

TITLE: “GRACE TO WORK THROUGH ANYBODY” (#2)

(GRACE)

TEXT: JUDGES 13:24

02/16/25

FILE: (GRACE2)

INTRO.

1. MANY OF YOU SAW THE 1993 MOVIE *SCHINDLER’S LIST*.
2. IT’S BASED ON THE TRUE STORY OF OSKAR SCHINDLER - A GERMAN BUSINESSMAN WHO ARRANGED TO SAVE THE LIVES OF OVER 1100 JEWISH WORKERS DURING THE WORST DAY OF THE HOLOCAUST IN POLAND.
3. SCHINDLER HAD FACTORIES WHICH MADE ENAMEL KITCHENWARE - & IN WHICH HE PRETENDED TO MAKE MUNITIONS FOR THE NAZI WAR EFFORT.
4. USING HIS CHARM & BRIBERY TO PERSUADE NAZI OFFICIALS TO ALLOW HIM TO LABEL HIS “SCHINDLER JEWS” AS “ESSENTIAL WORKERS” - & HAND THEM RELOCATED TO A BARRACKS NEAR HIS FACTORIES – ASSURING THAT THEY WOULD NOT BE TAKEN TO THE DEATH CAMPS ALONG WITH MILLIONS OF OTHERS.
5. ONE OTHER ACT OF KINDNESS STOOD OUT ... WHEN HENRY ROSNER - A JEWISH VIO-LINIST - WAS TRANSFERRED FROM POLAND TO A PRISON CAMP IN GERMANY - HE WASN’T ALLOWED TO TAKE HIS VIOLIN.
6. SCHINDLER BOUGHT IT AND GAVE IT TO ROSNER’S WIFE.
7. AFTER THE WAR - ROSNER WAS RE-UNITED W/ HIS WIFE & HIS VIOLIN - & WAS ABLE TO RESUME HIS MUSIC CAREER IN THE UNITED STATES.

8. LITTLE WONDER THAT SCHINDLER WAS & STILL IS A HERO TO THE JEWISH PEOPLE B/C OF WHAT HE DID DURING THE WAR.
9. HE SPENT HIS ENTIRE FORTUNE HELPING “HIS JEWS” & THEN DIED PENNILESS.
10. HE WAS TRULY A HERO ... BUT HE WAS AN *UNLIKELY* HERO.
11. HE WAS GERMAN-BORN & A MEMBER OF THE NAZI PARTY.
12. HE WAS ALSO A PROFITEER WHO GAINED A FORTUNE THROUGH THE WAR.
13. HIS FACTORIES HAD BELONGED TO JEWISH OWNERS - & AFTER THEY WERE CONFISCATED - SCHINDLER TOOK THEM OVER AND GOT RICH OFF OF THEM.
14. HE HAD EXPLOITED JEWISH LABOR IN ORDER TO AMASS HIS FORTUNE.
15. HE DEALT EXTENSIVELY IN THE BLACK MARKET TO GET EVEN RICHER.
16. THOMAS KENEALLY - AUTHOR OF *SCHINDLER'S LIST* - WROTE THAT WHAT ATTRACTED HIM TO SCHINDLER'S STORY WAS THE FACT THAT “YOU COULDN'T SAY WHERE OPPORTUNISM ENDED AND ALTRUISM BEGAN.”
17. IN SCHINDLER'S CASE - “GOOD WILL EMERGED FROM THE MOST UNLIKELY PLACES.”
18. OSKAR SCHINDLER WAS CLEARLY A *FLAWED HUMAN BEING* - & YET NO ONE CAN DENY THE GOOD HE ACCOMPLISHED – WHATEVER HIS MOTIVES MIGHT HAVE BEEN.

DISCUSSION:

I. *SAMSON - ONE OF ISRAEL'S "JUDGES" - WAS A LOT LIKE THAT ... ONE OF THE GREAT-EST HEROES IN THE O.T. - YET ONE OF THE MOST UNLIKELY.*

A. ABOUT FAITH'S HALL OF FAME - HEB. 11 - SOMEONE HAS WRITTEN:

“MEN & WOMEN DIDN'T GET THEIR NAMES IN HEB. 11 B/C OF PERFECTION - BUT B/C OF STRENGTHS GOD CHOSE TO EMPHASIZE AND EXEMPLIFY.”

B. THAT COULD CERTAINLY BE SAID ABOUT SAMSON ... HE WAS “RAW MATERIAL” IN GOD'S HANDS THAT GOD MOLDED INTO A VESSEL TO ACCOMPLISH HIS PUR-POSES ... AND I MEAN *REALLY RAW* MATERIAL.

C. HIS STORY IS FOUND IN JUDGES 13-16 & WE HAVE MORE INFORMATION ABOUT HIM THAN ABOUT ANY OF THE OTHER JUDGES.

1. HE WAS BORN TO A PREVIOUSLY CHILDLESS COUPLE WHO WAS TOLD THAT HE WOULD LIVE HIS ENTIRE LIFE UNDER THE VOW OF A NAZIRITE.

2. NOW - THAT'S NOT THE SAME AS A NAZARENE - BUT IT MEANS “A CONSE-CRATED PERSON.”

3. THERE WERE 3 STIPULATIONS - ACCORDING TO NUM. 6: NO WINE OR PRODUCT OF GRAPES WAS TO BE CONSUMED ... NO TOUCHING OF DEAD BODIES (NOT EVEN PARENTS) ... NO CUTTING OF HAIR.

4. FOR MOST PEOPLE - IT WAS A TEMPORARY PERIOD OF CONSECRATION - BUT SAMSON WAS TO BE A NAZIRITE FROM THE TIME OF HIS BIRTH UNTIL HIS DEATH.

D. THERE'S A REALLY BIG PROBLEM IN THE SAMSON STORY ... *HE*

SYSTEMATICALLY BROKE EVERY STIPULATION OF HIS NAZIRITE VOW ... WHICH IS MUCH OF WHAT HIS LIFE STORY IS ABOUT.

1. THE BIBLE NEVER SPECIFICALLY SAYS HE DRANK WINE - BUT HE PARTIED A LOT AND WAS VERY OUT OF CONTROL ON OCCASION - SO IT SEEMS LIKELY.
 2. HE KILLED A LION WITH HIS BARE HANDS - & LATER ATE HONEY FROM A SWARM OF BEES NESTED IN THE CARCASS (WHO HASN'T DONE THAT - RIGHT?)
 3. HE YIELDED TO THE WILES OF DELILAH & ALLOWED HER TO HAVE HIS HEAD SHAVED WHILE HE SLEPT.
 4. SOME SUGGEST THAT THAT'S THE REAL REASON HE LOST HIS STRENGTH - NOT B/C HIS STRENGTH WAS NECESSARILY IN HIS HAIR - BUT B/C THAT WAS THE LAST VESTIGE OF HIS VOW TO BE BROKEN ... REMEMBER THAT *HIS STRENGTH CAME FROM GOD.*
- E. HE ALSO MARRIED A NON-ISRAELITE - A PHILISTINE IN FACT - OVER THE OBJEC-TIONS OF HIS PARENTS & IN VIOLATION OF THE LAW OF MOSES - JUDG. 14:1FF.
1. HE ALSO HAD A VIOLENT TEMPER ... E.G., AT HIS OWN WEDDING FEAST - HE MADE A FOOLISH WAGER FOR 30 GARMENTS ... WHICH HE LOST.
 2. HE THEN KILLED 30 PHILISTINE MEN JUST TO GET THEIR GARMENTS IN ORDER TO PAY OFF HIS GAMBLING DEBT.
- F. IT WOULD BE AN UNDERSTATEMENT TO SAY THAT HE HAD A WEAKNESS FOR

WOMEN - ESP. PHILISTINE WOMEN.

1. IN ADDITION TO HIS WIFE - HE TOOK UP W/ A PROSTITUTE IN GAZA - & LATER W/ DELILAH - WHO CLEARLY DID NOT HAVE HIS BEST INTEREST AT HEART.
2. HE WAS EXTREMELY BRASH & SELF-SUFFICIENT.
3. UNLIKE OTHER JUDGES - HE WAGED A ONE-MAN WAR AGAINST THE PHIL-ISTINES ... W/ NO HELP FROM ANYONE ... & MOSTLY FOR PERSONAL REASONS.
4. HE DISPLAYED POOR JUDGMENT THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE - & WE CAN SAY THAT HE WAS THE EPITOME OF PROV. 25:28 ... “WHOEVER HAS NO RULE OVER HIS OWN SPIRIT - IS LIKE A CITY BROKEN DOWN- W/OUT WALLS.”

II. SO - HE WAS AN UNLIKELY HERO - BUT HE WAS A HERO.

- A. SAMSON JUDGED ISRAEL FOR 20 YEARS AND KEPT THEIR ENEMIES - THE PHILIS-TINES - AT BAY AT A TIME WHEN NO ONE ELSE SEEMED ABLE TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT THEM.
- B. AFTER HE WAS CAPTURED BY THE PHILISTINES - WHEN HE WAS BEING DISPLAYED FOR THE AMUSEMENT OF HIS CAPTORS IN THE TEMPLE OF DAGON - THEIR OWN FALSE GOD - HE PRAYED TO THE TRUE GOD OF HEAVEN & EARTH - FOR STRENGTH - *AND HE GOT IT!*
- C. HE QUITE LITERALLY “BROUGHT DOWN THE HOUSE!”

- D. THE BIBLICAL RECORD SAYS THAT THE “SPIRIT OF THE LORD” CAME MIGHTILY UPON HIM TO DEFEAT THE PHILISTINES - EVEN AS HE HIMSELF LAY DYING.
- E. HE’S LISTED AMONG THE HEROES OF FAITH IN HEB. 11:32 - ALONG W/ THE LIKES OF ABRAHAM .. MOSES .. DAVID & THE PROPHETS .. PRETTY HIGH COTTON!
- F. SAMSON EXEMPLIFIES NOT ONLY GOD’S *ABILITY* TO WORK THROUGH A BADLY FLAWED PERSON - BUT ALSO HIS *WILLINGNESS* - HIS GRACE AS IT WERE - TO DO SO.
- G. THERE’S REALLY NO OTHER WAY TO EXPLAIN THE FACT THAT A VILE MAN LIKE SAMSON - ONE WHO HAD BROKEN EVERY DETAIL OF THE VOW HE WAS SUP-POSED TO LIVE UNDER - COULD BE USED BY GOD TO SERVE HIM AND HIS PEOPLE ... AGAIN - THE WORD “GRACE” COMES TO MIND ... WHEN GOD CHOOSES TO USE US DESPITE OUR FLAWS AND SHORTCOMINGS!

III. THIS ISN’T AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO “BE LIKE SAMSON” - THINKING GOD WILL USE YOU & WORK THROUGH YOU NO MATTER HOW OUT OF CONTROL YOU ARE OR HOW MUCH YOU CHOOSE TO DISOBEY HIM!

- A. FIRST - SAMSON BROUGHT MUCH HARDSHIP ON HIMSELF BY BEING SO OUT OF CONTROL.
 - 1. WE NEED TO REMEMBER THAT THERE’S A PENALTY TO BE PAID FOR REBEL-LION NO MATTER WHO WE ARE - *IN THIS LIFE* - PROV. 13:15; GAL. 6:7.
 - 2. SO FOOLISH VOWS – FOOLISH DECISIONS – FOOLISH LIFE CHOICES – ALL HAVE PREDICTABLE RESULTS.

- B. SECOND - GOD WOULD SURELY HAVE *DONE SO MUCH MORE* THROUGH SAM-SON HAD HE BEEN MORE OBEDIENT.
1. REMEMBER THAT OBEDIENCE IS WHAT OPENS US UP TO GOD'S BLESSINGS.
 2. SAMSON CLOSED OFF A LOT OF THAT POSSIBILITY - HE MISSED MANY OF GOD'S GREATEST BLESSINGS BY HIS LIFESTYLE CHOICES.
- C. BUT THE REAL TAKE-AWAY IS THAT WE SHOULD LEARN FROM SAMSON'S LIFE *NOT TO RULE OUT ANYONE - INCLUDING OURSELVES* - AS A POTENTIAL SERVANT & AS AN INSTRUMENT IN DOING GOD'S WILL.
1. EVERYONE OF US IS FLAWED IN SOME WAY OR ANOTHER .. WE *ALL* HAVE OUR IMPERFECTIONS & LIMITATIONS AND SPIRITUAL BLIND SPOTS.
 2. WE TALKED LAST WEEK ABOUT DAVID & HIS SINS - & YET LOOK AT HOW POWERFULLY GOD USED HIM!
 3. ELIJAH WAS ONE OF GOD'S GREATEST PROPHETS - & YET HE BECAME FRIGHTENED & DISCOURAGED & RAN AWAY FROM JEZEBEL & HER THREATS - & HE THOUGHT HE WAS THE ONLY FAITHFUL SERVANT GOD HAD LEFT IN THE WORLD ... HIS EXACT WORDS WERE: "I ALONE AM LEFT..."
 4. AND BEFORE *PAUL THE APOSTLE* GAVE HIS LIFE SPREADING THE GOSPEL THROUGHOUT THE MEDITERRANEAN WORLD - HE WAS SAUL OF TARSUS - WHO BREATHED OUT THREATS & SLAUGHTER AGAINST THE PEOPLE OF GOD

5. HE WROTE TO HIS YOUNG FRIEND TIMOTHY NOT TO “LET ANYONE DESPISE YOU B/C YOU’RE YOUNG.”
6. AND TIMOTHY *WAS* YOUNG – & TIMID ON TOP OF THAT - & YET PAUL WOULD LATER WRITE: “I HAVE NO ONE ELSE LIKE HIM.”
7. THINK ABOUT THAT – YOU & I CAN BE *FLAWED* - BUT ALSO *INDISPENSABLE*.

D. I KNOW YOU’VE HEARD THIS BEFORE - BUT PLEASE TAKE IT TO HEART.

1. GOD WORKS THROUGH IMPERFECT PEOPLE - SIMPLY B/C *THAT’S THE ONLY KIND OF PEOPLE HE HAS TO WORK WITH!*
2. AND THE CHURCH HAS SOMETIMES BEEN DESCRIBED AS A VAST UNEM-PLOYED ARMY WITH ONLY A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF ITS RANKS WILLING TO SERVE ON THE BATTLE LINES.
3. WHY IS THAT? – OFTEN IT’S B/C WE THINK WE’RE *TOO FLAWED ... TOO WEAK .. TOO INSIGNIFICANT .. TOO SINFUL* FOR GOD TO EVER BE ABLE TO USE US!

E. THE TRUTH IS - SCRIPTURE SAYS THAT GOD HAS GIVEN EACH OF US A *GIFT* TO USE IN HIS SERVICE - ROM. 12:6-8 - & IT’S UP TO US TO FIND OUT WHAT IT IS & THEN USE IT TO SERVE GOD & PEOPLE.

1. LISTEN TO ME NOW ... YOU ARE NO EXCEPTION TO THAT RULE!
2. GOD STILL HAS WORK FOR YOU & ME - B/C HE *IS A GOD OF GRACE*.
3. WE DON’T DESERVE TO BE HIS SERVANTS ANY MORE THAN SAMSON

DID.

4. AND YET HE STILL PROMISES THAT IF WE'RE *WILLING* – HE WILL MAKE US *ABLE*.

IV. SO - HOW DO WE BECOME SERVANTS BY GOD'S GRACE?

A. FIRST - THINK OF YOURSELF AS *RAW MATERIAL* IN THE HANDS OF A MASTER WORKMAN.

1. RECOGNIZE THAT YOUR ABILITY TO SERVE ISN'T BY YOUR OWN POWER BUT BY *HIS* - *EPH. 6:10*.
2. YOU & I ARE LUMPS OF CLAY - OR PIECES OF WOOD & *HE'S* THE MASTER WORKMAN!

B. SECOND - *BE OBEDIENT* IN ORDER TO MAXIMIZE YOUR SP. POTENTIAL.

1. E.G. - PAUL - IN DESCRIBING THE AFTERMATH OF HIS DAMASCUS ROAD EXPERIENCE:

“THEREFORE I WAS NOT DISOBEDIENT TO THE HEAVENLY VISION - BUT DE-CLARED FIRST TO THOSE IN DAMASCUS - THEN IN JERUSALEM - & THROUGHOUT ALL THE REGION OF JUDEA - & ALSO TO THE GENTILES - THAT THEY SHOULD REPENT & TURN TO GOD - PERFORMING DEEDS IN KEEP-ING WITH THEIR REPENTANCE” - ACTS 26:19-20.

2. IF YOU'RE RIGHT NOW *NOT* WORSHIPING .. NOT PRAYING .. NOT IMMERS-ING YOURSELF IN GOD'S WORD .. NOT CARING FOR OTHERS ... *START DOING IT W/OUT DELAY!*

C. THIRD - *PRAY ... BECOME A PERSON ABOUT WHICH PRAYER ... STAYING IN TOUCH W/ HEADQUARTERS ... IS A DAILY & REGULAR PART OF YOUR LIFE.*

1. HERE'S THE PART THAT SAMSON GOT RIGHT ... WHEN HE KNEW HE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO STAND AGAINST THE ENEMIES OF GOD & GOD'S PEOPLE ... & USE HIS SUPER-POWER STRENGTH FOR GOOD ... *HE PRAYED FOR GOD TO GIVE HIM HIS BLESSING ... JUST ONE MORE TIME ... AND HE DID.*

2. YOU CAN DO THAT TOO ... JUST PRAY .. ASK GOD TO USE YOU.

3. ASK HIM TO EMPOWER YOU FOR WHATEVER IT IS THAT YOU HAVE THE OP-PORTUNITIES & GIFT TO DO IN HIS NAME.

D. FOURTH - *BE GRATEFUL FOR GOD'S GRACE* IN BEING WILLING TO WORK THRU YOU ... AS WEAK & FLAWED AS YOU ARE ... AS *WE ALL ARE.*

1. IN FACT - THAT REALLY IS A GREAT PLACE TO GET STARTED.

2. GIVE THANKS ... SINCERE THANKS ... FOR GOD'S GRACE.

3. TELL HIM THAT YOU BELIEVE HIM WHEN HE SAYS HE'S WILLING TO WORK THROUGH FLAWED & UNLIKELY PEOPLE.

4. AND THEN ASK HIM TO WORK THROUGH YOU.

5. BUT DON'T PRAY IT *UNLESS YOU MEAN IT.*

FINAL THOUGHTS:

1. AND WHO KNOWS ... YOU MAY BECOME AN “UNLIKELY HERO” TOO!
2. REMEMBER: “THE JOURNEY OF A 1000 MILES BEGINS WITH THE *FIRST STEP.*”

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