

'We don't have time to tell you about the rest' — Hebrews 11:32-40
Basil Howlett - Carey Baptist Church – 16 December 2007

Chapter 11 is a kind of portrait gallery containing many word pictures of great heroes of the faith but in verse 32, realizing he is running out of time, the writer just gives us a list of the sort of people he would like to have included and then makes a few general remarks about them.

Gideon, Barak, Jephthah and Samson were all judges who ruled Israel at various times soon after they had entered the land of Canaan (Judges 6, 4, 12, 13-16). Samuel was the last of the judges and was also a prophet (1 Samuel 1-16). David was the famous shepherd boy who became the greatest king Israel ever had (1 Samuel 16-2 Kings 2). The expression “*and the prophets*” refers to Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 17- 2 Kings 13) and the authors of the OT books from Isaiah to Malachi.

A What did they believe?

- God's sovereignty, power and grace (e.g. Gideon, Judges 6:22; Isaiah 40:10-31).
- The Word of God (e.g. Gideon, Judges 7:1-8).
- The coming Messiah (e.g. David Ps 16:8-11, Acts 2:25)
- The resurrection of the body and glory (Hebrews 11:35).

B. What effects did their faith have?

- They were encouraged to live just lives (Verse 33). They '*administered justice*' or '*they ruled in justice.*' Their faith constrained them to be men of integrity who lived in a way that was just and righteous; but they were not perfect!. Faith doesn't suddenly make us perfect.
- They were empowered them to stand firm for God in the face of appalling opposition (verse 34). What a catalogue of suffering and danger they faced? Some were thrown to the lions (verse 33, e.g. Daniel), were thrown into the fire (verse 24 e.g. Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego), others were tortured, jeered, flogged, imprisoned (e.g. Jeremiah 20, 37, 38), stoned (e.g. Zechariah, 2 Chron 24:21) even sawn in two (?Isaiah), hunted (e.g. Elijah and David).

- They escaped from terrible danger (verses 33-34).
- They were excited by great victories (verse 33 & 34). Think of Gideon subduing the Midianites, of Barak conquering Sisera and the Canaanites, and of Samson defeating the Philistines.
- They enjoyed God's promises (verse 33).
- They experienced great miracles in their ministries (verse 35 e.g. Elijah 1 Kings 17:2; Elisha 2 Kings 4:32-37). God does not do these miracles 'to order' just when we want them. We must distinguish between faith and presumption.

C. What faith has not done for them or us – yet?

In verses 39-40 the writer sums up the whole chapter by saying that all the people mentioned were commended for their faith, yet none of them received one particular promised blessing.

- Some say this refers to the promised Messiah and the full Gospel revelation which none of them lived to see but we have received it. In my view that is not what the writer is saying here because it does not fit in with the last clause of verse 40 which says that the OT saints did not receive this promise because it was God's plan '*that only together with us would they be made perfect.*'
- The promise which they didn't receive and still haven't received is the resurrection of the body and the full glory of the new heavens and a new earth (2 Peter 3:13, Revelation 21:1, Acts 3:21).

That promise will be fulfilled when the Lord Jesus Christ returns.