

March 27, 2011 by Steve Brandon



What More Shall I Say?

Hebrews 11:32

1. Gideon
2. Barak
3. Samson
4. Jephthah
5. David
6. Samuel
7. The Prophets

I invite you this morning to open your Bibles to the book of Hebrews, and turn to chapter 11. At Rock Valley Bible Church, we have been looking at Hebrews 11 for three months now. In fact, this is my 12th sermon in Hebrews 11, and we aren't done yet. Over and over and over again, my message has essentially been the same. People have always come to God on the basis of faith. So, look at the faith of those who lived in the days of the Old Covenant, and imitate their faith. Or, to say it another way, "Press on in your faith!"

We have seen example after example after example of those who lived in Old Testament times who pressed on in their faith, even through tremendous difficulty. The premise of Hebrews, chapter 11 is simply this: people have always come to God by faith, so you should do likewise.

I have called you to imitate the faith of these men and women. Imitate the faith of Abel, who worshiped God, and it cost him his life. Imitate the faith of Enoch, who walked with God when few were, and he was taken up into heaven. Imitate the faith of Noah, who witnessed for God in building the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible) and begun thinking about Joshua. Chronologically, we see Abel in Genesis 4, Enoch in Genesis 5, Noah in Genesis 4, Abraham in Genesis 12, Isaac in Genesis 21, Jacob in Genesis 26, Joseph in Genesis 37, Moses in Exodus 2, and Joshua in Joshua 6. That's about 25% of the way through the Old Testament. And even this isn't exhaustive.

We could go on and on and on, taking examples of Old Testament saints, who walked by faith. But, the big question is this: where do we stop? Should we continue on? How long should we continue? I've been aiming for Hebrews 12. So far, the writer to the Hebrews has only covered the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible) and begun thinking about Joshua. Chronologically, we see Abel in Genesis 4, Enoch in Genesis 5, Noah in Genesis 4, Abraham in Genesis 12, Isaac in Genesis 21, Jacob in Genesis 26, Joseph in Genesis 37, Moses in Exodus 2, and Joshua in Joshua 6. That's about 25% of the way through the Old Testament. And even this isn't exhaustive.

He skipped Lot, who by faith, left Sodom and Gomorrah, without looking back (Gen. 19). He skipped Aaron, who by faith spoke for Moses before Pharaoh (Ex. 4-14). He skipped Phinehas, who by faith made a stand for righteousness, turned away the wrath of God from Israel and obtained "an eternal priesthood" He skipped Caleb, one of the twelve spies, who by faith (along with Joshua), urged Israel take the land (Numbers 14). How long should we continue to place before you the heroes of the faith, who endured and persevered by faith?

That is the very question that is introduced in our text this morning. Hebrews 11:32: "And what more shall I say?" This is the question that I have dealt with throughout this entire chapter. How much should I say about Abel and Enoch and Noah and Abraham? How much should I say about Jacob and Joseph and Sarah and Moses? I've chosen to slow down, that we might really think about their faith, taking one or two of those people mentioned each week.

This is the title of my message this morning is this: "What More Shall I Say?" My title comes straight from verse 32 -- "What More Shall I Say?" -- which, by the way, gives evidence that this book was first a sermon. Because, he doesn't say, "What More Shall I Write?" No, the book of Hebrews is first and foremost an oral book. I believe that the book of Hebrews contains the sermon notes to one of the greatest sermons ever preached.

In the next phrase, we see another hint of this, when he writes, "for time will fail me, ..." He doesn't say, "I don't have enough space on my printed page." Rather, he says, "I don't have time in my sermon to say everything that can be said. Preachers always feel as if they don't have enough time to say everything that they want to say.

Hebrews 11:32-40

What more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy),

wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.

We see a change here. Rather than describing how each of these people lived by faith, the author merely mentions them only by name. And, he stops being chronological. Certainly, here he could easily have spoken a sentence about Gideon. He could have elaborated on Barak or Samson or Jephthah or David or Samuel or many of the prophets. But, he didn't.

And so, this morning, we have a choice. Either we can speed ahead, or we can slow way down. Here's what I have chosen to do. These names in verse 32 are given for a reason. I want to spend our time this morning reflecting upon each of the names given in verse 32. I'm going faster -- I'm picking up 7 names this morning. And they are rich. So, let's reflect upon the faith of those mentioned in verse 32, ...

1. Gideon

Do you know about Gideon? His story is told in Judges 6-8. He arose during a time when Israel was oppressed by Midian (Jud. 6:1-6). Periodically, Midianites would come in swarms "like locusts in number" and devastate those in Israel and take their sheep, their oxen and their donkeys (Jud. 6:4-5). They would leave them with nothing (Jud. 6:4), much like a tsunami in Japan. Then, they would let them rebuild -- only to come back in again.

It was when the people cried to the Lord for help, that God sent Gideon to deliver them (Jud. 6:6, 11). Gideon delivered Israel in such a way that demanded great faith. First of all, he tore down an altar of Baal, which incited the Midianites to fight against him (Jud. 6:28-32). As a result of this, "All the Midianites and the Amalekites and the sons of the east assembled themselves" to fight against Gideon (Jud. 6:33).

So, when Gideon went to muster his troops, he had more than 30,000 soldiers. But, the LORD said, "The people who are with you are too many for Me to give Midian into their hands, for Israel would become boastful, saying, 'My own power has delivered me'" (Jud. 7:2). And so, Gideon was to proclaim to the people, "Whoever is afraid and trembling, let him return and depart" (Jud. 7:3). More than two-thirds of the people left. The army was down to 10,000 to fight Midian.

But, the LORD said, "The people are still too many" (Jud. 7:4). So, God told him to take everyone down the water and encourage them to drink (Jud. 7:4). Gideon was to watch them drink. If they lapped the water like a dog or knelt down to drink, Gideon was to dismiss them from the army. If they brought the water up to their mouths in their hands to drink, Gideon was to keep them in the army. Do you remember the result? The army was dwindled down to 300 men (Jud. 7:6). So, the Lord said, "I will deliver you with the 300 men ... and will give the Midianites into your hands" (Jud. 7:7).

Gideon, believed the LORD. I'm not sure about you, but I wouldn't be so thrilled with this arrangement. I'd rather go up with the 32,000 men we started with. Wouldn't you?

But, such are the people of faith. People of faith realize that the most important factor in any difficulty we face is God. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31). This is the great reality of life. If God is for us, nobody can be against us. The body they may kill, but God's truth abideth still. If God looks down upon us as forgiven in Jesus Christ, then nobody can lay an accusation against us. No tongue can bid me thence depart. We stand or fall before the Lord -- and Him only!

And this was the faith of Gideon. When the army was dwindled down to 300, Gideon believed in God and took those men down against the camp of the Midians that very night (Jud. 7:9). Now, "the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the sons of the east were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as numerous as the sand on the seashore" (Jud. 7:12). Gideon's men were far outnumbered. But, Gideon took these 300 men and put trumpets and empty pitchers into the hand of all of them, according to the word of the LORD (Jud. 7:16). He then split them up into three groups (Jud. 7:16). And in the middle watch of the night, all of the men "blew the trumpets and smashed the pitchers that were in their hands" (Jud. 7:19). They made a ruckus! The noise sent the armies into confusion, and they "set the sword of one against another" (Jud. 7:22), and fled (Jud. 7:22).

Thus, Gideon delivered Israel from the hands of the Midians by faith. The call of Gideon in our lives is to believe God, despite how desperate circumstances may appear. This teaches us that God's ways are best. They may not appear as best -- "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Prov. 14:12) -- but they are. And, it is true that, "You will reap what you sow" (Gal 6:7).

The next person in the list is ...

2. Barak

Do you know about Barak? His story is told in Judges 4 and 5. Like Gideon, he too was a judge who arose to deliver Israel from their distress. His story isn't nearly as interesting as Gideon's was. Yet, nevertheless, it is a story of faith.

During the days of Barak, Israel was being oppressed by the Canaanites. Through the prophecy of Deborah, Barak took 10,000 men to Mount Tabor to fight against Sisera and his chariots and all his army (Judges 4:14). He overtook the men there and the entire army of Sisera fell by the sword (Jud. 4:16). It's a simple story. Take an army, and fight. Psalm 20:7 summarizes the life of Barak: "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will trust in the name of the LORD, our God."

That's the story of Barak. It's pretty simple and straight forward. He wasn't called to take on an army against incredible odds. He wasn't called to do anything strange, like taking a city by blowing trumpets and banging pots. Rather, he was called to be a courageous, military leader, who engaged his army in battle. And quite honestly, that's where God has placed most of us. God isn't calling most of you to take on some heroic act of faith. Rather, God is calling you to simple faith in Jesus, walking with Him each day by faith, leading your children to Jesus,

talking with those who don't know Christ, calling them to believe.

We've seen Gideon and Barak. The next name on the list is ...

3. Samson

Do you know about Samson? His story is told in Judges 13-16. He is one of the most interesting characters in all of the Bible. Sure, he had his faults. He was a womanizing scoundrel, who thought nothing about taking revenge upon his enemies by killing them (Jud. 14:19) or by destroying their crops (Jud. 15:1-8). But, the Spirit of the LORD was upon him (Jud. 14:6). God gave him incredible strength.

Samson also accomplished great things by faith. He terrorized the Philistines, the enemies of Israel, during his days, because of the strength that God gave him. At one point, he killed 1,000 Philistines who had attacked him, with the jawbone of a donkey (Jud. 15:14-15). That's one against a thousand, and the thousand lost. My daughter, Stephanie, asked me the other night if we could wrestle like we used to. I used to be able to pin all the kids to the ground. Not anymore; they're too big now. But, 1,000 men weren't too big for Samson.

When finally he was weakened by the cutting of his hair, the Philistines gouged out his eyes. At one point, He was brought out to be mocked by thousands of Philistines, who had assembled together. They wanted to laugh at the one who had terrorized them for 20 years (Jud. 16:25). Samson, blind as a bat, asked the boy leading him to set him beside "the pillars on which the house rests" (Jud. 16:26). Standing between two pillars, Samson called on the LORD and said, "O Lord GOD, please remember me and please strengthen me just this time, O God, that I may at once be avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes" (Jud. 16:28). And grasping the two middle pillars -- one with his right hand and on with his left hand -- he took down the house of the Philistines and "killed [more] at his death ... than those whom he killed in his life" (Jud. 16:30).

There's the story of Samson. From him, we learn the lesson of God's power. When the Spirit of the Lord comes upon you for a specific task, God will give you the strength. You will have no lack. God will call you to do nothing for which He doesn't supply the strength to do it. Philippians 4:19 says, "My God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." Now, this is not talking about wants, but needs.

So walk by faith like Samson. Walk in courage.

Next on the list is ...

4. Jephthah

Do you know about Jephthah? His story is told in Judges 11. He is yet another judge. His story isn't too spectacular. No jawbones or long hair or wild plots of revenge. No. Instead, Jephthah was merely holding the ground of the Israelites.

During his days, the people of Israel were fighting against the sons of Ammon. The elders of Israel chased Jephthah down and asked him to lead in the battle against the Ammonites (Jud. 11:1-11). Apparently, Jephthah had some gifts.

So, Jephthah sent a message to the king of the sons of Ammon saying, "What is between you and me, that you have come to me to fight against my land?" (Jud. 11:12). The king said, "Because Israel took away my land when they came up from Egypt, from the Arnon as far as the Jabbok and the Jordan; therefore, return them peaceable now" (Jud. 11:13). In other words, the king felt that the land upon which the Israelites were living really belonged to the Ammonites, because they had it first. But, Jephthah stood firm in his faith, believing that this was the promised land that God had given them. And if God had given them the land, Israel wasn't about to surrender it, nor would God allow them to be defeated. He told the king, "Whatever the LORD our God has driven out before us, we will possess it" (Jud. 11:24). ... I therefore have not sinned against you, but you are doing me wrong by making war against me; may the LORD, the Judge, judge today between the sons of Israel and the sons of Ammon" (Jud. 11:27).

Now there's a statement of faith! Jephthah was saying, "Let's fight it out. God is on our side. He will vindicate my words!"

Like Samson, Jephthah had flaws. Before the war, he made a foolish vow to the Lord. He had said, "If You will indeed give the sons of Ammon into my hand, then it shall be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the sons of Ammon, it shall be the LORD's, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering" (Jud. 11:30-31). In essence, Jephthah was making a deal with God. But, it was a deal of faith. The vow was a vow of faith. By faith, Jephthah led the Israelites in victory. This vow simply turned sour when his daughter was the first one to greet him (Jud. 11:34).

There's the story of Jephthah. We come now to ...

5. David

Do you know about David? His story is told in 1 and 2 Samuel.

He wasn't a judge. He was a king! He was a shepherd. He was a musician. Not only was he able to play the harp, but he also wrote many, many songs which we have today! David wrote half of the Psalms in the Bible! He was called "The sweet Psalmist of Israel" (2 Sam. 23:1).

What shall we say about David? He had faith, for sure.

I trust that you remember the story when he first broke onto the public scene. The Israelites were in a showdown with the Philistines. They were all in the valley of Elah; the Philistines were on one side of the mountain, and the Israelites were on the other side of the mountain (1 Sam. 17:3). In between them was this valley.

The Philistines had this guy named Goliath. He stood over 9 feet tall (1 Sam. 17:4). He was the champion of all Philistine fighters. He would

come out day after day into the valley floor and say to the Israelites, "Choose a man for yourselves and let him come down to me. If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will become your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall become our servants and serve us. ... I defy the ranks of Israel this day; give me a man that we may fight together." (1 Sam. 17:8-10).

This was taking place day after day after day for over a month (1 Sam. 17:16). At one point, David's father sent him up to Elah to bring food to his brothers who were "fighting." Actually, all they were doing were listening each day to Goliath's rage against the cowards of Israel. When David heard this man's verbal abuse, David's blood was stirred within him. He said, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God?" (1 Sam. 17:26). He went quickly to Saul and said, "[I] will go and fight with this Philistine" (1 Sam. 17:32). David was just a boy of about 14, 15, or 16 years of age. Initially, Saul refused the request: "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are but a youth while he has been a warrior from his youth" (1 Sam. 17:33). But David, full of faith, said, "The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine" (1 Sam. 17:37). There's faith right there.

So David went down to the brook and chose five smooth stones and put them in his pouch (1 Sam. 17:40) to use for his sling. He went out to meet that Philistine (1 Sam. 17:41). After Goliath said a few insulting words to David (1 Sam. 17:43-44), David replied, "You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted. This day the LORD will deliver you up into my hands, and I will strike you down and remove your head from you. And I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not deliver by sword or by spear; for the battle is the LORD's and He will give you into our hands" (1 Sam. 17:45-47).

Picture the scene. As "the Philistine rose and came and drew near to meet David, ... David put his hand into his bag and took from it a stone and slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead. And the stone sank into his forehead, so that he fell on his face to the ground. ... David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him, and cut off his head with it" (1 Sam. 17:49, 51).

This sent the Philistines fleeing (1 Sam. 17:52). Israel was victorious! David ascended in the minds of the Israelites. He went on to reign in Israel for 40 years, easily becoming Israel's greatest king, to be surpassed only by Jesus Himself. David was full of faith. After all, he was a "a man after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22; 1 Sam. 13:14).

I love the way in which David fought against Goliath. He fought in such a way that it made God look great. The point of the story isn't about the great power of David. Rather, the point of the story is the great power of David's God! By faith, David was able to kill Goliath. By faith, David was able to let all the earth know that there is a God in Israel (Isa 17:46). By faith, David was able to let all who witnessed the event to know that the battle is the LORD's. (1 Sam. 17:47). Do you so live that others know that God fights your battles? When people look at you, are people drawn to your strength, your intelligence, your wealth? "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises loving-kindness, justice and righteousness on earth" (Jer. 9:23-24).

Let us so live by our faith that people see and know that we are following Jesus. Let us so live by our faith that people know that our strength comes from Him. It's not ourselves that we preach, but Christ Jesus as Lord! (2 Cor. 4:5). We are a light on the hill; people see our good works, and glorify God, not us (Matt 5:16).

This is but one example in the life of David of his faith in trusting God. We could go on to tell of David's faith in so many other ways. By faith, David did not touch Saul, the anointed, but waited for God's perfect timing to be anointed king of Israel. By faith, David waited for the LORD in the wilderness, trusting God's will for His life. By faith, David delivered those in Keilah, who had been held captive by the Philistines (1 Sam. 23:1-5). By faith, David cared for Abigail, who had been treated poorly by her husband, Nabal (1 Sam. 25). By faith, David overthrew the Amalekites who had overthrown Zilag (1 Sam. 30). By faith, David mourned the death of Saul (2 Sam. 1). By faith, David brought the Ark of the Covenant back into Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6). By faith, David planned to build a temple for the LORD (2 Sam. 7). By faith, David showed loving-kindness to Mephibosheth (2 Sam. 9). By faith, David was restored as king, after Absalom took the throne by deceit (2 Sam. 19). By faith, David was merciful to Shimei, who had cursed him (2 Sam. 19).

We could say more (especially from his writings in the Psalms), but such is a sampling of faith in the life of David. Many more could be picked up.

Now we come to ...
6. Samuel

Do you know about Samuel? His story is told in 1 Samuel. He was the last of the judges. His mother was Hannah, who was barren. Hannah felt the pain of her barrenness. So, she begged the Lord for a child. She pledged to give her son to the Lord, if she would be given a child (1 Sam. 1:11). So, when Samuel was weaned, she brought him to Jerusalem and gave him to Eli, the priest, to raise him in service to the Lord.

The hand of God was clearly upon his life from the time he was a child. Perhaps you remember the prophetic call that came to Samuel. While he was sleeping, the LORD called to him, "Samuel!" (1 Sam. 3:4). Thinking that it was Eli's voice that was calling him, he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am" (1 Sam. 3:5). But, Eli didn't call him, so he sent him back to bed (1 Sam. 3:5). This happened twice again. Eli discerned that it was the LORD who was calling Samuel (1 Sam. 3:8). So, Eli counseled the little boy to go and lie down. "If He calls you, ... you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for Your servant is listening'" (1 Sam. 3:9). And so he did.

And the message that came was a difficult one. It was a message of condemnation to Eli, his surrogate father. The LORD said, "I am about to judge [Eli's] house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them" (1 Sam. 3:13). In the morning, Samuel was confronted with a choice. Would he deliver this painful message to Eli? Or, would he soften the

message. Upon Eli's pleading, "Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him" (1 Sam. 3:18).

Such a response set the stage for Samuel's life. By faith, he was a bold proclaimer of the truth. A short while later, Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, died at the hands of the Philistines (1 Sam. 4:11). When Eli heard about how his sons had died and that the Ark of the Covenant had been taken by the Philistines, he "fell off the seat backward beside the gate, and his neck was broken and he died" (1 Sam. 4:18). Samuel saw the words of the LORD come true in his life. And by faith, God "let none of his words fail" (1 Sam. 3:19).

Such boldness characterized Samuel's life. When Israel demanded a king (like the rest of the nations), by faith, Samuel warned them of the trouble that would come from such a demand. He warned them: This king will take your sons and place them for himself in his army (1 Sam. 8:11). "He will take your daughters for perfumers and cooks and bakers" (1 Sam. 8:13). "He will take the best of your fields" (1 Sam. 8:14). "He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his servants" (1 Sam. 8:17). "You will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day" (1 Sam. 8:18). "The people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel" but insisted upon having a king (1 Sam. 8:19).

The boldness of Samuel continued right down to coronation day, when Saul was to be crowned king in Israel. To the assembled crowds, Samuel spoke out against what they were doing. He reminded them of the history of the rebellion of Israel. Then, he said, "You said to me, ... 'A king shall reign over us,' although the LORD your God was your king" (1 Sam. 12:12). "I will call to the LORD, that He may send thunder and rain. Then you will know and see that your wickedness is great which you have done in the sight of the LORD by asking for yourselves a king" (1 Sam. 12:18). So, Samuel called to the LORD, and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel.

Such was the faith of Samuel. He believed God and was ready to speak to all who were disobedient to Him and warn them of the coming danger. If the writer to the Hebrews had said anything about Samuel, I believe that he would have said something like this: "By faith, Samuel, warned the people of Israel of the dangers of having a king."

Right here is a great point of application for us. It is a point of boldness. God has called us to be upfront and honest with people regarding eternity. God has called us to be bold with the gospel. "You are dead in your sins. Apart from Christ, you are on your way to eternal destruction. But, God has provided the way of escape. It's through Jesus, who died upon the cross. His death was to bear the wrath of God for sinners, like you and me. And He died in the place of those who believe in Him. You don't need to perish. Call upon the Lord and be saved from your sins. Trust in Jesus." As people are going astray, God has called us to be a Samuel.

Now, Samuel wasn't too successful in turning people back to righteousness. The people of Israel continued along their sinful ways. So too, we aren't responsible for turning people from their wickedness. We can only warn them of the destruction that awaits them, and call them to come to Jesus.

We have seen Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David and Samuel. Finally, there are ...

7. The Prophets

The number of prophets that we could look at this morning is many. There are the writing prophets, like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah Micah, Nahum Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, or Malachi. There are other prophets who did great things, like Elijah or Elisha. There are the lesser known prophets, like Uriah (Jer. 26:20-23) or Shemaiah (1 Kings 12:22-24; 2 Chron 11:2-4, 12:5-15) or Baruch (Jeremiah 32, 36, 43, 45).

Some of the prophets in the Old Testament were women, like Miriam (Ex. 15:20-21; Num. 12:1-12:15, 20:1), like Deborah (Judges 4:1 - 5:31), like Abigail (1 Sam. 25), like Huldah (2 Kings 22:14-20). This is only a sampling of the Old Testament prophets. The Jews used to number the prophets at 55. [\[1\]](#)

I thought about identifying for you a prophet or two. But, the writer to the Hebrews keeps it generic, so, we will as well. I want for you to think about two statements in the New Testament that speak about "the prophets."

The first is that of Stephen, the first martyr, of the church. When speaking to the Jews, he boldly proclaimed, "You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it" (Acts 7:51-53).

The second comes from the mouth of our Lord, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling" (Matt. 23:37).

Such was the life a prophet -- rejected, persecuted, and killed. Prophets may have had a word from the Lord. But, prophets weren't treated too nicely from the people. It's because most of those you will meet don't want to have anything to do with God.

God calls us to have such a faith. Acts 14:22 tells us that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. 2 Timothy 3:10 says that all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. Jesus even said, "I did not come to bring peace, but a sword."

If the writer to the Hebrews were to write a brief description of the prophets, it might go like this: "By faith, the prophets faithfully proclaimed God's truth and paid for it with their lives." This is a great point to bring it back to the original context of the book of Hebrews. Remember, this book was originally written to those who had come into the church and expressed an interest in Jesus, but were being pulled away. They were facing persecution. "Where are your priests? Where are your rituals? Where are your sacrifices? What sort of faith do you have?"

The message comes in Hebrews 11 is this: I have a faith just like everyone else in the Old Testament. I am ready to suffer, just like the

prophets did. They believed in God. I believe in God as well. I'm looking to Jesus.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on March 27, 2011 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] <http://www.jewfaq.org/prophet.htm>