

(32) And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets --- who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight! Women received back their dead by resurrection ---

(35b) Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated --- of whom the world was not worthy --- wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

(39) And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

(12:1) Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight --- and sin which clings so closely --- and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the Founder and Perfector of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Think on these things:

Match these people with events, from memory or by the scripture references –

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| A. Samson (Judges 15:14-17)                        | ___ Imprisoned for prophesying unwanted news   |
| B. Daniel (Daniel 6:16-24)                         | ___ Hid godly prophets in a cave from ungodly rulers   |
| C. Jeremiah (Jeremiah 37:4, 15-18)                 | ___ Delivered from Nebuchadnezzar’s fiery furnace  |
| D. Zechariah (2 Chronicles 24:1-3, 20-22)          | ___ Defeated thousands with a donkey’s jaw bone  |
| E. Obadiah (1 Kings 18:3-4)                        | ___ Enforced justice and God’s standards upon Israel   |
| F. Elijah (1 Kings 17-17-24)                       | ___ Routed the Midianite army with just 300 soldiers   |
| G. Gideon (Judges 7:1-8, 19-23)                    | ___ Delivered from the (hungry) lions’ den   |
| H. David (1 Samuel 17:31-37, 48-50)                | ___ Raised the Zarephath widow’s son   |
| I. Samuel (1 Samuel 7:3-4, 13-17; 12:4-5)          | ___ Stoned in the court of Solomon’s Temple  |
| J. Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego<br>(Daniel 3:16-30) | ___ Protecting his family’s flock of sheep, he killed a lion<br>and a bear. Used a slingshot to kill a giant |

NOTE: Tradition holds that the prophet Isaiah was the one “sawn in two” (Hebrews 11:37). His father, Amoz, according to Jewish tradition, was the brother of King Amaziah, putting him into the royal family. The accounts of Isaiah’s death are cited in Lives of the Prophets 1.1 and Martyrdom of Isaiah 5:1-14, related to persecutions by later King Manasseh (per ESV “Introduction to Isaiah” notes).

1) When we put together part of v. 33 (“who through faith”) and v. 34 (“were made strong out of weakness”), we confirm an important teaching in the New Testament. Read 2 Corinthians 7:7-10. What is the reason God allows us to know our own weaknesses? Can you share a personal “weakness” where you have seen God work through you?

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2) Based on the description in vs. 35-38, were the godly prophets able to live a life of comfort and normalcy, as most of our pastors in America do today? Were they well-respected and revered among the people as God’s representatives and messengers? Especially from v. 38, what would be a more apt description of their lifestyles?

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3) What did Jesus say to His disciples (and us) in John 16:32-33?

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4) What reason is given for ALL the people listed in Hebrews 11 NOT to receive what God promised the world? See v. 40.

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5) Everything in chapter 11 was recorded for a purpose. There is a “cloud” of witnesses who have walked this faith journey and have passed on before us. According to 12:1-2 what should we set aside and what should we do now? What should we focus on to get us through the tough times?

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People and situations I want to pray for this week: