

You Have Faith and I Have Works

Can you see happiness? You can see signs of it, but you cannot actually see happiness. You can see a smile. You can see the look in someone's eyes when things are going well in their day. Happiness, on the other hand, is an outward sign of something you feel. You can in fact be happy and have no one notice. A person cannot look at another and see what they are feeling. They can see signs and make an educated guess to what is going on inside the other's mind, but in the end it is only a logical guess.

The same can be said of faith. Faith is, *"the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"* (Hebrews 11:1). It is something that you hold in your beliefs. One has faith in heaven because they cannot see it but believe it exists. Once again, a person cannot look at another and see a person's faith. We know that faith is essential to salvation because we are told in Hebrews 11:6, *"without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him"* (Hebrews 11:6). So how do we know if we or anyone else has faith?

The answer to this question is found in James 2:18-20: *"But someone will say, 'You have faith, and I have works.' Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?"* (James 2:18-20). James points out that it is impossible to show faith without working. He challenges anyone to show him faith without working and he will show his faith by his works. One's faith is the light they take into the world by their works, and if they are not working their light is as dead as their faith.

If someone says that they have faith in God they, *"do well. Even the demons believe - and tremble!"* The demons and servants of Satan believe in God and this belief moves them to shake in fear. This act of trembling is more than some who claim to be Christians today! Faith in God causes us to have godly fear and motivates us to make our life right. This can be shown in two examples. On the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, the Jews that heard Peter and the rest of the apostles heard and were, *"cut to the heart,"* and said, *"Men and brethren what shall we do?"* (Acts 2:37). When he commanded them to repent and be baptized, those who obeyed were saved. They had faith when they were *"cut to their heart,"* but it wasn't until they worked obedient to God's plan of salvation that they were saved. Those who did not adhere to God's commandment of repentance and baptism did not receive the remission of sins. The other example is in Acts 8 with Simon. Simon had believed and was baptized in Acts 8:13. As you continue to read in Acts 8, Simon sins by offering to buy the apostles' ability to lay hands and impart the Holy Spirit. He had not lost his faith but he was no longer being obedient like he should. Peter commands him to, *"Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you"* (Acts 8:22). He had his faith still intact, he had previously obeyed the gospel, but had stopped obeying God. He needed to return to his first works and he would be saved.

Today there are many who claim faith is the only thing essential to your salvation. In Acts 2 and 8 there were obedient acts they had to follow to obtain salvation. Those on the day of pentecost were not saved by having their hearts cut and Simon was not saved by realizing his sinful state. Each had to perform works of obedience: the jews had to become Christians through baptism and repentance and Simon had to repent and pray to God that he be forgiven. James writes, *“What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?”* (James 2:14). He brings up the example of the hungry. If someone is hungry and we tell them, *“Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,”* but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, *what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead”* (James 2:16-17). The only way to fix hunger is through eating and the only way to get to heaven is obedience.

It is easy to claim that you have faith because no one can see into you and prove to the positive or negative. Many claim to be Christians, when in fact they are not. It takes one's faith and their works to save them. This does not mean that their works earned them salvation, but what it means is that their true faith motivated them to meet the requirements of salvation predetermined by God. When we come together as followers of God, not only do we test ourselves but we test each other. We can observe what each other are doing and weigh them with the scriptures. If one's light is not burning, someone else lights it! In this way we draw strength from one another and we aid each other to get to eternal happiness and joy. Many do not like this process and try to disprove it, but now that we know the truth the question truly is, *“but do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?”*