

ACPC Bible Studies: Topical Series

1. "Faith": Hebrews 11:1-16

Introduction

Just as scientific evidence "makes sense" of the physical world, faith "makes sense" of the spiritual world. Scientists often do not actually "see" scientific evidence. Atoms are far too small to see. However, scientists "know" that atoms exist, because all the evidence and reason tells them so. Accurate mathematical calculations enable us to land a vehicle on a meteor, even though it has never been achieved before. As we learn and study "known knowledge", we can do things that have not been done or known before. In faith, we study the Bible and build up our knowledge – and do new things in hope. We know that we cannot *prove* that it is the "Word of God". But when Christians debate or discuss our faith, we should make sure that we can give "reasonable answers".

Many people feel that faith is an irrational, "blind leap" into the unknown. However, while faith is *beyond* normal reason and logic, it is not "unreasonable" (ie: not able to be reasoned). In verse 3, God created the visible out of the invisible. No one saw him create it. So faith can accept the idea that God created the world is "reasonable". In verse 11, faith can even accept that God will do something "unreasonable", if he wills it. Sarah in her old age gave birth to a baby. In verse 7, Noah did something that everyone thought was more than unreasonable; it was stupid. Why build a boat so far from water? However, Noah had his "reasons". Faith has "insight" into the mind of God.

When we are sure of our faith in *this* God, we have hope. The people in this passage did what was right and just because they believed in the God of love, grace and justice. We too can overcome all things. However, do remember that we personally may not see our hope realised – not in this life anyway – but God's people will. (v13-16)

Notes:

1. v.4 Abel's offerings were not better than Cain's (Genesis 4: 1-8). He had "faith" and was "righteous". Faith and being right with God" are linked.
2. Without faith it is impossible (not "difficult") to please God.
3. Noah responded in "holy fear". He had faith in God, and held him in awe and also was "afraid" of not doing what God said. So he acted in faith.

Questions

1. People seem to think faith is a check-list" of the things we ought to believe. Is this right?
2. What is the relationship between faith, righteousness and "works"? Read James 2:26. What is James saying about faith?
3. What do people put their "faith" in today?
4. Charles Dickens wrote a classic book "Great Expectations." The Bible is also about "great expectations". What is the "Great Expectation in the Bible?
5. How can you tell when a person has "spirit" and is not "emotionally dead"?
6. Read v.5 How can our faith "condemn" the world?

Conclusion

Paul says that faith hope and love are the three critical factors in the worlds today. Faith in Jesus brings hope. That makes it possible for the love of God to shine through on to the world. The Church must be a place where faith is nurtured, which creates a right relationship with God and is actively working for God. In such faith, we find hope, that God has a plan for us and the world. That plan is made real by practicing and sharing love in the world around us. We should not worry about what others think. The only thing that matters is what God thinks.

