

Opening Scripture: [Psalm 119:33-40](#)

Introduction

John Owen was an English puritan theologian in the 17th century. Owen's writings, though not identical to Baptist doctrine, contributed to congregationalism. Owen was most known for his writing on sin, especially his book, *Of the Mortification of Sin*.

In *Of Temptation*, John Owen wrote "It is the deceit of sin which is **in us** that draws us away. The beginnings of all temptation lie in our **own hearts**. The world and Satan do but present occasions; they have no power unless there be that **within** which answers unto them. Every temptation, therefore, may be said to arise from **ourselves**, because it is the corruption of our **own hearts** that gives it life and efficacy."

Why do we sin? Owen argued that sin has no power outside of ourselves; rather, we sin because our own hearts are corrupt and desire sin. Samson was a judge plagued with sin and spiritual weakness. Samson did not suddenly fall into sin. Samson sought out temptation, which eventually led to compromise and sin.

Samson marries a Philistine

Samson's life show us the result of flirting with temptation. We see this first with Samson's wife.

Led by his eyes

[Judges 14:1-4](#) "1 Samson went down to Timnah, and at Timnah he **saw** one of the daughters of the Philistines. 2 Then he came up and told his father and mother, "I **saw** one of the daughters of the Philistines at Timnah. Now get her for me as my wife." 3 But his father and mother said to him, "Is there not a woman among the daughters of your relatives, or among all our people, that you must go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?" But Samson said to his father, "Get her for me, for she is **right in my eyes**." 4 His father and mother did not know that it was **from the Lord**, for he was seeking an opportunity against the Philistines. At that time the Philistines ruled over Israel."

Who did Samson ask his parents to give him as a wife? Samson asked for a Philistine wife. The Philistines were currently ruling over Israel ([Judg 13:1](#)). They worshipped a false god, named Dagon ([Judg 16:23](#)). God had warned Israel to not marry the inhabitants of the land because their wives would lead them into idolatry.

What was Samson's defense (in verse 3) to justify why he should marry a Philistine? Samson said that she was "right in my eyes." This previews [Judges 21:25](#) "25 In those days there was

no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” It is interesting as you read the life of Samson how often his eyes lead to sin (see [Judg 14:1-2](#)).

What was God’s (behind the scenes) purpose of Samson marrying a Philistine? God was providing an opportunity for a fight with the Philistines; this was Samson’s purpose ([Judg 13:5](#)).

[Judges 14:5-9](#) “5 Then Samson went down with his father and mother to Timnah, and they came to the **vineyards** of Timnah. And behold, a young lion came toward him roaring. 6 Then the **Spirit of the Lord** rushed upon him, and although he had nothing in his hand, he tore the lion in pieces as one tears a young goat. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done. 7 Then he went down and talked with the woman, and she was **right in Samson’s eyes**. 8 After some days he returned to take her. And he turned aside to **see the carcass** of the lion, and behold, there was a swarm of bees in the body of the lion, and honey. 9 He scraped it out into his hands and went on, eating as he went. And he came to his father and mother and gave some to them, and they ate. But he did not tell them that he had scraped the honey from the carcass of the lion.”

Why is it significant that Samson passed through a vineyard on the way to Timnah? As a Nazirite, Samson could not eat or drink anything from grapes ([Judg 13:4-5](#); [Num 6:3](#)). There is no evidence that he broke his vow, but he placed himself in temptation.

What is significant about Samson getting honey from the lion’s carcass? The Nazirite was to avoid dead bodies ([Num 6:6-8](#)). Although [Numbers 6](#) gives humans (family) as an example, this probably included animals because animal carcasses made people ceremonially unclean according to the Law ([Lev 11](#)).

Verse 7 again makes the point that the Philistine wife was “right in Samson’s eyes” ([Judg 14:7](#)). We should be careful that we judge things by what is right in **God’s eyes**, not our own. Furthermore, we should be careful that we do not put things **before our eyes** that we know are a temptation to sin.

Led by pride

[Judges 14:10-14](#) “10 His father went down to the woman, and Samson prepared a feast there, for so the young men used to do. 11 As soon as the people saw him, they brought thirty companions to be with him. 12 And Samson said to them, “Let me now put a riddle to you. If you can tell me what it is, within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothes, 13 but if you cannot tell me what it is, then you shall give me thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothes.” And they said to him, “Put your riddle, that we may hear it.” 14 And he said to them, “Out of the eater came something to eat. Out of the strong came something sweet.” And in three days they could not solve the riddle.”

What was the cost of the wager between Samson and the 30 companions? If they solved the riddle, Samson would give 30 changes of clothes (including linen garments). If they failed, they had to give Samson 30 changes of clothes (including linen garments).

In the riddle, what is the strong eater and what is the sweet thing to eat? Samson is referring to the honey he got from the lion carcass.

[Judges 14:15-17](#) “15 On the fourth day they said to Samson’s wife, “Entice your husband to tell us what the riddle is, lest we burn you and your father’s house with fire. Have you invited us here to impoverish us?” 16 And Samson’s wife wept over him and said, “You only hate me; you do not love me. You have put a riddle to my people, and you have not told me what it is.” And he said to her, “Behold, I have not told my father nor my mother, and shall I tell you?” 17 She wept before him the seven days that their feast lasted, and on the seventh day he told her, because she pressed him hard. Then she told the riddle to her people.”

Of what did the 30 companions threaten Samson’s wife? They threatened to burn her and her father’s house, meaning her family, with fire. So, she pressed Samson the whole week until he finally told her the meaning of the riddle.

[Judges 14:18-20](#) “18 And the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down, “What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?” And he said to them, “If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have found out my riddle.” 19 And the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon and struck down thirty men of the town and took their spoil and gave the garments to those who had told the riddle. In hot anger he went back to his father’s house. 20 And Samson’s wife was given to his companion, who had been his best man.”

Where did Samson get the clothing for his wager? He killed 30 men in Ashkelon and took their clothing for the 30 companions. Samson knew that his wife had betrayed him, so he returned home and left her at her father’s house. While Samson was gone, she was given to his best man as a wife.

Parents, guard your children’s view of dating and marriage. They have hundreds (or thousands) of sources giving them an unbiblical view of dating and marriage. We must lead them to Scripture and faith in God’s word as the guide to understanding dating and marriage. Samson had been warned from Scripture about marrying idolatrous women, but he did what was right in his own eyes. Scripture, not our desires, should shape our views of dating and marriage.

Samson’s versus the Philistines

In [Judges 15](#), the tension between Samson and the Philistines intensifies.

Samson's vengeance

[Judges 15:1-5](#) “1 After some days, at the time of wheat harvest, Samson went to visit his wife with a young goat. And he said, “I will go in to my wife in the chamber.” But her father would not allow him to go in. 2 And her father said, “I really thought that you utterly hated her, so I gave her to your companion. Is not her younger sister more beautiful than she? Please take her instead.” 3 And Samson said to them, “This time I shall be innocent in regard to the Philistines, when I do them harm.” 4 So Samson went and caught 300 foxes and took torches. And he turned them tail to tail and put a torch between each pair of tails. 5 And when he had set fire to the torches, he let the foxes go into the standing grain of the Philistines and set fire to the stacked grain and the standing grain, as well as the olive orchards.”

What did Samson do when he learned that his wife had been given to another man? Samson set fire to their grainfields, their grain storage, and their olive orchards. Notice that he says that “this time” he will be innocent for attacking the Philistines.

[Judges 15:6-8](#) “6 Then the Philistines said, “Who has done this?” And they said, “Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he has taken his wife and given her to his companion.” And the Philistines came up and burned her and her father with fire. 7 And Samson said to them, “If this is what you do, I swear I will be avenged on you, and after that I will quit.” 8 And he struck them hip and thigh with a great blow, and he went down and stayed in the cleft of the rock of Etam.”

What happened to Samson's wife and her family? They were burned with fire, just as the 30 companions had threatened earlier.

The Philistines' vengeance

[Judges 15:9-13](#) “9 Then the Philistines came up and encamped in Judah and made a raid on Lehi. 10 And the men of Judah said, “Why have you come up against us?” They said, “We have come up to bind Samson, to do to him as he did to us.” 11 Then 3,000 men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam, and said to Samson, “Do you not know that the Philistines are **rulers** over us? What then is this that you have done to us?” And he said to them, “As they did to me, so have I done to them.” 12 And they said to him, “We have come down to bind you, that we may give you into the hands of the Philistines.” And Samson said to them, “Swear to me that you will not attack me yourselves.” 13 They said to him, “No; we will only bind you and give you into their hands. We will surely not kill you.” So they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock.”

*What was Samson's condition for going with the men of Judah? He surrendered to them to be given to the Philistines as long as **they** agreed to not kill him. He wanted to face the Philistines, not the men of Judah.*

[Judges 15:14-17](#) “14 When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting to meet him. Then the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon him, and the ropes that were on his arms became as flax that has caught fire, and his bonds melted off his hands. 15 And he found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, and put out his hand and took it, and with it he struck 1,000 men. 16 And Samson said, “With the jawbone of a donkey, heaps upon heaps, with the jawbone of a donkey have I struck down a thousand men.” 17 As soon as he had finished speaking, he threw away the jawbone out of his hand. And that place was called Ramath-lehi.”

How did Samson kill the Philistines at Lehi? He killed 1000 men with a donkey’s jawbone. Notice that he was empowered by the Holy Spirit. Although Samson was not faithful to God, God still intended to use him to fight the Philistines.

[Judges 15:18-20](#) “18 And he was very thirsty, and he called upon the Lord and said, “You have granted this great salvation by the hand of your servant, and shall I now die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?” 19 And God split open the hollow place that is at Lehi, and water came out from it. And when he drank, his spirit returned, and he revived. Therefore the name of it was called En-hakkore; it is at Lehi to this day. 20 And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years.”

How did God provide for Samson? God gave him water from a rock, just as He had done for Israel in the wilderness. The Exodus generation was unfaithful to God, yet God provided for them. Samson was unfaithful to God, yet God provided for him.

Samson’s weakness

Samson is clearly very strong, but he has a great weakness.

Weakness for women

[Judges 16:1-3](#) “1 Samson went to Gaza, and there he **saw** a prostitute, and he went in to her. 2 The Gazites were told, “Samson has come here.” And they surrounded the place and set an ambush for him all night at the gate of the city. They kept quiet all night, saying, “Let us wait till the light of the morning; then we will kill him.” 3 But Samson lay till midnight, and at midnight he arose and took hold of the doors of the gate of the city and the two posts, and pulled them up, bar and all, and put them on his shoulders and carried them to the top of the hill that is in front of Hebron.”

Notice that Samson “saw” the prostitute. Samson continues to do what is right in his eyes.

[Judges 16:4-6](#) “4 After this he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. 5 And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, “Seduce him, and see where his great strength lies, and by what means we may overpower him, that we may bind him to humble him. And we will each give you 1,100 pieces of silver.” 6 So Delilah said to Samson,

“Please tell me where your great strength lies, and how you might be bound, that one could subdue you.”

How did the Philistines plan to overthrow Samson? They targeted Samson’s weakness. Samson was physically strong, but spiritually weak. His weakness was temptation toward sin. They offered Delilah 1100 pieces of silver to help them defeat Samson.

[Judges 16:7-14](#) “7 Samson said to her, “If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings that have not been dried, then I shall become weak and be like any other man.” 8 Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh bowstrings that had not been dried, and she bound him with them. 9 Now she had men lying in ambush in an inner chamber. And she said to him, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” But he snapped the bowstrings, as a thread of flax snaps when it touches the fire. So the secret of his strength was not known. 10 Then Delilah said to Samson, “Behold, you have mocked me and told me lies. Please tell me how you might be bound.” 11 And he said to her, “If they bind me with new ropes that have not been used, then I shall become weak and be like any other man.” 12 So Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them and said to him, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” And the men lying in ambush were in an inner chamber. But he snapped the ropes off his arms like a thread. 13 Then Delilah said to Samson, “Until now you have mocked me and told me lies. Tell me how you might be bound.” And he said to her, “If you weave the seven locks of my head with the web and fasten it tight with the pin, then I shall become weak and be like any other man.” 14 So while he slept, Delilah took the seven locks of his head and wove them into the web. And she made them tight with the pin and said to him, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” But he awoke from his sleep and pulled away the pin, the loom, and the web.”

(1) Bind me with seven fresh bowstrings. (2) Bind me with new ropes ([Judg 15:13-14](#)). (3) Weave the seven locks of my head and fasten the web with a pin.

[Judges 16:15-17](#) “15 And she said to him, “How can you say, ‘I love you,’ when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and you have not told me where your great strength lies.” 16 And when she pressed him hard with her words day after day, and urged him, his soul was vexed to death. 17 And he told her all his heart, and said to her, “A razor has never come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother’s womb. If my head is shaved, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak and be like any other man.”

What did Samson say was the secret behind his strength? Samson admitted that he was a lifelong Nazirite and that he had never cut his hair. If his hair was shaved, he would be weak. In reality, the Lord is the source of Samson’s strength, not his hair.

Samson's defeat and victory

[Judges 16:18-22](#) “18 When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called the lords of the Philistines, saying, “Come up again, for he has told me all his heart.” Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hands. 19 She made him sleep on her knees. And she called a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him. 20 And she said, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” And he awoke from his sleep and said, “I will go out as at other times and shake myself free.” But he did not know that the Lord had left him. 21 And the Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes and brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze shackles. And he ground at the mill in the prison. 22 But the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaved.”

What was unknown to Samson when he confronted the Philistines? He did not know that the Lord had left him. Again, the Lord was the source of his strength.

What did the Philistines do after capturing Samson? They gouged out his eyes, bound him in bronze chains, and made him work at the prison mill of Gaza.

[Judges 16:23-27](#) “23 Now the lords of the Philistines gathered to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to rejoice, and they said, “Our god has given Samson our enemy into our hand.” 24 And when the people saw him, they praised their god. For they said, “Our god has given our enemy into our hand, the ravager of our country, who has killed many of us.” 25 And when their hearts were merry, they said, “Call Samson, that he may entertain us.” So they called Samson out of the prison, and he entertained them. They made him stand between the pillars. 26 And Samson said to the young man who held him by the hand, “Let me feel the pillars on which the house rests, that I may lean against them.” 27 Now the house was full of men and women. All the lords of the Philistines were there, and on the roof there were about 3,000 men and women, who looked on while Samson entertained.”

Why was Samson brought into public? Samson was brought into an arena to be tortured before the crowd of 3000 men and women to show Dagon's victory over the Samson. By extension, this would show Dagon's victory over the Lord.

[Judges 16:28-31](#) “28 Then Samson called to the Lord and said, “O Lord God, please remember me and please strengthen me only this once, O God, that I may be avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes.” 29 And Samson grasped the two middle pillars on which the house rested, and he leaned his weight against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other. 30 And Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines.” Then he bowed with all his strength, and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he had killed during his life. 31 Then his brothers and all his family came down and took him and brought him up

and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father. He had judged Israel twenty years.”

How did God use Samson to defeat the Philistines? Samson destroyed the arena and killed everyone in it, including himself. He killed more Philistines this day than the rest of his life. It is significant that Samson has struggled with temptation throughout these three chapters based on what he saw; he did what was right in his own eyes. Now that he has no eyes, he prays to the Lord for only the second time.

Conclusion

Why do we give in to temptation? Scripture tells us that we sin because we desire sin. [James 1:13-15](#) “13 Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. 14 But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. 15 Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.”

Church, we should guard our eyes. We should not allow tempting things in our presence, whether that is a vineyard, a lion carcass, or an ungodly woman. Scripture teaches that we should **flee temptation**. [1 Corinthians 6:18](#) “18 Flee from sexual immorality...” [1 Corinthians 10:14](#) “14 Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. [1 Timothy 6:10-11](#) “10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. 11 But as for you, O man of God, flee these things ...” [2 Timothy 2:22](#) “22 So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.”

John Owen - “Be killing sin or it will be killing you.”