

**PRAYERS & ENCOURAGEMENT**

Those who are sick or need our prayers — Joe, Turner, Kaylee Dolan, J Hughes, Linda Reagan

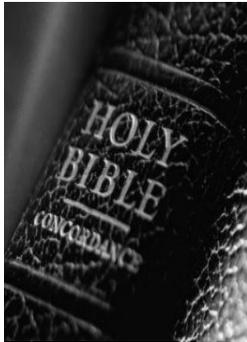
Continue to remember in your prayers those who are unable to attend worship services regularly: *Faye Roberts, Freda Dunn, Romona Stokes ,and Marjorie Barringer, J. Hughes, Billie Sue Atkins.*

Please pray for those who have forsaken the Lord that they may be reconciled to God.

**READING THE OLD & NEW TESTAMENTS IN ONE YEAR**

*Monday - Job 12-14; Psalm 100; Rev 13*  
*Tuesday - Job 15-17; Rev 14*  
*Wednesday - Job 18-20; Psalm 141; Rev 15*  
*Thursday - Job 21-23; Psalm 101; Rev 16*  
*Friday - Job 24-27; Rev 17*

***Week #51***  
***Dec. 18 – Dec. 22***



**VISITORS** - We would like to get to know you better, and ask that you stay a while after services. We encourage you to visit our website at <http://www.parkhillchurchofchrist.com> where you will find sermons, articles, and daily bible studies to encourage you in your daily walk with God.

**QUESTIONS?** *We Welcome the opportunity to study God's word with you any time.*

*All sermons are recorded on CD & DVD -  
If you would like a copy, please ask one of the men.*

**ELDERS**

Carl Dolan....479.414.1972 ~ Ron Roberts ....479.452.0347 ~ Randy Sexton.....479.763.4524

**DEACONS**

Wayne Carson...479.648.1087 ~ Luke Dolan.....479.357.9547 ~ Joe Dugas .....479.629.4046 ~ David Meek.....479.459.0820 ~

**PREACHER**

Bryan Loughmiller.....479.434.3939

**December 17, 2017**

**THINK ON THESE THINGS**

*Welcome to the Park Hill Church of Christ*

3536 GRINNELL AVENUE FORT SMITH, AR 72908 479.782.2415

*It is our desire to worship God in spirit and in truth, and to glorify Him in all we do.*

**SCHEDULE OF SERVICES**

SUNDAY MORNING	SUNDAY EVENING	WEDNESDAY EVENING
Bible Study.....9:30 am	Worship..... 5:00pm	Bible Study.....7:00pm
Worship.....10:15 am		

***Samson and Jephthah???***

*Hebrews 11:32 "And what shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets"*

I heard a great sermon last evening from my preacher about Samson. We like the story of Samson for Bible classes and VBS, however, as adults, his story is troubling to many of us. Prostitutes. He and Delilah weren't married. Samson and Philistine women, the enemy-not just to Israel, but to Samson's heart. He dies a hero, but his story is troubling. And, what makes it even more puzzling to us is our verse today. There he is displayed in God's trophy case of heroes of faith. And, right next to Samson's name is Jephthah, and he is known for that foolish vow concerning his daughter that has troubled Bible students for years. Did he truly sacrifice his daughter?

Why is Samson and Jephthah listed here? Had we written Hebrews 11, we would have left them out. We may have included Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. Or, how about Uriah, the noble Hittite? But, not Samson. His story is so marred with trouble and problems, that it seems he only does one noble and right thing and that wasn't until the very end of his life. Why is Samson spending so much time with the enemy of God's people? He's not spying. He's not on an official mission. He seems to have a weakness for Philistine women. And, why is he listed among the likes of Noah, Abraham and Moses?

The news is filled with famous men who now are tarnished because of their abuse of women. For all the good that these men may have accomplished in their careers, they will be forever remembered by being fired for these secrets in their past. They are tarnished. They are ruined in their careers. Yet, Samson, immoral as he was, is listed as an example. He is a hero of faith. He is numbered among those who gained approval by God. He'll be in Heaven.

There are some lessons here.

First, God forgives and we remember. We can say that we forgive, but we remember. Roger Maris was the first to hit more homeruns in a season than the legendary Babe Ruth. It took decades for Ruth's record to be broken. The season included more games when Maris played. For that reason, there was an asterisk by his name. He hit more home runs, however, his season included more games than Ruth's. This is what we do with forgiven sins. We tend to put an asterisk by a person's name. King David, don't forget Bathsheba. Noah, don't forget he got drunk. Abraham, he lied. Peter, he denied. We do that even with people today. There is that guy at church, don't forget, he confessed a few years ago about cheating on his wife. Years later, that asterisk that we keep by his name will keep him off any list of being considered an elder or a deacon. Samson was included in Hebrews 11. God forgives and we remember.

Second, none of the people in Hebrews 11 were perfect. If they were, Jesus would not have come. They all sinned. Their sin didn't keep them from walking by faith and doing heroic deeds for God. We want our heroes to be perfect. If we want to hold them up to be role models, we expect perfection. We go over a person's life with intensity, judging and analyzing every decision and every act before we will clear them to be a spiritual giant and hero. This process eventually eliminates everyone, including ourselves. It leads to discouragement because we feel that no one can do what is right. And, yet, here is God, holding up Samson, to the Hebrew Christians as a means to keep going in difficult times. Maybe it's time we stopped looking for perfection in one another and started to do our best to be role models and examples for others.

Third, by faith, is why Samson is included in Hebrews 11. His life ends with a plea and prayer to God. He, as a judge, wants to deliver Israel from the oppression of the Philistines. He did his part. The Philistine thorn in Israel's side is centuries long. King Saul dies in battle with the Philistines. It wasn't until the time of David, that the Philistines were finally subdued. By faith. We are to walk by faith. We are to practice righteousness. Not only did nearly every name in Hebrews 11 stumble on their walk with God, they also all suffered. Most of the suffering came about by making choices that put them with God. They stood with God and they suffered. The Hebrews 11 story is the story of the Hebrew Christians. It is also our story as well. We walk by faith. We suffer for making the right choices. The world doesn't like us. The world doesn't

like our right choices. Like the names in Hebrews 11, we stumble. We make mistakes. We sin. God's love, forgiveness and grace is what saves us. We become examples to others. Some lift us much higher than we feel is right. They see the good in us. We see everything. Abraham had to make a choice. Noah had to make choices. Joshua had to make choices. Samson had to make choices. You and I have to make choices. By faith, becomes the basis of which choice we will choose. By faith-not by happiness. Not by which is easiest, fastest or most convenient. By faith-by God.

Finally, Samson is in Hebrews 11 because God put him there. His name doesn't appear there as a result of some heavenly vote. There was no contest, competition or questionable way he got included. He belongs there because God says so. And the same will be for you and I. We will be in God's book of life and in Heaven some day because God says so. Others may question that. We may have reservations ourselves, God knows. Which leads us to this amazing conclusion.

There may be folks in Heaven, such as Samson, that I will be surprised to see there. In my mind, I may think they don't belong in Heaven. I may be shocked who is in Heaven. Likewise, there may be some who I think ought to be in Heaven and they are not. Only God knows the whole story. Only God truly understands choices by faith. There may be some who are shocked that you and I are in Heaven some day. Thankfully, man doesn't determine that. Which means, I may judge a person to be wrong when God doesn't. I may think a guy has missed it completely, like Samson, and yet, there he is, listed in God's book for all eternity. Amazing! All of which should tell us that we must allow God to be God and we must walk away from His throne and put down the judging radar that we tend to point to people that we disagree with.

Samson will be in Heaven. That's hard for some to understand. It may be even harder to grasp that you and I will be in Heaven.

God's infinite grace and love and mercy makes all the difference when one is walking by faith. Had Hebrews 11 contained only spotless and perfect people, there wouldn't be much hope nor encouragement for you and I. But there is Abraham. There's David. There's Noah. And, yes, there's Samson. We know what they did wrong and we certainly know what they did that was right. By faith, they lived and died. My hope is not in being perfect, because that will never happen. My hope is in living and dying by faith.

I'm now glad that God included Samson in His trophy case of heroes. It helps. It gives hope. It gives courage. It reminds us that I can please God.

God is so good! He is so good to me!