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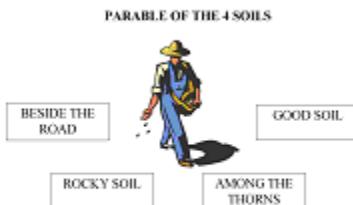
A0713 – April 1, 2007 – Jas 1:21 – The Salvation Of The Soul

James 1:21 Διὸ ἀποθέμενοι πᾶσαν ῥυπαρίαν καὶ περισσείαν κακίας, ἐν πρδύτητι δέξασθε τὸν ἔμφυτον λόγον, τὸν δυνάμενον σῶσαι τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν. (BYZ)

James 1:21 Therefore, put off all filth and abundance of wickedness, in humility receive the implanted word, which has the ability to save your lives. (**Author's Translation**)

James 1:21 Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. (**NASB95**)

receive (*dechomai*) is an aorist imperative. “Do it now, receive **the word implanted!**” Obviously **the word** is the **word of truth** from verse 18 which God used as an instrument to regenerate them (James 1:18). Now, tomorrow, every day of your life, receive the word implanted. You are going to have to devote your life to Bible study. When they first believed the word it was sown in their hearts, implanted within them like a seed. Now that word *should* grow and affect every area of their lives. But will it? James uses a metaphor from farming and seems to be relying on the parable of the four soils in Luke 8:4-15 (also of Matt 13:2-9; Mark 4:1-9)ⁱ.



The word is planted in the heart like seed is planted in the soil. But is it going to grow? Is the seed going to produce fruit? Well, that depends on the soil. What kind of soil has the seed been planted in? Is it rocky soil? Is it thorny soil? or is it good soil? The parallel is the believer's heart. What kind of heart has the word been planted in? What is the condition of your heart? Is it a shallow heart? Is it a crowded heart? or is it a fruitful heart? There are many factors in our hearts that make a difference in the effect the word will have in our lives? James is saying we need to put off the filthiness and wickedness which hardens our hearts to the word and have a humble heart. If we come to the word with a prideful heart we will not be prepared to **receive the word**. Oh that we had men of humble hearts who did not think they were so great! In the NT, humility is the pre-eminent Christian virtue as demonstrated by Jesus Christ (Phil 2:7ff).

What humility prepares us for is **receiving the word implanted**. That word was **implanted** in us at the moment of regeneration. The word was the means by which God regenerated us (1:18). At that moment we were saved from the penalty of sin and heaven was made certain! Now, having been saved from the penalty of sin by the word of truth, that same word becomes the means by which we can be saved from the power of sin. However, this salvation is conditioned upon **receiving** it. *If you receive the word of God with humility it is able to save your souls. save your souls* from what? The Greek word for **save** is *sozo* and means “to deliver, to rescue” from some imminent danger. But what is the imminent danger? Remember, they are on the path of James 1:14-15. Their minds and lives are full of moral filthiness. Where does the path of James 1:14-15 lead? What's the end product of sin? If it reaches maturity the end product is “death”. This is physical death, pre-mature physical death due to unchecked sin. The wages of sin is death, always, everywhere for everyone, believer and unbeliever (Rom 6:23)ⁱⁱ. Obviously, the death an unbeliever earns is eternal separation from God in the lake of fire (aka the second death Rev 20:11-15). But what kinds of death can a believer earn by sinning? The believer by sinning is temporally separated from God, he's out of fellowship with God, he experiences darkness and spiritual depression. If this separation remains because of the believer's failure to confess or repent of the sin then his sin matures and eventually he experiences pre-mature physical death. James doesn't want this for these believers. The answer is not to continue to sin and die but to put off sin, run to the word of God and be saved! The word has the ability to **save** the

believer's **soul**. So, they are not being saved from hell here. They are being saved from the deadly consequences of sin in their life such as spiritual depression, darkness, gloom, anxiety, but ultimately, premature physical death (James 1:15).

Let's take a minute to get a biblical understanding of the words "save", "saved" and "salvation". This is so often missed and so often led to erroneous interpretations of the Bible. So often all one ever imagines is that salvation is from hell, that if a person is saved they are going to heaven, that if a person is not saved they are going to hell. So, let me ask you three true/false questions.

1. If a person is saved they will not go to hell.
2. If a person is saved they will go to heaven.
3. If a person is not saved they are going to hell.

It may shock you to know that the answer to all three of these questions is false. The reason is because "If this is all you had to go on then for them to be true they would have to be true in every context." If you didn't get these right then you don't understand the word "salvation" and/or you're reading into each statements more than is there. That is very dangerous. You should never, never, never read a statement for more than what is there. If you missed these questions it's probably because you assumed something either about the word salvation or what I meant. But you're not supposed to do that so let's look at each of the three statements. *First*, in the Bible if a person is saved they can still go to hell. I don't mean they can lose their salvation, I don't mean the Arminian belief. I mean that being saved does not always mean being saved from hell. In fact, throughout the OT, salvation is from hell only 7% of the time. The other 93% of the uses refer to salvation from physical enemies. The people were saved but it did not mean they would not go to hell. *Second*, in the Bible if a person is saved it does not mean they are going to heaven. Again, this is because being saved does not always mean being saved from hell in the Bible. Often people in the Bible are saved from dangers that surround them which have nothing to do with heaven. *Third*, in the Bible if a person is not saved it does not mean they are going to hell. Unsaved people will go to heaven. You might think I'm off my rocker here but if you do you do not understand the word "salvation". Everything I've stated here is absolutely biblical. And, Biblically speaking, there are believers who

will go to heaven but miss out on salvation! That is James' whole point in verse 21! They've been regenerated (1:18) and will certainly go to heaven but they still need to have their souls "saved" (1:21)! If you don't get this you are never going to be able to make sense of the Bible as you read it and I really want you to understand it. I am desperately trying to get people to understand the Bible the way it is written. If you don't then you can't go home and read it and make sense of it. I'm not trying to confuse you I'm trying to get you unconfused about biblical terms.

So, that little exercise was designed to teach you how the biblical authors use the words "salvation" "saved" "save". If you've narrowed the word down to refer to salvation from hell then you are missing out on a lot of biblical teaching.

The Greek verb for "save" (*sozo*) and the Greek noun for "salvation" (*soteria*) have a range of meanings that correspond closely to their English meanings: "deliver, rescue, preserve". A newspaper headline may read "Six Marines Saved from Enemy Territory" or "Man Saves Encrypted File" or "Preacher Saves Wife from Drowning". We all know intuitively these statements have nothing to do with going to heaven or hell. But, for some reason, when we come to the Bible we come with a narrow mindset thinking that salvation is always from hell. But the word study turns up several interesting uses in various contexts you might not expect, some you might not expect. So, let's look at four different biblical contexts for the word "save"/"salvation".

First, the word "save" can be used of Physical-Deliverance. Physical-Deliverance refers to being saved from physical dangers. In the Bible this occurs four ways.

First, Physical-Deliverance from Physical Death occurs in Exodus 14:30. "*Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.*" This kind of salvation occurs in the NT also, Acts 27:31, "*Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Unless these men remain in the ship, you yourselves cannot be saved.*" (Also cf 1 Chron 11:14; 2 Chron 32:22; Ps 20:6, 9; Jer 31:7; Matt 8:25; 14:30; 24:22; Mark 13:20; 15:31; John 12:27; Acts 27:20, 31; Jude 5; Heb 5:7; et. al).

In the NT, Physical-Deliverance from Demon Possession occurs in Luke 8:36
“*Those who had seen it reported to them how the man who was demon-possessed had been made well.*”

In the NT, Physical-Deliverance from Sickness occurs in Mark 6:56,
“*Wherever He entered villages, or cities, or countryside, they were laying the sick in the market places, and imploring Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched it were being cured.*”

In the NT, Physical-Deliverance from Some Danger occurs in Acts 2:21 and Romans 10:13, for “*WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.*” The context here is the rescue of Israel from her enemies. Verse 14 makes clear that they must have already believed in order to call upon Him and be saved. Romans 10:9-10 are very misunderstood verses. Many claim there are two conditions for a person to go to heaven; belief with the heart and confession with the mouth. Others try to say these are one and the same condition because of a Greek chiasmic structure. However, one must realize in Romans Paul clearly distinguishes justification from salvation. For example, in Romans 5:9 Paul says, “*Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.*” They had been justified but still needed to be saved! So, when we come to Romans 10:10 Paul gives the logical sequence of justification and salvation, “*for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.*” The Greek word for “righteousness” is the same Greek word for “justification”. Paul is saying, belief results in justification, confession results in salvation. There are not two conditions for being justified and going to heaven. A person is justified by faith alone in Christ alone. That is a sure ticket to heaven. But if a person wants to be saved in Romans he will also have to confess. If you doubt this drop down to Romans 10:14-15. What is the sequence? Notice that for a person to call upon Him they must have already believed! “*How can they call upon Him in whom they have not believed?*” The belief, which results in justification must precede calling upon Him to be saved (v 13). If you don’t understand the way Paul talks you can’t understand the Bible! So many people have used Romans 10:13 as a justification verse. It is categorically not! It is written to those who have already believed and been justified! It is heresy to say that a man is justified by calling on the Lord or confessing the Lord. A man is justified by faith alone! Paul has already made this

abundantly clear in Romans 4. So, Romans 10:13 is actually a call by Israel for Jesus to return and rescue her from her enemies in the Tribulation. Jesus said, “*For I say to you [Israel], from now on you [Israel] will not see Me until you say, ‘BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!’*” (Matt 23:39) Here Paul is alluding to that confession and the salvation that will result. It will be a Physical-Deliverance from the Antichrist and his armies. They will have already believed that Jesus is the Messiah and been justified. When they call on Him they will be saved in the sense of Physical-Deliverance (Rom 11:26). I’m trying to show you the breadth of meaning with this word “save” and how easily a passage can be misconstrued to teach something totally contrary to the author’s true intent!

Second, the word “save” can be used of Justification-Deliverance. Justification-Deliverance refers to being saved from the penalty of sin which is eternal hell. It is a legal declaration of God that occurs at the moment of faith alone in Christ alone. Everyone who is saved in this sense will go to heaven. Justification-Deliverance occurs in 2 Tim 1:9, “*who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,*” This is an aorist active participle, a completed action (also cf Acts 16:31; 1 Cor 1:21; 1 Tim 1:15; Tit 3:5).ⁱⁱⁱ

Third, the word “save” can be used of Sanctification-Deliverance. Sanctification-Deliverance refers to being saved from the power of sin which is loss of fellowship with God. When a believer obeys God he enjoys salvation in this sense. For example, Phil 2:12, “*So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling;*” Here’s salvation by human works. But it isn’t salvation from hell. No one’s work will save them from hell. This is salvation from the deadly consequences of sin and the means by which it is obtained is obedience to God (also cf Heb 7:25; Rom 5:9b-10; 1 Cor 15:2; 1 Tim 4:16)

Fourth, the word “save” can be used of Glorification-Deliverance. Glorification-Deliverance refers to being saved from the presence of sin when we step into God’s presence. Technically this is when believers receive a resurrection body. The church will be resurrected at the pre-trib rapture. However, in reality we will not have to wait till that day to be saved from the

presence of sin. When we die our sin nature will be removed immediately so we can be in God's presence. But, we still talk about receiving a resurrection body as a phase of salvation. For example, 1 Thess 5:9, "*For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,*". That's clearly a future salvation and refers to our reception of a glorified body (also cf 2 Tim 4:18)

The question in James is, "What kind of salvation is he talking about in 1:21?" What does it mean to say that the word implanted is able to save your souls? James uses the word "save" five times (James 1:21; 2:14; 4:12; 5:15, 5:20) and if we don't know what he's talking about here we will inevitably mess up every other passage.

We can know for sure that James does not mean "saved from hell" for several reasons. First, he has already said "point of fact" that they have been regenerated (James 1:18). Second, the word is planted in them. If they are not regenerated then what is the word of God doing planted in them? Third, the phrase "save the soul" is never used of being "Saved from hell" anywhere in the Bible. The salvation of the soul is a common theme of the OT (Gen 19:17; 1 Sam 19:11; Jer 48:6; Ps 6:4; 7:2; 68:1; 72:13-14; 86:2; 29:3; 109:31) and the NT (cf John 12:27; Matt 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:27) and it always refers to the salvation of the physical life! It should be translated "save your lives". I searched the LXX, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew OT and found ten verses that use the same Greek words used here in James 1:21 and 5:20. All of them refer to salvation of the physical life. Three of them are very important because they share a similar Greek construction.

Genesis 19:17 When they had brought them outside, one said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you, and do not stay anywhere in the valley; escape to the mountains, or you will be swept away."

1 Samuel 19:11 Then Saul sent messengers to David's house to watch him, in order to put him to death in the morning. But Michal, David's wife, told him, saying, "If you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be put to death."

Jeremiah 48:6 "Flee, save your lives, That you may be like a juniper in the wilderness.

Fourth, since James is the first book in the NT, where do you think he got the phrase “save your souls”? From the OT. Fifth, when Jesus talked of saving the soul he was referring to saving the physical life.

Matthew 16:25 “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

Finally, when we realize that he has already warned of the deadly consequences of sin in James 1:14-15 his meaning is obvious: when a regenerate person puts off sin and receives the word implanted he is in a position to enjoy salvation anew. The kind of salvation the believer will enjoy here is Physical-Deliverance. This meaning is so obvious in James 5:19-20 it is hard to imagine why interpreters have ever come to another conclusion! This is a natural reading since it was well known from the OT that righteous living resulted in a prolonged physical life and unrighteous living in a premature physical death.

Proverbs 10:27 The fear of the LORD prolongs life, But the years of the wicked will be shortened. (also cf Prov 10:16; 12:28; 19:23)

Proverbs 11:19 He who is steadfast in righteousness *will attain* to life, And he who pursues evil *will bring about* his own death. (also cf Prov 21:16; Rom 6:23; James 1:15)

Hopefully you can see that if you get this wrong. If you don’t answer the question “Saved from what?” rightly then you will never be able to understand the controversial James 2:14-26 since it also involves being “saved”.

“Sin is deadly!” And contextually the kind of death in view in James 1:15 is physical and the kind of salvation in view in James 1:21 is also physical. It is the judgment of God on a believer who continues in sin.

The word has been implanted in them. If they are not regenerate then what in the world is the word doing planted in them? That word is able to save their physical lives. Cockamamied schemes of how to avoid persecution by flying under the radar of Christianity will not result in the salvation of their

souls! The longer they try to avoid persecution and trial the longer their lives fill up with all kinds of filth and wickedness. If this continues God will judge them with physical “death” (1:15). To avoid the judgment of God they have to put off the filth and wickedness and in humility receive the word planted within them. Such reception coupled with doing will result in the saving of their lives!

ⁱ I take it that the parable of the four soils as presented by Luke is the clearest. In this parable Jesus is telling us about 1 unbeliever and three believers. It would make little sense to tell us about multiple kinds of unbelievers. Besides, in the parable only one soil did not receive the seed. The other three received the seed and the seed sprouted up! What we have are three believers with three different heart responses to the word of truth. Only the last soil was fruitful but this does not mean the other two were not genuine believers, they most certainly are!

ⁱⁱ Romans 6:23 is often used in gospel presentations as a part of the “Roman Road”. *“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* What most Christians don’t realize is that this verse has nothing to do with being saved from hell. Have you ever looked at the context in verse 22? *“But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.”* They are already freed from sin, enslaved to God and eternal life is viewed as a future goal or outcome. Let’s not confuse what Paul is saying. Paul knows they are believers who possess eternal life but he also knows that there is a fuller enjoyment of it when we obey God and a final attainment of it when we are resurrected. That is why he says to believers, *“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* Paul knows that when a believer sins wages are dealt out and those wages are death. Death here is temporal separation from God which result in loss of enjoyment of life and/or premature physical death. This has nothing to do with spiritual death, eternal separation from God in hell. Of course, the opposite of sinning is obeying and the opposite of death is eternal life which is a free gift. Here it is both the enjoyment of eternal life and the final attainment of eternal life at the resurrection.

ⁱⁱⁱ Note how Romans 5:9 makes justification distinct from being saved. We’ve been taught from childhood a narrow view of salvation, that salvation only has to do with that initial deliverance from hell so we can go to heaven and I’m telling you it’s much more than that. I’m telling you there are believers who will go to heaven one day but still need salvation today. *“Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.”* Now, in this verse the people have been “justified” but they haven’t been “saved”! See, you’re going to have a real problem here if you think justification is a synonym for salvation. They’ve been justified but they still need to be saved.

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