Christ 101: How to Defend the Christian Faith with Reason and Evidence.

Lesson Four: The Nature of Faith. The Biblical view that faith cooperates with reason.

Where is the room for faith when we talk about truth? What is faith?

First, we have to identify what faith is not?

* Faith is not feeling! Religious faith is not based on mere feelings or religious sentiment

What is faith?

* The Biblical view is that faith cooperates with reason.
* The reason that God has given us is part of the image of God.

***“Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you yet do it with gentleness and reverence.”*** (1 Peter 3:15)

How does faith work with reason? What do we mean by an act of faith?

* “The act of believing is an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth at the command of the will moved by the grace of God.” St. Thomas Aquinas

There are three things needed for an act of faith.

1. The intellect’s part – You are thinking that something is true.
2. The will’s part – Faith is a free choice to believe.
3. God’s part – The choice is moved by the grace of God. Grace is primary in the act of faith.

You cannot have an act of faith without the intellect, will, and grace.

Faith is not just a work of God, and it is not just a work of the will. Faith is also the work of the human mind.

Faith is choosing to believe something is true because God said so.

We believe human authorities all the time. Most of our knowledge is based on the testimony of authorities.

In an act of divine faith, we believe it is true based on the authority of God.

How do we know what God has spoken?

* What makes faith rational is that the witness is competent and honest. It is reasonable to believe someone who is competent and honest.

Christian faith can be reasonable in three ways.

1. Preambles of the Faith – some parts of the faith can be known by reason alone. (That God exists, that God is One)
2. Mysteries of the Faith – cannot be established by reason but can be defended by reason. (The Trinity) Even though reason cannot establish these truths, reason can still defend these truths.
3. The whole content of faith can be shown to have come from a divine source when accompanied by miracles.

Motives of Credibility – The rational grounds for accepting divine revelation. Motives of credibility are miracles and prophesy.

Jesus Himself appeals to miracles to establish his claim as a divine being.

***“If I do not do the works of my Father do not believe me; but if I do, though you do not belie me, believe the works.”*** *(John 10:37-38)*

***“Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves.”*** *John 14:11*

Jesus is appealing to the motives of credibility. The presence of miracles and prophesy are what distinguish true revelation from the false.

The presence of miracles and prophesy help one to make an act of faith.

How grace, faith, and miracles cooperate.

* God sends grace. Grace is internal assistance. God moves the will to choose to believe. “Grace does not destroy nature but perfects it.”
* In addition to the internal assistance of grace, God also gives external indications of revelation.
* External indications of revelation – so that the act of faith can now be made in accord with reason. Reasonable faith is not rationalism.

Fideism is faith alone. The opposite of fideism is rationalism. Rationalism is all reason and no faith.

Reasonable faith falls between the extremes of fideism and rationalism.

Reasonable Faith – reason does not necessitate an act of faith but does make it credible.

* With reasonable faith the act of faith is reasonable without being an act of pure reason.
* Reasonable faith does not mean faith is only for smart people.
* We have a responsibility to grow in our faith in accord with our state of life.