-10](#) “8 Then Manoah prayed to the Lord and said, “O Lord, please let the man of God whom you sent come again to us and teach us what we are to do with the child who will be born.” 9 And God listened to the voice of Manoah, and the angel of God came again to the woman as she sat in the field. But Manoah her husband was not with her. 10 So the woman ran quickly and told her husband, “Behold, the man who came to me the other day has appeared to me.””

What did Manoah want to learn from the angel? He wanted the man of God to **teach** them what to do with Samson. Manoah wanted to raise Samson according to God’s teaching.

Why did the angel appear twice to the wife and not Manoah? Perhaps he appeared to the wife because she was barren and it was good news for her. Perhaps he appeared to the wife to strengthen Manoah’s faith.

Manoah meets the angel

[Judges 13:11-14](#) “11 And Manoah arose and went after his wife and came to the man and said to him, “Are you the man who spoke to this woman?” And he said, “I am.” 12 And Manoah said, “Now when your words come true, what is to be the child’s manner of life, and what is his mission?” 13 And the angel of the Lord said to Manoah, “Of all that I said to the woman let her be careful. 14 She may not eat of anything that comes from the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, or eat any unclean thing. All that I commanded her let her observe.””

What two questions did Manoah ask the angel? First, he asked if he was the man who spoke to his wife. Second, he asked about Samson’s manner of life and mission.

Why did he ask about the manner of life and mission? (cf. vs. 4-5) God had specific instructions about Samson’s manner of life. He was to be devoted to the Lord as a Nazirite. God had specific instructions about Samson’s mission. He would begin the deliverance from the Philistines.

What was Manoah’s wife’s restrictions during pregnancy? She had to observe the same dietary restrictions that Samson would keep.

Summary

[Judges 13:6-14](#) has some important lessons for parents. First, like Manoah, we should be turning to God's word to know how to raise our children. It is a blatant contradiction to (1) say I want my kids to follow the Lord and (2) neglect reading Scripture. If I read Scripture when it is convenient (vs a commitment), then I should not expect my kids to be devoted. *How can I expect to be a godly father if I neglect the word that God has given me that will change me into a godly father?*

Second, like Samson's mother, we as parents should share in our children's devotion. Samson's mother could not drink grape juice. What she fed herself fed Samson. What I feed my soul feeds my kids. This applies positively to reading Scripture and praying. It also applies negatively to consuming things that pull me away from God.

God-honoring devotion

We see in the interaction between Manoah and the angel of the Lord that devotion to the Lord results in worship and fear of the Lord. Devotion benefits me, but it is really for God's glory.

Goat offering

[Judges 13:15-16](#) "15 Manoah said to the angel of the Lord, "Please let us detain you and prepare a young goat for you." 16 And the angel of the Lord said to Manoah, "If you detain me, I will not eat of your food. But if you prepare a burnt offering, then offer it to the Lord." (For Manoah did not know that he was the angel of the Lord.)"

What did Manoah offer to the angel? He asked the angel to stay and eat. He offered to cook a young goat for them to eat. *What did the angel tell Manoah to do with the goat?* He said he would not eat the food. Instead, Manoah should offer it as a burnt offering to the Lord.

What did Manoah not yet know about the angel? Manoah was still under the assumption that this was a prophet (a man of God).

[Judges 13:17-18](#) "17 And Manoah said to the angel of the Lord, "What is your name, so that, when your words come true, we may honor you?" 18 And the angel of the Lord said to him, "Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?"

Why did Manoah ask the angel's name? He wanted to honor the man when Samson was born. Essentially, he wanted to honor him as a true prophet of God.

What did the angel say about his name? He said that his name was too wonderful for Manoah to hear it. Wonderful here means incomprehensible; it cannot be understood (see [Ps 139:6](#)).

The burnt offering

[Judges 13:19-20](#) “19 So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering, and offered it on the rock to the Lord, to the one who works wonders, and Manoah and his wife were watching. 20 And when the flame went up toward heaven from the altar, the angel of the Lord went up in the flame of the altar. Now Manoah and his wife were watching, and they fell on their faces to the ground.”

What two things did Manoah bring as an offering? He offered the goat and grain.

Are grain offerings acceptable to the Lord? God prescribed grain offerings as well as animal sacrifices (see [Lev 2](#)).

How does this shape your understanding of Cain's offering? This is an important detail that should inform our reading of the story of Cain and Abel. It was Cain's heart that God rejected, not that his offering was from the garden.

What happened to the angel? The angel went up into heaven with the flame. Remember that Manoah's wife did not ask the man of God where he was from or what his name was. Now we get a little bit of an answer to both. He won't give his name because it is beyond understanding. He seems to be from heaven.

How did Manoah and his wife respond to the angel going up to heaven? They fell down with their faces on the ground.

Angel of the Lord

[Judges 13:21-23](#) “21 The angel of the Lord appeared no more to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of the Lord. 22 And Manoah said to his wife, “We shall surely die, for we have seen God.” 23 But his wife said to him, “If the Lord had meant to kill us, he would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering at our hands, or shown us all these things, or now announced to us such things as these.””

What did Manoah expect to happen after this encounter? He expected that they would die. *Why did Manoah think they would die?* He said they had seen God. *Why did Manoah's wife think they would live?* She reasoned that God would not appear to them, announce the birth and purpose of their son, then kill them.

Can a person see God and live? There is an interesting tension in Scripture about seeing God. First, there are some situations that suggest that a person **cannot see God and live**. [Exodus 33:20](#) “20 But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.” Here God specifies that Moses can see Him, but not His face ([Exod 33:23](#)). Second, there are some passages that suggest that **no one can see God**. [1 Timothy 6:16](#) “16 who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.” This verse is especially tough because it is

difficult to discern if this refers to Jesus, the Father, or both. Third, there are passages in which people **see God and live**. [Isaiah 6:5](#) “5 And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!”” Here, Isaiah **fears** he will die, but he lives (cf. [Gen 32:30](#); [Gen 18](#)).

The balance to all of this tension is the mercy of God. As Isaiah observed, we cannot see God and live because He is holy and we are sinners. It is not right to say that God cannot be in the presence of sin; it is better to say that sin cannot be in the presence of God. Yet, Isaiah lived because God is merciful.

Who is the angel of the Lord? Scholars debate the identity of the angel of the Lord. Some argue that he is an angel (like many of the angels in Scripture). Others argue that the angel is God Himself. In [Gen 16:1-16](#), the angel of the Lord visits Hagar. [Genesis 16:10](#) “10 The **angel of the Lord** also said to her, “I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude” (notice the first-person pronoun, I). [Exodus 3:2-4](#) “2 And the **angel of the Lord** appeared to him **in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush**. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. 3 And Moses said, “I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.” 4 When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, **God called to him out of the bush**, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.””

At other times, the angel of the Lord speaks on behalf of God, not as God Himself. [Genesis 22:11-12](#) “11 But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” 12 He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God ...” [Genesis 22:15-16](#) “15 And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven 16 and said, “By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son ...”

[Samson's birth](#)

[Judges 13:24-25](#) “24 And the woman bore a son and called his name Samson. And the young man grew, and the Lord blessed him. 25 And the Spirit of the Lord began to stir him in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.”

What did Manoah's wife name her son? She named her son Samson. Samson's name is a derivative of the word for “sun.”

As Samson grew, what did the Lord begin to do in him? The Spirit of the Lord stirred Samson. God was preparing him for his purpose of fighting against the Philistines.

Conclusion

The following chapters will highlight Samson's responsibility (without ignoring God's initiative). In those chapters we will still see God's sovereignty. Samson is filled with the Holy Spirit and God accomplishes His will through Samson, even in Samson's failures. Yet, we will primarily see that Samson ignores God's word and flirts with temptation. He is an illustration of believers who "quench the Spirit."

[Judges 13](#) highlights God's role in Samson's devotion (without ignoring human responsibility). God devoted Samson before he had done anything. Samson's devotion was based on God's grace, not Samson's merit. God filled Samson with the Holy Spirit who stirred him toward God's will. The same is true of our relationship with the Lord. We know God because He is gracious, not because we are good. We grow in sanctification by the power of the Holy Spirit, not by the flesh.

I can only exalt **God** for my initial sanctification, not myself or those who shared the gospel with me. I can only exalt **God** for my ongoing sanctification, not myself or anyone who disciples me.

Closing Scripture: [Hebrews 13:20-21](#) "20 Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, 21 equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."