

1. The writer begins by introducing Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. All of these taken from the book of Genesis. (v4-22)
2. The Hebrew believers should renounce the opportunity to go back to any form of Judaism and should live longing for a better country—a heavenly one.
3. In spite of their failures and trials, these men and women believed God and He bore witness to their faith.
4. Abraham received the promise (6:13) and Moses received the law (10:28). (v23-29)
5. The writer passes over the years in the wilderness and continues with the first main difficulty which the Hebrews had to overcome once they reached Canaan - Jericho. (v30-40)
6. He then mentions the faith demonstrated by Rahab the harlot, before a brief reference, by name only, to six characters from the period of the Judges to the anointing of David as king.
7. The faith which is exemplified in these verses is undaunted. Six leading men are mentioned; the first four from the period of the Judges, when faith was at a premium.
8. In those days, instead of obeying God's voice, or honoring a devoted leader, everyone did 'what was right in his own eyes'. It was a period of backsliding and apostasy.
9. The devout minority recalled the stories of God's power in days gone by to bring the people renewed confidence in the God who could deliver them.
10. Yet for the Judges as well as for David after them, faith was not stereotyped. God works as He pleases and uses whom He will.
11. All six men were very different in personality, social circumstances and spiritual opportunity, yet in various ways God used them.
12. He did not press them into an identical mold or demand the same response from each of them.
13. They were not without faults. Gideon was frightened, Barak was hesitant, Samson was flippant, Jephthah was rash, David was sensuous and Samuel was careless.
14. God's servants do not consist solely of outstanding leaders, patriarchs, judges, kings, prophets or martyrs.
15. In the closing verses we see to a large group whose names we may never know, but whose faith will be not only remembered but treasured.
16. In many circumstances their faith inspired heroism. In other times their faith encouraged fortitude. In all cases their faith awaited fulfilment.
17. Rich as it was, all their faith was confined to the limits of the old covenant. They anticipated the fulfilment of God's promise, the fuller revelation in Christ, but they did not witness its realization.
18. They could be made perfect only as Christians are today, that is by Jesus himself and his sacrifice. Perfection or fulfilment would come through a new covenant, by an eternal legacy, made possible because of a better sacrifice.