

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study of *Unstoppable Gospel* these sermon outlines will use different Scripture passages related to the small group study theme, so the pastor can reinforce the study from the pulpit.

Introduction: The nation of Israel, God's people, needed a deliverer. They were being oppressed by an enemy – the Philistines. This was actually a recurring scenario. It was the time of the Judges – a time in Israel's history where they went through a series of heroes that God sent to get them out of messes that they had gotten themselves into. One of those judges was Samson. That is a name that you know, and whenever you hear that name, you think of superhuman strength. It seemed that there was nothing that Samson couldn't do. And God assigned him with a mission to fulfill during the 20 years that he served as a judge.

God has assigned a mission to us too. By looking at the mission God gave Samson to fulfill and the empowerment He possessed, it can give us some insight into our mission as well.

1. God has a mission for His people to fulfill. (Judges 13:5)

a. He uses impossible situations – “*wife was barren*” (13:2)

Think about all the times in Scripture when God used a barren woman to produce a person He was going to use in great ways – Isaac, Joseph, Samuel, and John the Baptist all came from barren women. And then Jesus Himself came from a woman who had an even greater problem with producing children. But nothing is impossible for God. No obstacle is too great for him to overcome.

b. He uses unextraordinary people – “*a certain man*” (13:2); “*the woman*” (13:3)

There was nothing unusual about Samson or his parents. He was just a guy and she was just his wife. The only things that made them unusual were their humility and their obedience. When they were told that they were getting ready to have a son, they asked for instructions from God on how he should be raised. And then they did exactly as they were told. Imagine that! God can use anyone who is humble and obedient to accomplish His mission because that kind of person relies on God's ways and God's power.

c. He uses confusing circumstances – “*it was of the Lord*” (14:4)

Imagine how confused Manoah must have felt when his wife came home with the news that they were soon to have a son and that she and he were going to have an unusual diet. Even more confusing was when that son, now grown, came home and said that he wanted to marry a woman he had never met and that was a member of the oppressing nation! And that God was going to use both of these situations? Confusing! Since God does things in ways that we would not expect, it's easy to get confused. Just don't get confused about the mission. *That* is always clear.

- 2. The Spirit empowers the accomplishment of God's mission. (Judges 15:14-15)**
- a. He rescues people from the hands of the enemy – “slew 1000 men” (15:15)
Samson had been given a mission by God – to begin to deliver the Israelites from the hands of the Philistines (13:5). God gave Him the empowerment of the Holy Spirit in the form of great strength to enable this mission to be accomplished. God has given His church the same mission and the same empowerment. In Acts 1:8, Jesus promised the Spirit's power in order that we might be His witnesses and rescue people from the oppression of the Enemy.
- b. He changes people from the image of the enemy – “they [the Israelites] bound him” (15:13)
God is not satisfied with people being rescued; He wants them to be changed. It is that part of the mission – the change part – that Samson didn't understand until the end. It seems that all the acts of strength that Samson did were done for personal motivations. He used the Spirit's power for his personal mission; the fact that he accomplished some of God's mission in the process seemed secondary, even incidental to him. Samson kept wavering back and forth in his allegiance, never fully committed to either side. Samson was supposed to be the deliverer, but at times he looked like the enemy.
- 3. The fulfillment of God's mission is not dependent on the faithfulness of God's messenger. (Judges 16:20-21)**
- a. God keeps His promises even if we don't keep ours – “if I be shaven” (16:17)
Before Samson was ever born, he had some requirements placed on him. He could not eat or drink from the grape vine, he could not touch any dead animal/person and he could never cut his hair. It was a promise that he was to fulfill. He broke all three promises. But God still used him to accomplish his mission. Jesus told Peter, “I will build my church.” (Matt. 16:18) It was his mission. And even though Peter failed to keep his promises, just like we fail to keep ours, Jesus is going to fulfill this mission. It is bigger than us.
- b. We keep the Spirit even if we don't yield to him – “the LORD was departed” (16:20)
When Samson proved unfaithful, God removed His Spirit and the power from Samson's life. God seemed to operate like that in the Old Testament. But Jesus promised something even better for us – the eternal presence of the Spirit (Jn. 14:16). We cannot lose the Spirit's presence, but like Samson, we can lose His power if we don't yield to His control (Eph. 5:18) or if we quench that power through sin in our lives (1 Thes 5:19).
- 4. Though the messenger changes, the mission goes on. (Judges 16:30-31)**
- a. Samson was a reluctant part of the mission.
Samson was a product of his time. He did what was “right in his own eyes” (17:6). Even in his death, it seems that God's mission was secondary to Samson's revenge. Samson's mother was told that he would “begin to deliver Israel” (13:5). That he did, and the mission continued on past his death. But imagine how much more he could have accomplished for God had he been a willing, fully committed servant.
- b. Jesus was a zealous part of the mission.
Much later in Israel's history, a much more willing participant in the mission arrived. His name was Jesus. He and Samson had a lot in common. He too

lived in the enablement of the Spirit (Luke 4:1,14,18). Both men were mocked as their death drew near, and both accomplished more in their death than they had in their lives. The difference was that Samson was a man of poor character, and Jesus was a man of impeccable character. He was the Son of God who was without sin. And through Jesus, the mission of defeating the enemy could reach its highest expression as Jesus died and then rose again three days later. In fact, none other was capable of doing what Jesus did on the cross.

c. We are a called part of the mission.

Before Jesus headed home to His Father, he passed off the mission to His followers – us. We, like Samson must now choose whether to accept that mission and draw upon the strength of God’s Spirit for its successful completion.

Conclusion: Mission Impossible was a popular TV show that began in 1966 and ran for seven years. In each episode and in the five movies that followed, the lead agent of the IMF, after hearing about some dire situation in the world, was then challenged with the words, “Your mission, Mr. Hunt, should you choose to accept it” followed by the specifics of the mission and the names of the people that would be a part of his team.

In the latest installment to the Mission Impossible franchise, there is a scene near the end of the movie where a female British agent is sitting across the table from Ethan Hunt, the main character played by Tom Cruise. Things have gone badly for both of them up to this point in the movie. She suggests a course of action – run away together. There were always going to be villains, and there were always going to be missions, and there were always going to be agents to fight those missions. It would make sense. The villain had bested both of them at every turn, they had both been betrayed by their home country and they were tired. Let someone else do it. Hunt doesn’t even blink. Why? The mission is what he does. It’s in his blood...plus, it’s in the script.

We have a mission too. At times, it seems much more impossible than any mission some writer could dream up. All that Ethan Hunt had to do was stop a nuclear bomb from going off. We have to share the message of Christ with the whole world. But in our mission, we have a much larger team, and we have the empowerment of God’s Spirit. And we can be sure that no matter whether we succeed or fail, our Father will never disavow His knowledge of us (2 Tim. 2:13). He claimed Samson as His own (Heb. 11:32). He will claim us as well. Will you choose to accept this mission? Will you make it a part of who you are such that running becomes an impossibility? Will you allow God to write the script for the rest of your life? Remember, you accomplish far more through sacrifice than you ever will by doing life the way that looks good to you.

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