

INTRODUCTION: Message - "Faith & Works" (Romans 4 & James 2)

Consider this: There are things that are absolutely invisible to us, but we KNOW that they exist. For example, WIND. You cannot see wind directly yet you can see what it does. You can watch the trees and the grass sway. You can feel it on your skin and in your hair. You can measure if the wind is simply a gentle breeze or a powerful force.

So how do you "observe" invisible qualities such as hope, love... and faith? Can we truly know if those qualities exist in other individuals? And why is this important?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Read John 13:34-35. How can you tell if someone really is a disciple of Christ?
2. Read Acts 14:8-10. In v9, Paul concluded that the man had faith to be healed. How he perceived this is not said. In what ways may Paul have perceived this man's faith?
3. Read Matthew 9:27-29. Jesus first asked for a declaration of faith before healing the two blind men (v28). Why do you think he did this?
4. Read James 1:22-27. These scriptures provide the important clue for what James says in chapter 2. What problem is James addressing here?
5. Meditate on these two premises: 1) I am saved by faith alone and therefore good works are not necessary at all. 2) Faith alone is too simple. I MUST do good works to earn my salvation. Which premise did Paul address (Rom 4:4-5) and which one did James address (Jas 2:17)? Are Paul and James in opposition or agreement regarding faith and works?

SO WHAT?:

There is nothing we can do to earn our salvation by works. If we could, it would no longer be grace. Therefore, salvation is by grace through faith. It is a gift from God (Eph 2:8). But faith produces works. Faith is active and not passive. Therefore, works are the natural byproduct of having faith. Faith without any works is dead (Jas 2:17).

Paul and James are not contradicting each other. Each is attempting to resolve abuses regarding the doctrine of justification by faith. It takes faith to accept the gift of salvation. But faith sitting still is not real faith at all. That would be like saying there is wind but the leaves are not moving.

THINK ABOUT IT:

Jesus said: "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." (Matthew 7:20, KJV)