



SALVATION
BY
GRACE

DISCUSSION 3: SALVATION

How Are We Saved?

Many have wrestled with the issue of salvation. While studying scripture, some have come to the conclusion that there are multiple levels of heaven. To support this belief, they refer to II Corinthians 12:2, which reads, "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven." They further claim that each level requires a different amount of good works to enter. They teach that in order to gain entrance into the presence of the Father, the Celestial Kingdom, it is necessary to be baptized by one with the proper authority, in addition to other good works. Without this good lifestyle, it would be impossible for someone to enter into the Celestial Kingdom.

What Does II Corinthians 12 Mean?

It is important to realize that the people who received this book from Paul commonly referred to multiple heavens when they spoke of the atmosphere. During this time in history, the heavens were often compared to one another. The first level of heaven was the sky; the second was the sun and the moon; and the third level, also referred to as "paradise" in verse 4, is where believers are taken after death, to be in the presence of Christ. Because it is important to read the scriptures in light of other biblical passages, it is interesting to note what Christ says about "paradise". In Luke 23:43, we read, "And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." In this passage, we can see that Christ affirms that paradise is heaven.

What Is The Gift Of Salvation?

The Bible teaches that God's gift of salvation is free for all to have. Eternal life is a gift from God. In Ephesians 2:8-9 we read, "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." Paul also says in Romans 5:1, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have

peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." To be justified means to be declared righteous. In other words, by our faith we can be declared righteous and holy in the eyes of God. It is important to note that no good works are involved in this process.

What About James 2:14?

Some may respond to this by referring to James 2:14, which states, "What doth it profit, my brethren, through a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?" We would have strong reason to believe that works do in fact save us if this was the only passage in the Bible that discussed salvation. However, since this is not the only passage regarding salvation, we must read this in light of the rest of Scripture. James, when examining the context of this verse, is discussing the necessity of demonstrating your faith to other men through your works. Paul agrees with James that believers need to live in such a way to reflect God to others. In Romans 5:21-6:1 we read, "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Paul's point is that we should not live in and excuse ourselves from the guilt of our sin. We cannot deny that we have sin in our lives. But we need to recognize our sin, confess it and ask for forgiveness. I John 1:8-9 says, "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." II Corinthians 12:9 teaches that through the weaknesses of men, God's strength is made perfect. These passages mean that God's grace is sufficient to cleanse all of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. However, this does not mean that we should not do good works. If we truly love God, we will back up our faith with the things that we do.

With these passages in mind, we can clearly see that scripture teaches that salvation is not based on works. Works are only evidence that we have saving faith. Our works merit nothing towards our status with God. This is complete salvation.

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