

Hebrews 11:32f - 40
“The World was not worthy”

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I. Introduction

The heroes of the Hall of Faith stand enshrined in scripture as evidence of God’s power as they are honored for simply trusting in God. These people were called to “*subdue*” literal nations as God worked through His people Israel as they performed acts of righteousness on His behalf over God’s people. Many of them obtained what God had promised, others never lived to see it. This section is placed by the writer as a reminder to his readers that *faith is not limited; it is equally valuable to a person as it ENABLES as well as EQUIPS: A person of faith can suffer and be strong. The accomplishments of faith as evidenced in Hebrews chapter 11 from our perspective may seem to be varied and valued differently; but all indicated to the fallen world that it was not and never will be worthy of those who have trusted a Mighty God and to us they serve as a reminder that this NEVER has been or ever will be our home!*

II. Vs. 32f-34 Samuel and the prophets

Samuel is added to this list of the people of faith though he was a prophet and not a king or warrior. Samuel fought the fight of faith equal to any battle that a soldier faced as he squared off against the two greatest enemies of the faith a nation can fight against, *national idolatry and immorality. His call was to stand up in the middle of a polluted society and speak the truth of God’s Word to a nation that didn’t care to listen. The battles he fought were not against the Amorites of the Philistines but rather against his own people. It takes far more faith to stand up for God against your family and friends than it does those who outwardly oppose the faith. Look out upon the horizon of the enemy’s attacks against truth and you will notice that he has gained far more territory through social pressure than he has military attacks.* Yet, through out Samuel’s life from the time he wore the lion ephod in 2:18 until his death he stood for God’s Word against a nation that didn’t want to listen to it.

Next the author mentions “*The Prophets*” who are unnamed except for Samuel but non-the-less risked everything for the Lord. They didn’t fight on the battle field made of dirt but won victories against the opposition as they trusted God. The exploits of verses 33-34 are general but we can adequately guess some of the references as being: *Daniel, who stopped the mouths of lions.* And Daniel’s three friends *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego who quenched the violence of fire.* The Greek word for “*subdued*” means to “*fight down or to overcome*” and signifies a desperate contest where as “*worked righteousness*” is speaking of a personal virtue but also of how this personal virtue was on display in public. *Faith was evident in these servants by the way they exhibited their influence in what God had called them to do.* The writers point is show that these people of faith accomplished through their trust in God what ever was needed be that political or overcoming enemies. *God works through those that trust Him and the obstacle no matter how large or small can not stand against Him!*

III. Vs. 35-38 Whom the world was not worthy

Vs. 35-38 “*Women received their dead raised to life again..*” is a reference to both **Elijah** (*who brought back from the dead the widow of Zarephath child in 1 Kings 17:8-23*) and his predecessor **Elisha** who did the same for *the Shunammite woman’s son in 2 Kings 4:18-37*. The point the author is making is that both of these prophets and mothers

believed God for the resurrection and God did as He had promised. These women suffered through the loss of their children but because they trusted God their pain was alleviated when they witnessed their children raised back to life. God may not always work this way but for the believer He will always raise those who trust Him alone back to life and not this mere resuscitation that these two mothers went through as their children like Lazarus would die again. “Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.” Some afflictions mentioned in verses 36-37 God gives power by faith THROUGH the trial instead of OVER the trial. But it is a greater victory when God grants by faith power to endure THROUGH a trial than to triumph OVER the the trial as He walks with them through out its entirety. Oft times it requires more courage to “HOLD ON” then it does too “FIGHT ON” to “ENDURE” than it does to “ESCAPE” and when this is true it will require faith. Some of the scenarios mentioned in in 36-37 would have be totally escapable for the non-believer but are unavoidable for the person of faith. Those of faith suffer because of God’s Word and their trust in Him and it would be a far greater torture to to deny God and His Word then it would be to endure the punishment of the world for their faith. As such they would not accept the terms for their release even if it meant their death or imprisonment. The word “tortured” in verse 35 is a word that indicated a person being stretched over a drum and beaten with clubs until they died. The true believer would rather be beaten to death then compromise their faith; not willing to sacrifice on the altar called immediate for the promise of the future in Christ. These are willing to accept the WORSE the world can distribute so they can receive the best God has in store for those that trust Him. They did all of this because they believed that they would receive a better resurrection then being spared the temporary alleviation of suffering!

Some endured “mockings and scourgings” which speaks of both mental as well as physical suffering. We can’t be sure but Jeremiah was one who went through both of these as he was emotional abused as well as physically abused and was known as the weeping prophet but his weeping WAS NOT for what he endured at the hands of his own countrymen but for the people he was called to speak the Word of God too as they rejected his message. Others went through imprisonment and the embracement that accompanied such a thing as they were numbered with the transgressors. Some received capital punishment of stoning which was a Jewish punishment like Zechariah the son of Jehoiada (2 Chron 24:20-22) while others like Isaiah was sawn into according to tradition during the reign of Manasseh. All of which was a result of people becoming so irritated by the message that they were called to deliver. They weren’t able to make a living and wandered from place to place having nothing but animal skins to ware and were “destitute, afflicted and tormented”. The world wanted to rid themselves of such people but in their so doing all that they proved was that God agreed with the them in as much that the very people they believed shouldn’t be allowed to live among them God said that they weren’t worthy of them! Peter said of them in 1 Peter 1:4 that they were headed “to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven.” Their primary concern was not for the safety of their lives but rather for the safety of their faith! The world drove them out, believing them unworthy to live, but God saw the world unworthy of have having them! The word for “caves” in verse 38 is a word in the Greek that means a hole or a place you can see through, it is the same word used for Moses in Ex. 33:22 where God placed him in the “Cleft or hole” when His presence passed by him.

III. Vs. 39-40 Something better

Vs. 39-40 These saints held onto a living hope and had the courage to count the cost through faith of the salvation God had promised! What happened to them during this life was not what they were concerned about “as they obtained a good testimony through faith” even though they didn’t immediately “receive the promise.” The failure to obtain the promise was not due to either God’s lack or their lack of faith; instead it was due to the fact that God’s plan had something better in view and that was that such a delay was for their perfection. And their perfection was dependent upon our perfection! Their faith was not about an immediate fulfillment. it was all about the

~~perfection. And when they had not seen an immediate consummation, it was all about the~~
permanent and ultimate fulfillment of God's promises! God had provided something better for those under the New Covenant which not until the time of Jesus finished work on theirs and our behalf their salvation would not be completed. **With out Jesus' perfect work of atonement NO salvation was complete no matter how much faith they may have had. Their faith was based upon what Jesus WOULD DO while our salvation is based upon WHAT JESUS HAS DONE. They were looking forward and we are looking back; they trusted in a promise and we trust in a completed historical fact the finished work of Jesus and the results of such trust is the same for both.** Though their salvation was not completed in their lifetime they are no 2nd class believers. Jesus said to Thomas in John 20:29 "*Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*"