

## Difficult Scriptures

Scripture seems to contradict itself. One place it intones "saved by faith without works" and in another "faith without works is dead" Another seems to say "You gotta be baptized" and in another you must "endure to the end". If you sin willfully, are you then lost? Let's take look at some of these verses and see if cannot resolve some of these so-called contradiction.

One reason these scriptures are sometimes hard to understand is that the command to study has been removed from every new version of the Bible. The KEY verse for understanding scripture is found in Paul's admonition to young Timothy:

**2Ti 2:15 (kjv) *Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.***

Let's start with an illustration. There is a large family. When relatives write they put all their letters in one envelope and mail it to the family. Each letter will have the name of the family member that it is written to. When they are done reading, they will more than likely (if they are a happy family) share some of the contents of each others mail, but some of it will pertain particularly to them. Now think of the Bible. It is God's letter to mankind. That includes Old Testament Jews, Gentiles, The Church, Folks that go into the great tribulation and also those who are part of the Millennial Kingdom.

Now the Bible is a Jewish book. The Old testament, briefly, gives us the beginning of God's creation, the giving of the law, and the beginning and fall of the Kingdom. That was mail to the nation of Israel. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, span the lifetime of Jesus Christ. His ministry was to Israel.

**But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Matthew 15:24**

The Gospels are God's mail to the Jews at the time of Christ. They were still under the old testament law. The "***new testament***" (not the books) is put in force at the resurrection of Christ. It is based upon a "new" covenant. When Jesus and John came they preached the "Gospel of the kingdom" What was that?

**From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Matthew 4:17**

Is that what Paul preached? No. So, who was Paul? Should we believe him over Jesus? The questions are real.

Paul was the "apostle to the Gentiles". (That's us!)

**For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: Romans 11:13**

Jesus' earthly ministry was to the Nation of Israel. That is important. It is not to be overlooked. It is part of "rightly dividing the word of truth".

That one fact, "rightly dividing" will open up the scriptures for you. Let's make it simple.

Paul tells us

**For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. Eph 2:8.**

**Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Titus 3:5**

James says

**Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. 18 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. 19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. 20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? James 2:17-22**

Are these men contradicting each other? How can we tell. Let's go back to our illustration.

Remember who Paul is: His ministry is to the Gentiles.

According to the first verse in the book of James, the mail recipients were the 12 tribes of Israel.

**¶ James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting. James 1:1**

When you are reading James, you are reading a book addressed to the 12 tribes which were scattered abroad. They are STILL scattered abroad. The book will apply DOCTRINALLY in the tribulation. In other words in the tribulation they will be required to maintain good works. That doesn't mean that we cannot profit from James. On the contrary, Paul tells us:

**All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 2Timothy 3:16**

That simply means that while a passage may apply doctrinally, (What it actually teaches to the intended audience) it can also reprove us, correct us and give us instruction in

righteousness. However we cannot take it's doctrinal content as applying directly to us or we will be confused.

Now, that's a long but necessary introduction to our subject. Let's take some verses, one by one.

**Matthew 24:13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.**

This will go contrary to the entrenched teaching that all men are all saved the same way. The truth is that they are not. In the Great Tribulation, it will be necessary for a man (or woman) to "endure" until the end of that three and one half year in order to be saved. It means not taking the mark of the beast nor worshiping his image

**And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, 10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: Revelation 14:9**

God does not require you to endure to the end of anything. You were saved by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Your salvation is a FREE GIFT from God.:

**But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. Romans 5:15 -16**

The verses teach our salvation by GRACE through FAITH. It is a FREE GIFT We learn of it through Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles.

**Mark 16:16**

**He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.**

So, is baptism necessary for salvation? It would almost seem so. Mark implies it, Peter specifies it in Acts 2:38, But Paul says in 1Corinthians 1:14:

**¶ I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius;**

A rather strange thing to say if not being baptized will put you in hell. It may be objected here that Paul was only saying, "If baptism is the source of your contention, I'm glad I had no part in baptizing you", but that won't work. It wasn't said out of anger or frustration, and Paul could have easily omitted the the statement without damage to his theme. He is totally aware of the fact that baptism during the **church age** is an ordinance and not a requirement for salvation. Why is Baptism necessary in Mark 16? Answer: In Mark 16 we are still under the kingdom gospel. It began with John the Baptist preaching repentance and baptism. It continued through-out the ministry of Jesus Christ and into the preaching of Peter in Acts Chapter 2. Keeping in mind the Jewish nature of the Gospels will help immeasurably in understanding why Baptism was necessary in the teaching of those disciples, but when Paul the apostle to the gentiles preached his message was pure grace. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: (Eph 2:8 )

### **Heb 6:4-6**

**For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, 5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, 6 If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.**

This one will take a bit of study. First up. When was Hebrews written, to whom was it written and what was it's purpose?

**How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; Hebrews 2:3**

The writer of Hebrews got his information from those who were contemporary with Jesus Christ. (**confirmed unto us by them that heard him;**) That will place it's message as valid during the time of Christ, and will make the message that which Christ and John the Baptist preached. The book was written to the "**Hebrews**". That makes the recipients of this "mail" Jewish (Hebrew). It's purpose was to help these Hebrews see the fulfillment of the Old Testament tabernacle, priesthood, and sacrificial system of worship in Jesus Christ.

The question the disciples asked Jesus in Acts chapter one is instructive and will help us in understanding these verses. What was the question?

**Ac 1:6 ¶ When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?**

The disciples knew nothing about the gospel revealed to Paul. They were interested in whether or not the kingdom was "at hand". Here the student should pay close attention. In answer to his question, He did not tell them their question was wrong. He simply told them that the matter of timing was in the fathers control.

**And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. Acts 1:7**

He continued teaching them and in Acts 2:34 he said:

**For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, 35 Until I make thy foes thy footstool.**

Now see how the individual WORDS are so important to understanding. He tells them that Christ would be SEATED ("sit thou") until God makes his foes his footstool. That is second advent material. Now look at Acts chapter 7.

**But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, 56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Acts 7:55**

Jesus is STANDING when Stephen sees him. He sees the glory of God. Jesus is waiting for the response of the Jewish elders. If they would have received him (free will!) He would have come back and set up his kingdom right then.

Now, this is a lot of material to swallow, and I admit it can be confusing at first. How does it all relate to the verse in Hebrews? Simply this. These Hebrews had tasted the power of the world to come, they had spoken in tongues (not for today!) They had seen Peters shadow heal folks. Those were the powers. They had "tasted" the heavenly gift. Their leaders refused their messiah. If THEY then should reject what God had shown them and given them (like their fathers in the wilderness after Moses brought them out of Egypt) then they could not be renewed to repentance. They had seen Christ crucified. Now The writer of Hebrews is telling them not to fall away, not to lose faith. They were not eternally secure like you are.

That is some "heavy" material, and is sure to generate questions. I will do my best to answer any and all.

### **Hebrews 10:26,27**

**For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, 27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. .**

If you sin willfully? When did you ever sin when it was not "willfully?" Then most likely there will be no one saved. All will be consigned to hell. But - did Jesus die in vain? Or, is there another answer to this conundrum? If we are going to find the correct answer, it will be one that takes the context of the entire book of Hebrews into account. As we learned before, Hebrews was an early book. It was written to (here we go again) HEBREWS. Hebrews was written to bring Jews, raised under the law of Moses, to an

understanding of the superiority of Jesus Christ to that system. Read Hebrews. See how many times the word "better" shows up (in a King James Bible). No, instead I'll just tell you. Thirteen times. In those 13 times we discover That Jesus is better than the Angels (the Jews didn't know this). He offered a better hope, a better testament, a better covenant, better promises, better sacrifices, a better country, a better and enduring substance, and better things than Abel.

When he tells them that if they sin willfully, first he is not talking to you. He is writing to Hebrew people who know life under the law, and now have been shown why Jesus Came. If they WILLFULLY REJECT HIM (sin willfully) There is not going to be another sacrifice somewhere down the road. He (Jesus) was the final sacrifice for their sins. The willful sin was and is unbelief. That is also the "besetting sin" in Hebrews 12:1. Don't worry about sinning willfully. As long as you are in this flesh you will mess up. But the blood of Jesus Christ God's son Cleanses us from ALL sin. Now if you are not saved, the verse holds true for you also. If you willfully reject Christ, there is no more sacrifice. It's Him, or nothing. He said "I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh unto the father but by me".

#### **Galatians 5:4**

**Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.**

How can it be that we are eternally secure in Christ, and yet here it implies that we can fall from grace? Satan has used this scripture (Yes, he knows how) to keep many of God's precious Children in bondage to a fear of "falling away", or losing salvation. Let's examine.

One reason we are "fanatics" on the KJV is because we learn after a while that words are important. Picture a box. It is a large box. You are standing ON the box, someone else is IN the box, and since our imaginary box is suspended in the air, someone else is climbing UP to the box and is close to being IN the box. However before he gets IN the box, the ladder slips and he falls FROM the box. Just an illustration. The ones who are "fallen FROM grace" never got IN grace to start with. They were much like today's Seventh Day Adventists, who, while professing faith in Christ, insist that it is necessary to keep some of the Law to remain saved. That is Just the error Paul is teaching against here. He is simply saying that If you don't receive salvation as a free gift, you have believed in vain, You got right up to grace, but being unable or unwilling to receive Christ as a free gift of grace, you have fallen FROM that grace. You were never saved to start with. You couldn't let go of the law. You were never IN, because if you were IN you couldn't fall OUT, but if you were OUT and heading IN, you could fall FROM.

## **Romans 10:13**

**Ro 10:13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.**

It probably seems strange that Romans 10:13 would fall into the category of "hard to be understood verse". We include it here because many hold out hope for their unsaved Roman Catholic loved ones saying that "they believe in Christ", and have "called upon him". Couldn't they be saved? We'll give a simple answer. While the verse is a quotation of Joel in the old testament, in the passage in Romans, he is speaking to a Gentile audience. He uses the verse and applies it to those at the church at Rome. Does that not mean that anyone that calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved? Answer NO. Chapter 10 is only valid in light of what was written before we get to chapter 10. That is the danger of "proof text" theology. We take a verse as it stands out of its intended context and use it to prove something we care deeply about. But we cannot do that. We will give ourselves false hope and Satan will use it to keep us from witnessing where we should. Paul starts in Romans chapter one and makes the concepts of the wickedness of the human heart, and of imputed righteousness crystal clear. By the time you get to chapter 10 you KNOW what is required. It is repentance and faith in the blood of Christ. You can then call upon the name of the Lord, understanding both your dire need, and what Christ has done to make your salvation possible. Hope that helps!