

Word notes Sunday 22/09/13 Tony Hodge
Living for God - Faith

Summary (read this bit out to remind cell members what was said on Sunday)

Key Texts: Key Texts: Hebrews 11:1-7 - Creation to Noah.

Starting a new series looking at how figures from the Old Testament lived for God, their calling, the result, difficulties, their reward and how that relates to our own experience and challenges. The series will be based on those people appearing in the list of heroes of faith in Hebrews 11. The author of the letter to the Hebrews is not confirmed in the text, traditionally it has been assumed to be Paul but arguments have been made for a number of other sources. It's target audience was Christian Jews who had a tendency to fall back into living under the Law – the author therefore wanting to remind them that they have life by faith in Jesus, and that this is not “new” in the sense that the heroes of the Jews also lived by faith in what they did not see.

How shall we live for God, having accepted the promise given through Jesus? By faith. Paul makes this strongly in Rom 1:1, 2 Cor 5:7, Gal 2:20 and 3:11 and the writer of Hebrews agrees in introducing our passage (Heb 10:38).

v1 & 2: What is Faith? The ancients were commended by God for being sure of the hope they had, certain of what they did not see. Faith has an object a focus, ie we “have faith in something” which is our hope received in the Gospel of Jesus – and exists outside of physical experience – not seen.

v3 Whatever we think about creation – a literal reading of Genesis 1 or seeing it through the eyes of science - the important faith issue is that what is seen came out of what was not seen at the command of a “transcendent” God. Pagan religions where gods are inherent in the physical nature of things do not therefore recognise a transcendent God and faith in them is not faith “in what we do not see”.

v4 Abel's offering was made by faith, Cain's, while “first fruits” were not offered in faith and so unacceptable. For Christians this continues to be a key: how we give. Our salvation has come by faith in Jesus' death and so offerings of blood under the law are no longer required but that does not excuse us from bringing our gifts to God but these are made out of our freewill love of God and joyously. (Acts 5:1-10, 2 Cor 9:7).

v5 & 6 The object lesson of Enoch's life is that he pleased God so much he was taken to be with Him without death and it was faith that kept him on that path. To be with God we too must exercise faith – faith in Jesus who said he is the only way (Jn 14:6).

v7 Noah was warned about things he did not see, had faith in God to do a big thing and was rescued from destruction. A metaphor for the whole Bible story-arc: it's not about what you see but about hearing what God says and putting your trust in that rather than the apparent security the world offers. Not to do so results in destruction but to trust God results in life.

In conclusion in Heb 12:1 & 2, the writer urges the early Jewish Christians and by extension all who believe in Jesus to “fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith”.

Application (this is the bit where cell members get to participate. Lead discussions around these points)

Read the definition of faith in verse 1.

What does the word faith mean to you? What everyday things or circumstances do we put our faith in and how do these help demonstrate the reality of faith in Jesus?

Why do some struggle with faith in God? How has God given answers to those struggles?

Faith has an “object”, it results in action, affects decisions and shapes our lives. What has been the biggest faith decision you have made this year? What was the result? How was God involved?

Witness (this is the bit where the cell talks and prays about how to share the Good News)

Share about the Spectrum Seminar “Connecting with your community” and encourage Cell members to attend. Pass a list of those who will come to Tony.