

Samson's Final Victory

Captured and blind, Samson is brought to the temple of Dagon for the Philistines' entertainment. In his final act, he prays for strength one last time and brings down the temple, killing more Philistines in his death than in his life.

Judges 16:23-31

CHARACTERS: Samson, Philistine rulers, Worshipers of Dagon, Servant boy

THEMES: Redemption, Repentance, Sacrifice, God's strength in weakness, Final victory

THE RULERS OF the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to celebrate. 'Our god has delivered Samson, our enemy, into our hands,' they shouted. The man who had terrorized them for twenty years—who had killed a thousand of them with a jawbone, who had burned their fields, who had torn off city gates—was now blind and broken, grinding grain like an ox.

When the people saw Samson, they praised their god: 'Our god has delivered our enemy into our hands, the one who laid waste our land and multiplied our slain.' As their hearts grew merry with wine, they called out, 'Bring out Samson to entertain us!' They brought him from the prison, and he performed for them.

Imagine the scene: thousands of Philistines packed into the temple of Dagon, the building's roof supported by two central pillars. On the roof alone stood about three thousand men and women, watching the spectacle below. The strongest man who had ever lived, now blind and humiliated, was being mocked by the enemies of God's people. They celebrated Samson's defeat as proof that Dagon was greater than the God of Israel.

But something had changed in Samson during those dark months of grinding in the prison. The hair on his head had begun to grow again—the outward sign of his Nazirite vow. More importantly, something had grown in his heart. The humiliation, the darkness, the endless circles of repetitive labor had given him time to think, to remember, to repent.

When they stood him among the pillars, Samson said to the servant holding his hand, 'Put me where I can feel the pillars that support the temple, so that I may lean against them.' The servant, not understanding the significance, positioned him between the two central pillars.

Then Samson prayed. After all his years of acting in personal vengeance, of pursuing his own desires, of violating his vows—finally, Samson prayed: 'Sovereign Lord, remember me. Please, God, strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes.'

This prayer is complex. It contains both spiritual growth and remaining imperfection. Samson addresses God correctly as 'Sovereign Lord,' acknowledging God's ultimate authority. He asks God to 'remember' him—to have mercy, to not forget their covenant relationship despite Samson's failures. He recognizes that any strength must come from God—'strengthen me.' Yet his motive is still partially personal: 'revenge for my two eyes.'

But consider the context. The Philistines were not merely Samson's personal enemies—they were oppressing God's people. Their celebration was not just mocking Samson but mocking the God of Israel, claiming that Dagon had defeated the Lord. Samson's act would vindicate God's name and strike a devastating blow against Israel's oppressors. His death would accomplish more than his compromised life had achieved.

God answered Samson's prayer.

Samson reached toward the two central pillars on which the temple stood. Bracing himself against them, his right hand on one and his left

hand on the other, he said, 'Let me die with the Philistines!' Then he pushed with all his might.

The massive pillars gave way. The temple came crashing down on the rulers and all the people in it. The sounds of celebration became screams as the roof collapsed. Stone and timber fell on the three thousand on the roof and all those packed inside. In that moment, blind Samson killed more Philistines than he had killed during his entire life.

Samson died with them. But he died on his own terms, in an act of faith recorded in Hebrews 11 among the heroes of faith. The man who had lived so often for himself made his death count for his people and his God.

His brothers and his father's whole family went down to get him. They brought him back and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father—near where the Spirit of the Lord had first begun to stir him as a young man. The story that began with an angel's promise of deliverance ended with a blind man's sacrifice.

Samson had judged Israel twenty years. His life showcases both the incredible power of God working through a human vessel and the tragic consequences of repeatedly violating one's consecration to God. Yet even in failure, God's grace pursued him. Even in darkness, God heard his prayer. Even in death, God gave him victory.

Samson's story reminds us that God can use flawed people, that repentance is possible even after catastrophic failure, that God's strength is perfected in human weakness, and that it's never too late to turn back to God. The judge who spent his life in compromise made his death count for redemption—a powerful picture of how God can bring beauty from ashes, strength from weakness, and victory from apparent defeat.