

**JUDGES AND RUTH: FACING GROUP APOSTASY AS INDIVIDUALS**  
**Part IX: Trusting God's Desire And Enabling To Use Even ONE Faithful Person**  
**(Judges 12:1-13:25)**

**I. Introduction**

- A. Though 1 Peter 4:10 calls each believer to use his spiritual gift for the Lord's ministry, once we start to serve, we soon learn the obstacles to fruitfulness are **way beyond** our power to handle them, John 15:4-5.
- B. This inadequacy may involve the carnality of other believers around us or even our own limitations or carnality. Thus, we need **encouraging direction** on serving the Lord **effectively** in spite of such obstacles.
- C. Judges 12:1-13:25 provides us the encouraging direction we need, showing us the great lengths to which God will go to use His servants against enormous obstacles, whether these arise from others or ourselves.

**II. Trusting God's Desire And Enabling To Use Even ONE Faithful Person, Judges 12:1-13:25.**

- A. When Samson rose to judge Israel, the office of judge in the land was a very hard and dangerous one:
  - 1. Due to the unbelief in God expressed by the people of Israel, it was dangerous to be a judge in Israel:
    - a. When God used Gideon to help Israel, the Ephraimites were jealously aroused when Gideon first advanced against the Midianites, so they criticized his success, Judges 8:1-2.
    - b. When God used Jephthah to deliver Israel from the Ammonites, these Ephraimites even threatened to kill him out of jealousy, and that even though they had refused to help Jephthah when he had first asked them for help in the battle, Judges 12:1-3. Hence, Jephthah had to defend himself from the men of Ephraim, and slew 42,000 of them in a tragic civil strife, Judges 12:4-6.
  - 2. Besides, it was unpopular among God's people to be righteously separate from the world as a leader:
    - a. Ibzan tried to be influential as Israel's judge by gaining 30 daughters for his 30 sons, and giving his own 30 daughters in marriage outside of his clan (to solidify his influence with others), 12:8-10.
    - b. Abdon, another judge, acquired donkeys, animals ridden by noblemen, so each of his 40 sons and 30 grandsons could ride one, 12:13-15 NIV; Bible Knowledge Com., O.T., p. 403!
    - c. Hence, as these judges sought fame and influence, the pressure existed for God's judges to be famous and influential like the world system promotes, cf. 1 John 2:15-16!
- B. In addition to these pressures of sin from without, carnality existed from within the heart of individuals, making it very difficult for a man to be used effectively by the Lord, Judges 13:1-23:
  - 1. God had to cross the obstacle of the especially carnal, apostate tribe of Dan to choose a judge:
    - a. When Deborah and Barak defeated the Canaanites, the tribe of Dan faithlessly stayed out of the battle, fearing harm were it to join the forces under Barak against the Canaanites, Judges 5:17.
    - b. Yet, the Lord went beyond this obstacle to use a childless couple from that faithless tribe, 13:1-2.
  - 2. Additionally, the Lord looked beyond the social shame of barrenness in the woman of this couple to use her to give birth to Israel's next judge, Samson, Judges 13:3.
  - 3. God looked beyond the sociologically superior man to initiate contact with the woman in the couple to prepare the way for Israel's next judge, Judges 13:3.
  - 4. God even went beyond the initial faithlessness of this couple to appear a **second** time to announce the birth of their son, Samson, Judges 13:3-8, 9a.
  - 5. Also, God went beyond the **continued** unbelief of the man, Manoah to perform a miracle to prove He was the Lord so Manoah would believe His message concerning Samson's birth, Judges 13:9b-21.
  - 6. God still worked with the couple, overlooking the man's fear though having demonstrated His identity in clear terms by way of this miracle, Judges 13:22-23.
- C. Yet, God produced Samson through this couple, giving him great physical strength and preparing him to be a "one-man army" of deliverance for the people of God, Judges 13:24-25 with 14:5-6!

***Lesson:*** *God's infinite grace and power is available to help anyone overcome any obstacle, whether it be sin in others or sin or weakness within himself, so that he can accomplish God's will in his life!*

***Application:*** *May we face ministry challenges by (a) noting the TOTAL INABILITY in ourselves and other people to do the job (John 15:4, 5b) while yet (b) trusting the FULL ABILITY and DESIRE of GOD to use US even ALONE to bear MUCH fruit (John 15:5a)! (c) Then, may we thus PRODUCE!*