

Main Idea: It takes the grace of God to be a mom in the real world. We learn four lessons about grace from Samson’s mother in Judges 13-16.

- I. We learn about the necessity of grace (1-2).
 - A. Life was hard for Israel (1).
 - B. Life was hard for a barren couple (2).
 - II. We learn about the surprises of grace (3-23).
 - A. Mrs. M received a surprising promise (3).
 - B. Mrs. M received a surprising assignment (4-5).
 - C. Mrs. M shared the surprising news with her husband (6-8).
 - D. Mrs. M received another surprising visit (9-14).
 - E. Mrs. M made a surprising discovery (15-23).
 1. She responded with reverence (20).
 2. She responded with faith (23).
 - III. We learn about the God-honoring effects of grace (24-25).
 - A. The Lord gave Mrs. M a special son (24).
 - B. The Lord gave her son a special purpose (25).
 - IV. We learn about the sufficiency of grace for struggles in the real world (chs 14-16).
 - A. Mrs. M’s son resisted counsel.
 - B. Mrs. M’s son gratified his flesh.
 - C. Mrs. M’s son reaped the consequences of his folly.
 - D. Mrs. M’s son humbly turned to the Lord.
 - E. Mrs. M’s son died a God-exalting death.
- Make It Personal: Ask yourself two questions...
1. Am I living in light of grace?
 2. Am I living for the glory of the Giver of grace?

It’s not easy being a mom. I’m not just talking about the sick kids and the night feedings, as challenging as that can be. I’m thinking of a far greater weight that a mom (and dad) carries, as you pour your life into little ones who then grow up and start making their own decisions. And their inevitable independence leads you to start asking some questions, like...

Did I do enough? Should I have done something differently? Should I do something *now*?

About ten years ago a woman approached me after one of our counseling training sessions on parenting and said, “This was helpful, *if* your children are still at home. But what about those of us whose kids are now adults? Does the Bible offer any counsel for us?”

Until that moment, I’d never really thought much about that question. As a parent of adult children, and with so many friends who now have adult children, I think about that question a lot now. In 2010 Jim Newheiser & Elyse Fitzpatrick wrote a helpful book entitled, *You Never Stop Being a Parent*. A great title. In the intro the authors quote a couple of parents they interviewed who said:

“Somehow, we thought that when the children reached eighteen, our parenting would be pretty much over. On the contrary, we discovered that our most challenging years as parents were in the vicinity of ages eighteen to twenty-three.... When the children were small, parenting was simple—not easy, but

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simply.” Another parent wrote, “I would have never imagined it would be this hard.”¹

Parenting is hard. I know one day who said, “If I’d known how hard this was going to be, I wouldn’t have had children.”

That’s an unfortunate conclusion to draw, for it’s a great blessing to be a parent, challenges notwithstanding.

So how is a mom (or dad for that matter) to do it? We’re going to find out this morning from God’s Word. I’ve entitled this Mother’s Day message, “Moms in the Real World—Learning about Grace from Samson’s Mother.”

We don’t even know her name. Her husband’s name was Manoah, so we’ll call her “Mrs. M.” But oh what a son she had! He was one of Israel’s judges, but Samson stands alone in Judges. He’s not your typical judge, if there is such a thing. At the end of his story we’re told that he “led Israel twenty years.” Not *forty* years, which represents a full generation, but only *twenty*. We come away from Samson’s story with a nagging “what could have been” feeling, for here’s a man who for all the good he accomplished, only lived up to half his potential.

Know anybody like that? Aren’t we all like that? Every sinner misses his God-given potential. That’s what *sin* is, missing the mark. So that means that every mother knows the pain of Mrs. M, the pain of personally missing the mark as well as raising a child that misses the mark.

The solution? It’s grace. It takes the grace of God to be a mom (or a dad, or a child, for that matter) in the real world. We’re going to learn four lessons about grace from Samson’s mother. The story begins in Judges 13...

I. We learn about the necessity of grace (1-2).

Life can be very hard at times. As we read verse 1 we discover that...

A. Life was hard for Israel (1). “Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, so the LORD delivered them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years.”

Notice that first word, *again*. The Israelites did evil *again*. That’s the theme of the book of Judges. God blessed His chosen people with the promised land, but instead of serving Him with gratitude, they took Him for granted and began doing evil. They did it again and again. And again and again He let them experience the hardness of life, not because He hated them, but because of His passion for His glory and their well-being. And every time they cried out to Him, in His grace He sent them a deliverer, a judge.

He’s already sent them close to a dozen judges, like Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, and Jephthah. But now they’re in need of another, because once again, life has become hard for sinful Israel.

B. Life was hard for a barren couple (2). “A certain man of Zorah, named Manoah, from the clan of the Danites, had a wife who was sterile and remained childless.”

Manoah is from Zorah, 15 miles west of Jerusalem in the foothills. He’s from the tribe of Dan, and he has a wife with a major problem. She’s sterile and childless.

Of course, Mrs. M, isn’t the only childless woman we meet in the Scriptures. Sarah felt great anguish over her childlessness. So did Rebekkah, and Rachel, and later so did Hannah and Elizabeth.

¹ Jim Newheiser & Elyse Fitzpatrick, *You Never Stop Being a Parent*, p. 12.

And so we see, first, the necessity of grace. When life is hard, what you need is grace. The unmerited favor and help of God Almighty. In this case, there's no indication that the grace is even sought, but still it comes. That's in scene 2, with lesson 2...

II. We learn about the surprises of grace (3-23).

Grace is always very surprising, when you see it in action. When a prophet sees his wife become a prostitute, yet he keeps loving her and eventually restores her, as did Hosea, that surprises us, but that's grace. When a father hears his cocky son demand his share of the inheritance *now* so he can live it up, and when that son squanders it all away yet returns home to the loving embrace of his forgiving father, that too surprises us, but that's grace. And when God creates a world that snubs Him, and He chooses to send His only Son to save those rebels by dying in their place, that really surprises us, but that's grace at its best.

I want us to look at Samson's story from Mrs. M's perspective, and as we do we're going to see five surprises of grace.

A. Mrs. M received a surprising promise (3). "The angel of the LORD appeared to her and said, 'You are sterile and childless.'" That's an interesting way to begin a conversation with a woman whose greatest burden in life was her childlessness. *You are sterile and childless.* But he's not rubbing it in. He's come to bring hope to the situation. "But you are going to conceive and have a son."

Not maybe, not if you do ten good deeds for God, but *you are going to conceive and have a son.* It's a divine guarantee, a promise, a surprising, grace-saturated promise.

B. Mrs. M received a surprising assignment (4-5). "Now see to it that you drink no wine or other fermented drink and that you do not eat anything unclean, because you will conceive and give birth to a son. No razor may be used on his head, because the boy is to be a Nazirite, set apart to God from birth, and he will begin the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Philistines."

It's actually a two-part assignment. Part one is for Mrs. M. The angel of the Lord says, "Don't drink any wine or anything fermented, and don't eat any unclean food." Part two is for the child. Make sure he never cuts his hair because he is to live as a Nazirite, "a separated and dedicated one" (that's what the Hebrew means).

We're told about the Nazirite vow in Numbers 6:1-21. Sort of a "lay your life on the altar, I'm all Yours, Lord" vow. Nothing from the grape vine was to enter the mouth, no wine, no grapes, no grape-juice, no raisins. No touching anything dead. And no cutting your hair either.

Do that with your son, Mrs. M. And make sure when he grows up, he does it too.

Of course, we know the end of the story. He didn't do as told. He didn't live a very separated life, but became a brash, *I'll do what I want* young man who touched dead things and did other deadly things too.

You come away from the story asking yourself, "He's a judge?! Not what I expected. Why did God choose to use this fellow to deliver His people?" And the answer, of course, is...*grace.*

Of course, I could just as well say of you, as you could of me, "You're a Christian?! Not what I expected. Why did God choose to use *you* to minister His saving power to a world in need?" And the answer would be the same. It's not merit. It's always *grace.*

After receiving the surprising promise and assignment, thirdly...

C. Mrs. M shared the surprising news with her husband (6-8). That's verses 6-7, "Then the woman went to her husband and told him, 'A man of God came to me. He looked like an angel of God, very awesome. I didn't ask him where he came from, and he didn't tell me his name. But he said to me, 'You will conceive and give birth to a son. Now then, drink no wine or other fermented drink and do not eat anything unclean, because the boy will be a Nazirite of God from birth until the day of his death.'"

So she tells Mr. M precisely what happened, what the angel of the Lord did and said, and told her to do. Of course, she's not so sure about who he is. She calls him *a man of God*, and says he *looked like an angel of God*, although I'm not sure how an angel looked, nor apparently was she. Other than *very awesome*, for she says he was *very awesome*.

We're told the effect of her testimony in verse 8, "Then Manoah prayed to the LORD: 'O Lord, I beg you, let the man of God you sent to us come again to teach us how to bring up the boy who is to be born.'"

I'm intrigued by two things, first Mr. M's response, and then secondly, his request. His response? He *prayed to Yahweh*. That's a good thing to do when the grace of God touches your life, *pray to the Giver of that grace*. And notice his request. *Lord, send Your man back to us*. And why does he want the messenger to return? Because he doesn't believe his wife and wants to hear it for himself? No. That's not it, for he believes a son is coming. But what's his concern? The same concern any parent has, but especially a parent who's just been told by God's messenger that they're receiving a special son who's going to bring deliverance to the chosen nation. *Send him back to teach us how, Lord, to teach us how to raise that boy!*

Then comes the fourth surprise...

D. Mrs. M received another surprising visit (9-14). Notice the first words in verse 9. "God heard Manoah, and the angel of God came again to the woman while she was out in the field." So Manoah prayed, and God heard his prayer, and the angel came again as requested.

We easily gloss right over the wonder of that statement, and most of us do it all the time in our own lives. Manoah prayed, and God heard Manoah.

Of course, He did. That's what He's supposed to do. We pray, and He listens and answers our prayer. There's nothing special about that, is there? The fact that we think that way is just another evidence of how easy it is to lose the wonder of grace.

In his commentary on this very text, Dale Ralph Davis writes: "Maybe prayer is like garbage. I regard taking out the garbage as part of the daily tedium of life, and it is something I leave, whenever possible, for other household members to do. Of course, I am wrong. Taking out the garbage should be viewed as a daily sacrament, for garbage in itself is a sign of provision. Potato peelings, apples cores, and squash seeds are silent witnesses that our Father is still feeding us. So garbage is not a tedious detail but a divine blessing. We can miss that because it is so routine. I guess our problem is that we don't think theologically about garbage."²

Actually, we don't think theologically about a lot of things, and that includes prayer at times. Friends, when God listens to Manoah's prayer, or our own, forbid that

² Dale Ralph Davis, *Judges*, pp. 162-3.

we should ever respond, “Well, why wouldn’t He?” There are hundreds of reasons why He shouldn’t, namely our sin, and only one why He would. It’s grace, all grace.

And so a second surprising visit took place, as told in verses 10-14, “The woman hurried to tell her husband, ‘He’s here! The man who appeared to me the other day!’ Manoah got up and followed his wife. When he came to the man, he said, ‘Are you the one who talked to my wife?’ ‘I am,’ he said. So Manoah asked him, ‘When your words are fulfilled, what is to be the rule for the boy’s life and work?’ The angel of the Lord answered, ‘Your wife must do all that I have told her. She must not eat anything that comes from the grapevine, nor drink any wine or other fermented drink nor eat anything unclean. She must do everything I have commanded her.’”

If you’re counting, that’s the third time in the story we’ve heard the parental instructions for Samson. We’ve heard it twice from the angel, and once from Mrs. M as she reported what the angel said to her husband. If this boy doesn’t turn out, it’s not because the assignment wasn’t clear.

One more grace-surprise...

E. Mrs. M made a surprising discovery (15-23). We read about it in verses 15-21, “Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, ‘We would like you to stay until we prepare a young goat for you.’ The angel of the LORD replied, ‘Even though you detain me, I will not eat any of your food. But if you prepare a burnt offering, offer it to the LORD.’ (Manoah did not realize that it was the angel of the LORD.) Then Manoah inquired of the angel of the LORD, ‘What is your name, so that we may honor you when your word comes true?’ He replied, ‘Why do you ask my name? It is beyond understanding.’ Then Manoah took a young goat, together with the grain offering, and sacrificed it on a rock to the LORD. And the LORD did an amazing thing while Manoah and his wife watched: As the flame blazed up from the altar toward heaven, the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame. Seeing this, Manoah and his wife fell with their faces to the ground. When the angel of the LORD did not show himself again to Manoah and his wife, Manoah realized that it was the angel of the LORD.”

So there’s the fifth surprise of grace. This was no ordinary messenger. This was *the angel of the LORD*, an Old Testament reference that many feel identifies a preincarnate manifestation of Christ Himself. No wonder he said his name was “beyond understanding,” (or “wonderful,” as it’s translated in Isaiah 9:6 referring to the “wonderful counselor”).

Notice the effect this discovery had on Mr. M. Verse 22, “‘We are doomed to die!’ he said to his wife. ‘We have seen God!’” Have you thought recently about what it’s going to be like when we stand before God at the judgment? Apart from the grace of Christ, we could not stand, but would be totally undone.

Mrs. M both agrees and disagrees with her husband. She agrees with the messenger’s identity, but disagrees as to the outcome of his visit. Notice verse 23, “But his wife answered, ‘If the LORD had meant to kill us, he would not have accepted a burnt offering and grain offering from our hands, nor shown us all these things or now told us this.’”

Take a close look at Mrs. M, for in her actions we see the proper response to grace.

1. She responded with reverence (20). Verse 20 says Manoah *and his wife* fell with their faces to the ground. That’s reverence, and that’s the appropriate

response to God and His grace. *I don't deserve You. I'm a sinner and can't stand in Your presence.* But not just reverence. Faith too.

2. *She responded with faith (23).* No, He's not going to kill us. He said He was going to give us a son, and that we were to raise this son for His purposes. So He's not going to kill us.

She believes the word of God, doesn't she? That's what faith is, taking God at His word, trusting, not your feeling and certainly not in yourself, but in His word.

Ladies, do you remember when cake mixes first came out? Do you remember the problem that many ladies ran into? Vance Packard in *The Hidden Persuaders* tells what happened. The first cake-mix packages warned not to add milk but 'just add water.' Some housewives, however, would add milk anyway as their special touch, but then they were disappointed when their cakes or muffins fell. Some cake mixes would also prohibit adding eggs since eggs and milk had already been added in dry form by the manufacturer.

Women interviewed in depth studies were disturbed: "What sort of cake is it if you just need to add tap water?" The marketing needed to be changed. The mixes needed to tell the homemaker that she *and* the mix together could produce the cake. And so, a white-cake-mix box now proclaimed: "You add fresh eggs." The message was clear. You do have a contribution you can make.³

Revealing, isn't it? The human heart does not want to believe a message that says, "You have nothing to offer." But this is God's message. He says He does not need our help. He says that we have nothing to offer Him that merits His favor. He says, "By grace are you saved through faith, and that, not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, lest anyone should boast (Eph 2:8-9)."

And so you're here this morning, and you know what God says. You've heard His message before. But you keep insisting on doing it your own way by adding the milk to the mix. And it keeps flopping.

My friend, it's time to learn from Mrs. M, who, by grace, exhibited faith. She believed the divine message, and rather than running from God, or remaining in paralyzing fear before God, put her trust in what He said. *Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.*

That brings us to our third lesson. We've learned about the necessity of grace, and the surprises of grace. Now...

III. We learn about the God-honoring effects of grace (24-25).

And that's always the intended purpose of grace, God's honor. We receive the blessing, He receives the glory. The blessing is a means to His glory. That's the point of Ephesians 1, right? "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ...to the praise of the glory of his grace (1:3, 6)."

The Judges' story identifies two effects of His grace in verses 24-25.

A. The Lord gave Mrs. M a special son (24). "The woman gave birth to a boy and named him Samson. He grew and the LORD blessed him." Samson, Hebrew for "sun" (as in Sonny? Probably as in, "he brightened up our lives"). A special son. A son

³ Story told by Dale Ralph Davis, *Judges*, pp. 161-2.

this once barren couple never thought they'd get to enjoy. But now they have him. A God-blessed son.

But as with any son (or daughter), the child's not really theirs. He's just on loan for a time, so they can raise him for the purpose the Giver has in mind.

Which brings us to the second effect of grace, which we see in verse 25. "And the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him [AV 'to move him'] while he was in Mahaneh Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol." What's this stirring and moving all about? It's about *purpose*, divine purpose.

B. The Lord gave her son a special purpose (25).

Now the question is, if we're so blessed, why does God give *us* children? If we don't get that question right, we're in for a great deal of heartache as parents, and so are our kids, especially when they turn about 18.

In Samson's case, the Giver made His purpose quite clear from the outset. "He will begin the deliverance of Israel," said the angel of the LORD to Mrs. M back in verse 5. That's why you're getting this son, Mrs. M, not so you can find your security in him, and certainly not so you can worship him as if he were your source of joy, but so you can raise him to be a means of blessing to God's people, to the glory of God.

When a grace-gift comes our way, the intended effect is always the honor of God. That's true of every expression of grace we enjoy, from our health, to our kids, to our homes, to our salvation itself. When God's grace comes our way, the proper response is to honor the Giver.

There's something here we mustn't miss, something that sets Samson apart from the other judges, and in so doing, points us to Jesus. Why does the book of Judges give us Samson's birth story? It doesn't for the other judges. There's nothing like Judges 13 in the rest of the book, no other nativity story. So why does the writer single out Samson's nativity and make such a big deal out of it?

The answer is, as commentator Dale Davis explains, "Because he wants to show that, at least in this case, Yahweh didn't merely raise up a deliverer who was, as it were, already available (as, e.g., Othniel or Ehud, 3:9, 15); rather, he *grew* one—from scratch. It is crucial that we see this, lest we think that Yahweh's salvation is always an ad hoc, Band-Aid affair, a piece of divine crisis management instead of a plan that Yahweh has had in view far in advance. This is exactly what staggers and gladdens us about the Greater-than-Samson who ransomed us at such cost—'He was marked out before the world was made, and was revealed at the final point of time for your sake' (1 Pet. 1:20 NJB). It boggles the imagination let alone the mind to think that something before 'in the beginning' could be for my sake. Even Judges 13 wants us to jump up and sing the doxology."⁴

Friends, when Israel wasn't even looking for a deliverer, God was preparing one. And He sent him to a very surprised couple. Just like He later did with Jesus.⁵ You see, that's grace, and if we're responding rightly to it, we'll honor Him for it.

⁴ Davis, p. 167.

⁵ Here's another connection between Samson and Jesus. If you'll notice, there's virtually nothing mentioned about Samson's childhood. There's material about his birth, a brief mention that he grew up, and then more material about what he did as Israel's deliverer. We see the same pattern later in the Bible with the ultimate Deliverer. In Jesus' story, the Gospel record gives us valuable material about His birth,

There's one more important lesson about grace from the Samson story, and I would be remiss if I didn't address it.

IV. We learn about the sufficiency of grace for struggles in the real world (chs 14-16).

If you know anything about the Samson story, you know this. Mr. and Mrs. M had their hands full when their little bundle of heavenly sunshine grew up.

We don't have time to read the full account, but I do want to point out the highlights, again from Mrs. M's perspective. There are five scenes involved in the struggle she faced as a mother in the real world.

A. Mrs. M's son resisted counsel. That's in chapter 14. According to verse 1, Samson went down to Timnah and saw a young Philistine woman there. When he went home, he said to his dad and mom, "I have seen a Philistine woman in Timnah; now get her for me as my wife."

Not exactly a model of how to honor your parents in the way you talk to them, but that was Samson, a big, strong fellow that demands what he wants, especially from mom and dad.

"A Philistine girl?" they said. "Isn't there a nice Jewish girl that catches your eye?"

"Get her for me. She's the right one for me," said Samson to his father in verse 3. Not to his mother this time, just to dad. Talk about a strong-willed child. And for whatever reason, against their better judgment, Mr. and Mrs. M gave in to Samson's pressure. Verse 5 says the three of them went down to Timnah together, and Samson talked with the Baal worshipping female, and according to verse 7, "he liked her."

Sort of sounds like fifth grade love letters, doesn't it? "I like you. Do you like me? Circle yes or no, and return."

She circled yes, and before long, wedding bells were playing. Of course, after his bride betrayed his confidence, Samson went home to mom and dad in a huff, and his wife was given to his best-man, and in the end, she and her family were burned alive by the Philistines.

The whole fiasco could have been prevented had Samson just listened to his parents' counsel. But no. And to make things worse, he wouldn't even ask their counsel the next time. And there would be a next time, and a next, for when it came to fifth grade love letters, Samson never did learn his lesson.

But then there's that peculiar parentheses in verse 4, "His parents did not know that this was from the LORD, who was seeking an occasion to confront the Philistines; for at that time they were ruling over Israel."

This was from the Lord? Really? What's that mean? It doesn't mean that Mr. and Mrs. M were wrong to oppose Samson for wanting to date and marry a pagan girl. And it certainly doesn't mean that Samson's gland-driven bullheadedness was right. "It means," as Davis explains, "that neither Samson's foolishness nor his stubbornness is going to prevent Yahweh from accomplishing *his* design. Yahweh can and will use the sinfulness or stupidity of his servants as the camouflage for bringing his secret will to pass."⁶

just a brief mention of his growing up years, and then focuses on what He did to bring deliverance in His final three adult years.

⁶ Ralph Davis, p. 171.

Of course, Mrs. M didn't know it at the time, that *this* was from the Lord. She must do what every mother of a sin-bent child must do, put her trust not in the goodness of her child, but in the certainty of the promises of her God. In this case, it's the promise the angel had given her 20 years earlier, "He will begin the deliverance of Israel from the Philistines."

I don't know how it's going to happen, nor when, but I believe you, Lord. You are going to fulfill Your plan for my son. I know it, and I trust You.

The testing of her faith was just beginning, for her struggles are far from over. First, her son resists her counsel. Then...

B. Mrs. M's son gratified his flesh. You'll have to read the story for the details, but suffice it to say that Samson had a weakness for women. He goes after a prostitute in 16:1. Some time later, according to 16:4, he fell in love with Delilah, apparently another Philistine gal. Not *love* as in God's kind of, this is what it takes for a joyful marriage *love*. But as in, "I'm a slave to my passions" kind of love, the kind that takes you to an early death, as it did for Samson.

Again, in chapter 14 Samson included his parents in his search for a woman. After that, he doesn't even bother to ask. He knows what he wants, and he just goes for it.

C. Mrs. M's son reaped the consequences of his folly. It started with a failed marriage, but it got far worse. In the end Samson is grinding grain in a prison, with two hollowed out eye sockets, listening to his cocky Philistine captors boasting, "Our god has delivered Samson into our hands."

It just couldn't get any worse than this, not for a Hebrew God-fearer, a judge at that. It's not just Samson's personal pain now. It's the mocking of his God, the true and living God who's been so gracious to him.

Last week our church received a missionary letter from a man who serves in the Middle East. Since he works in a very sensitive ministry that seeks to bring the good news of Jesus to Muslims, I won't mention his name. But I want you to hear something that he wrote:

There is a major lesson that we as Christians need to learn from the Boston terrorist attack. The lesson has to do with what happened to Katherine Tsarnaev, the wife of Tamerlan. We need to learn this lesson in order to warn our daughters and the girls in our churches.

According to reports, Katherine Tsarnaev grew up in a Catholic home. Her father was a medical doctor. As a little girl, she received a lot of love from her parents. As Catholics, they were liberals, socially open, and friendly.

When she was a teenager, she was known for her outgoing and jolly personality. After her marriage to Tamerlan, her personality completely changed. She became an introvert and unfriendly. She converted to Islam and wore the scarf in the Moslem fashion. She began to read the Koran regularly. Her joy and laughter disappeared, and she avoided people. Whether or not she recognized it, she lost her freedom and became a slave.

She ended up working sometimes 80 hours per week. Meanwhile, her Moslem husband had plenty of time on his hands to plot against the country that gave him refuge and a new beginning.

Today, Katherine Tsarnaev is confused and disillusioned...

Through the story of Samson, the Bible warned us against marrying outside the faith. When Samson pursued the Philistine woman, his parents warned him against the dangers into which he would be putting himself. They called upon him to pursue women of like faith. When he refused to acknowledge his parent's warnings, he ended losing freedom, his eyes, and his life. Samson should not have had anything to do with a Philistine woman. The same principle applies to Christian women. They should not have anything to do with Moslems. Pastors and church leaders must be alerted and learn from the lesson of the Boston terrorist attack.

Does this mean that all Moslems are bad? The answer is no. Many are kind and gentle. The fact remains that they are different because of a different faith and a different culture...⁷

We don't know if Mrs. M was still living when Samson was in prison (the wording of 16:31 seems to indicate she *wasn't*), nor if she ever heard, in this life, about the work that grace produced in his life. But the text tells us that...

D. Mrs. M's son humbly turned to the Lord. "O Sovereign Lord, remember me," prayed Samson as the crowd mocked him in their temple. "And give me strength just one more time (28)."

Have you ever talked with someone who said they'd wasted their life and were too far gone for God? It's not true. Samson had wasted so much of his life with wild living, but when he humbled himself, the Lord listened. That's grace.

Jesus went to the cross, not for the righteous, but for sinners. He died and rose again, and He'll rescue *any* sinner who will humbly cry out to Him in repentance and faith.

Oh, what a difference grace makes, so much so that in the end...

E. Mrs. M's son died a God-exalting death. He grabbed those temple pillars, cried out to God, and in the end he killed more God-mockers in his death than in his life.

Samson's name appears one more time in the Bible. Do you know where? In Hebrews 11. Do you know why? Because for all his flaws and failures, in the end Samson is commended by God for his faith, and all by the grace of God.

Know anybody that's blown it? Don't give up. There's hope...because of grace.

Make It Personal: Ask yourself two questions...

1. *Am I living in light of grace?* If I'm living in the light of grace, I don't put my trust in myself, but in the Lord, and by His help I now live for His purposes. Does that describe you? Why not begin today?

2. *Am I living for the glory of the Giver of grace?* It's all about Him and His honor. Just ask Mrs. M.

⁷ Taken from a missionary letter written by E.F. received May 7, 2013. Name omitted to protect his ministry.