

Only the last statement, #5, is true. The other statements are man-made inventions attempting to reconcile what human wisdom struggles to understand.

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

[1Co 2:14]

The 'natural man' is either someone who is: (1) unsaved (that is, never placed their trust in Christ's blood to cover their sin), or, (2) is saved, but who's relationship with God is currently suffering due to unconfessed sin. If you answered anything other than #5 then, by definition, you must fall into one of the two categories above.

If you are unsaved, then please recognize that heaven is a perfect place and you are not perfect. You have sinned. God can't let you into heaven because in your current state you would ruin it. The only option open to you is a very dire one—hell. No amount of good deeds will erase your sin or the penalty for your sin. The penalty *must* be paid; somebody must go to hell. The 'good news' (Gospel) is that God loved you so much He took on human flesh (Christ), lived a perfect life, and then bore *your* penalty on the cross—going to hell in *your* place. But, He didn't stay there. After three days He was resurrected to heaven. He did all the work to correct your sin problem and offers this solution to you as a gift if you will simply place your complete and total trust in His solution.

If you are already a believer and chose something other than #5, then the issue is not salvation, but unconfessed sin. Unconfessed sin is dealt with through prayer to place you back into fellowship with God.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[1John1:8-9]

Saved? All prayed up and ready to go? Okay, let's tackle James 2.

Think about this for a moment. Once you become a child of God, why wouldn't He take you home to heaven immediately? Would you drop your child off in a drug-infested, seamy part of town overnight? Compared to heaven, aren't our surroundings even worse? Why would God leave us here as His dear children when we could be with Him immediately?

The answer is found in the one thing that we should do here that we can't do in heaven. We can pray, praise, worship, sing hymns here—all the things you can do in heaven. The one thing we *can't* do in heaven is impact others for Christ. The entire book of James is about this very topic. It is about believers who influence others toward the kingdom or away from the kingdom through their post-salvation behavior—good and bad.

Let's look briefly at chapter 1 to set the stage:

...to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad..[1:1],. My brethren...[1:2], ...trying of your faith...[1:3], ...brother...[1:9], my beloved brethren [1:16,19]

Notice is that James is writing to *believing* Jews. Salvation isn't their problem—that's already settled. Living out the faith is their problem.

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying

of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing (i.e., mature and wise).[1:2-4] If (1st class conditional: "Let's assume it's true...") any of you lack wisdom [1:5], ask in faith, nothing wavering [1:6], A double minded man is unstable in all his ways [1:8], Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God [1:13], Do not err, my beloved brethren [1:16], etc.

We also see that growth, maturity, and (dare I say it) doctrinal moxie were big issues—there apparently wasn't as much of these in evidence.

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

As shown above, the remainder of chapter 1 extols the believer to live out their faith by growing and maturing. By being "doers of the word, and not hearers only" we will receive blessing—NOT SALVATION. [Recall that they were already saved.]

Chapter 3 and 4 are very similar—extolling the believers to be doers and not hearers only (for blessing or reward—not salvation).

Now, let's look at chapter 2.

My Brethren, ... [1:1], ...come unto your assembly...[1:2], ...my beloved brethren... [1:3] Notice, they are still saved (as brethren).

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man

say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? [2:14]

We begin to look at the case of those who say they have faith, but do not evidence that faith to others—neglecting the only reason God left them on this earth.

Before we go deeper into this, let me explain about judgments.

Believers will—after the Tribulation period—stand before the 'Bema Seat' or Judgment Seat of Christ (Dan.12:3; Matt.5:19; 1Cor.3:5-18; Rev.20:4-6, etc.—also called "the first resurrection") where every believer's 'good' works will be judged for motives—whether they were produced by the leading of the Holy Spirit (rewarded with gold, silver, and precious stones) or by the human spirit (wood, hay, and stubble). God will try all of our good works with fire and only those works motivated by the Holy Spirit (gold, silver, and precious stones) will survive as rewards in God's millennial theocracy [Rev.20:4]. Bottom line: a believer without works led by the Holy Spirit profits nothing at the Bema Seat. Saved—YES! Rewards—NONE!

Unbelievers will ultimately (after the 1000-year reign) be resurrected and go to the Great White Throne Judgment [Rev.20:4-6]—where they will unsuccessfully attempt to apply their 'good' deeds to cover their sin debt and will be cast into hell. [Rev.20:11-15 (where "book" = book of life containing the names of all those who placed their trust in Christ's blood and "books" = books containing a complete list of all (supposed) good works)]

Now back to 2:14. James is referring to the Bema Seat Judgment for believers from two viewpoints—mankind's and God's.

Mankind's view is the judgment of other people (believers and unbelievers) — spe-

cifically, how are others influenced by a believer's actions—positively, or negatively. [That is, how unbelievers be influenced toward the kingdom, or, believers inspired toward a deeper relationship with God (thus, producing more 'fruit').

So, if a man has saving faith, but never acts to influence others, how will others 'judge' him? Like Abraham, will he be called a "friend of God?" Consequently, how will that man fair at the Bema Seat?

Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. [2:17] A saving faith is great, but without post-salvation discipleship aimed at influencing others, then why are you here? What will you profit at the Bema Seat? In other words, your faith is, from mankind's view, lifeless.

Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. [2:18] Refers to the 'what-man-sees' side of the coin. As a saved believer, how have you influenced others for Christ?

Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. [2:19] James is referring here to those who simply recite an 'I-believe-in-God' creed. Even the devils can recite *that* creed and yet still work to undermine the Kingdom. Creeds mean nothing in discipleship.

But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? [2:20] From mankind's view, James reminds us that without works, saving faith appears 'lifeless' to others and they are not influenced either to consider the Gospel or to run the race with renewed vigor. Consequently, no rewards, no blessing.

Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Faith in action—justified in the eyes of

his son and the two attending slaves—results in reward for Abraham [Ge.22], but not salvation from sin. It was Abraham's faith that saved him from sin (Rom.3:24; 4:2), but his post-salvation works that influenced others and resulted in reward (both at the Bema Seat and in his life—Gen.22:16-18; Heb.11:17-19).

Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? Godly fruit can only come as a consequence of salvation by faith. It is this 'package' that leads others to Christ.

And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness (in God's eyes—one side of the coin): *and he was called the Friend of God* (in the eyes of those who witnessed his fruit—the other side of the coin). *Ye see then how that by works a man is justified* (in the eyes of man *and* at the Bema Seat), *and not by faith only* (which plays no part in the Bema Seat Judgment). [2:21-24]

Jam 2:26 *For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.* Saving faith may get you into heaven, but without subsequent leading by the Holy Spirit to produce fruit, no one is influenced by your presence. Thus, your faith appears lifeless to others and your presence on earth has no lasting impact.

Why does James focus on effective discipleship so intently? Because this is where Satan targets believers. Satan may not be able to stop you from going to heaven (you were guaranteed heaven the moment you believed the Gospel), but he will try his best to make you ineffective at influencing anyone else to do the same!

Even the devils believe, right?

A careful look at James chapter 2 with regards to salvation

Instructions: Check only those items listed below with which you agree.

- Salvation must require more than simply believing the Gospel because, after all, "the devils also believe, and tremble." [James 2:19b]
- Faith alone is insufficient to assure one's salvation. One must also show a change of lifestyle. [James 2:14b, 24]
- Despite #2 above, you are aware of non-James Scriptures that clearly say that faith is all that is needed for Salvation. To satisfy this apparent contradiction and align with James 2, faith must be defined as, "a faith that works." [John MacArthur, et.al.]
- Despite His assertion, Christ must have been lying when he said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life" [John 6:47], because James chapter 2 clearly says belief alone is insufficient as a basis for salvation.
- James chapter 2 isn't referring to the salvation that provides everlasting life, but to the judgment that provides rewards to those already saved.

Workman Ministries

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

[2 Tim. 2:15]