

## The Sermon - In 10 Sentences Or Less

Perfectly-Imperfect Faith 5 - Samson's Faith:



1. We continued looking at the names mentioned in Hebrews 11.32-34 from the period of the Judges in the Old Testament: last week was Barak, this week was Samson.
2. Samson's birth narrative is meant to evoke memories of Isaac being born to Sarah: he would be a special child with a special mission (to begin freeing Israel from the Philistines), and that would be made tangible by his lifelong Nazarite vow (Judges 13.3-5; see Numbers 6.1-21).
3. A harbinger of things to come, the very first act of Samson's adult life is to seek marriage to a Philistine (14.1-3), the very same people from whom he is supposed to deliver Israel, and the second is to break his Nazarite vow by eating honey from a lion's carcass (14.5-9).
4. Samson was the judge in Israel for 20 years (15.20), and that period was characterized by his escalating, erratic, impulsive, and violent behavior (Judges 14.1-16.3).
5. Even in the climax - or rock bottom, as it were - of Samson's story, we see him capture and blinded due to his own arrogance (and God's exasperation with him; see 16.20) and then seek revenge by committing suicide and killing 1000s of Philistines (16.22-30).
6. So what on earth are we to make of Samson's inclusion in Hebrews 11, the so-called "hall of fame of faith"?
7. First, the biggest takeaway from Samson's story in Judges is that personal ability or giftedness minus any real spiritual substance is just a tragic waste.
8. Similarly, as Jon Bloom puts it, "Let Samson's faith soberly remind us that our spiritual and personal giftedness is not the same thing as God's endorsement of us."
9. But, second, if we've not gotten the message by now in Hebrews 11, the shock value of including Samson certainly clinches it: God uses (very) imperfect faith, because there is only (very) imperfect faith.
10. And, third, there is great comfort in knowing that God will accomplish His goals and purposes through, or maybe even despite, (very) imperfect faith and people.

## **Quotes to Remember**

*"God makes His own sweet, often underappreciated music, with cast off, second hand, pawn shop instruments." (George Guthrie, commenting on the characters included in Hebrews 11)*

*"Faith is better understood as a verb, not a noun, as a process, not a possession. It is on-again, off-again, rather than once-and-for-all. Faith is not being sure of where you're going, but going anyway. It is a journey without maps." (Frederick Buechner, in "Wishful Thinking – A Seeker's ABC")*

## **Prayer for the Week**

Rev. Teri Peterson (The Church of Scotland):

O God, You who are always doing a new thing, we confess that we sometimes close windows against the fresh air of new ideas, against other people's voices, and against the winds of change.

God of every place and time, we confess that we often draw the curtains against people who are different and who disagree with us.

Forgive us our insulation in our locked homes, our shuttered churches, and the security systems on our hearts.

So in Your grace, help us open up our lives, and let your Spirit blow through, this we ask today, amen.