

Self salvation vs Gospel Salvation / Broken Religion 9

Galatians 4:8-9 (ESV) 8 Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. 9 But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?

If you are a Christ-follower - do you ever struggle with why you/I seem to get stuck in cycles of sin? Do you ever struggle with why we often know so little freedom when FREEDOM is what God promises us in Christ?

Before we faith Christ – God says all we know is a life of sin that chooses everyway and anyway but God’s way. It’s all we know. We have no other choice but to choose sin. Sin - any action, attitude, or nature that fails to reflect the image of God. But something happens when we come to God by faith in Christ – we are promised freedom from the slavery to this sin in us – that we are addicted to – if you will. If that is true – and God is telling us it is – why do we know so little freedom. In the next couple of weeks – ch. 5, vs 1 - freedom. Today – why do like slavery? Let me give us a picture for today – that I hope helps us.

As a parent, or aunt or uncle - do you ever question why toddlers (1-3) are so consistently and relentlessly

selfish? *No, because as a parent or aunt we know that’s just who they are! They don’t really have the capacity to be any other way. Cute, cuddly, adorable – yes! Servants, selfless, sacrificial in their love – no! Here’s the picture: Babies - It’s as if they are in a giant room full of mirrors. All they know is this room. There is no idea that on the outside people live differently or can live differently. It’s just all about them and really - they are ok with that. Before Christ in us, this is our life. It’s all about us – and it’s as if we are in a room with no idea there is another life outside this room or that we could live differently. But then Christ comes and rescues us. This is where freedom comes to us. But if it does why do we still often feel trapped or enslaved or stuck in this room? Why? Listen to God thru Paul ... Eph 2:5-6 (ESV) 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, (God) made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, Rom 7:18 (ESV) For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.*

We are living in two places. Theologians call this our position and condition. **Our position:** is with Christ outside the box. We have a new name, family, ID, we are under his authority and in his sure love. **Our condition:** our flesh is still in the box, still addicted to sin. Every day, we choose to live in freedom OR as a slave. In this passage, God thru Paul is going to warn, beg, & plead with us that ...

Living in self-salvation enslaves us, but - Living in gospel-salvation (Jesus) frees us.

01. Living in self-salvation enslaves us ... *to death and the fear that God is never pleased.*
02. Gospel-Salvation frees us ... *to live in the never-ending pleasure of God.* (6)

01. Living in self-salvation enslaves us ... *to death and the fear that God is never pleased.*

Galatians 4:8-20 (ESV) 8 Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. 9 But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?

- **Before faith in Christ** that brings us into relationship with holy God (*known*) – we were enslaved. **Enslaved or addicted to what? – sin. Enslaved by who? - those who are real – but are not God.**

Who are “those”? – “Elementary principles” (could be talking about base ideas or base spirits of this world. But in context with this chapter and specifically vs 8 – enslaved to things that pose as gods. A more precise rendering is – *How can you turn back to being slaves to the weak and worthless base spirits of this world*). That is demonic forces or angels that once worshiped God, but long ago rebelled and now follow one lead rebellious angel – Satan. God is saying – before you trusted Christ – you were enslaved by forces (demonic angels) you didn’t even realize existed. These forces are real but they are not God. Why would you turn back to be enslaved to these forces who just feed your addiction to sin.

It doesn’t matter what we believed before Christ. You might have been: an atheist, a witch doctor, a Hindu, or a believer in long haired hippie Jesus who was just a lover and good teacher – but not God who saved us. It doesn’t matter what we believed before our faith in Christ alone to bring us to God. **Our condition before Christ:** we were unknowingly but deeply addicted to sin and hopelessly enslaved by demonic angels.

Living in self-salvation: returns us to enslavement by demons who feed our addiction to sin.

Most of us, if we walked into a room with demons hanging on the wall, would run, like we saw a demon. God says, when we return to this sin addiction and live in it, we are entering a room full of demons like it’s nothing.

We are forgetting our position with Christ – and choosing to live in that room full of selfish mirrors where sin rules and demons enslave. **That’s crazy – but it gets crazier!**

How are we “turning back” to be enslaved by these spirits who feed our addiction to sin?

10 You observe days and months and seasons and years! 11 I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain.

The Law of God was given as we said last week – to protect and push us toward our need for a Savior. The Law cannot save – it can only protect and push. *The Jews had distorted this and taught self-salvation thru keeping the Law.*

Self-salvation (which is broken religion) is believing I can be fully pleasing to God by my work.

Some Christians who were Jews were trying to convince these non-Jewish Christians – they had to trust Jesus and keep God’s Laws in order to be fully pleasing God. And some in the Galatians churches had believed this and were observing all sorts of laws that had to do with how one was to act on certain days, months, seasons, and years.

This self-salvation can take many forms or shapes - but it always involves our earning God’s pleasure by our work. What does self-salvation look like for you and I?

Self-salvation can look like:

- Earning God’s pleasure – **by doing good things or not doing bad things.**

*Many of us would say, I don’t do this. It’s hard to see when you are practicing self-salvation this way, but here are a few ways to see if you are. 1) When I say – “I don’t deserve this.” I have been practicing self-salvation. Believing what I do earns God’s favor and protection from harm or suffering in this world. **Truth – all Christians will suffer.** 2) When I feel far from God and less secure in His love and my reasoning is “I have not been to church in a while or prayed much.” I am saying, my good actions earn me God’s closeness or faithful love. **Truth - In Christ – God’s Spirit lives in you – you can never get more or less - closer, protected or loved by what we do or don’t do.***

- Earning God’s pleasure - **by punishing ourselves for our sin.**

We punish ourselves in all sorts of ways. 1) Often we don’t pray for a while after some great sin because we believe we aren’t worthy to be heard. 1) We give an excessive offering to make up for our sin. 3) I start serving my wife after I have blown up on her – to get her pleasure back to get God’s back. It’s punishment because I really don’t like doing this, don’t want to do – but I feel like deserve this for what I have done.

- Earning God’s or His people’s pleasure – **by looking like a good Christian.**

In public I speak of God’s love and mercy for all, but in my mind there are people because of how they look, live, or what they believe – I hate and I believe or hope God hates them too. I keep up the appearance –for God, others.

Why does self-salvation have Paul so amped up? **Why the intensity and urgency in God’s warning to us?**

Galatians 4:12,15-17, 19-20 (ESV) 12 Brothers, I entreat you, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You did me no wrong. 15 What then has become of your blessedness? For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me. 16 Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?

17 They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them. 19 my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you! 20 I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

1) Self-salvation is the ultimate act of rebellion toward holy God.

It is the greatest way we defame His name because it is a functional rejection of Jesus, the Son of God – who is the only Savior of all people. It is only by His work that we can have right standing and relationship with God. And even more – He alone has earned us God’s favor, blessing, closeness, mercy, healing, and more.

When we believe God owes us these things – we are saying – we have done something to earn these things. And, in saying that – we reject and mock the work of Jesus to save us. We reject and mock his perfect life, his brutal sin bearing death, and his miraculous resurrection from the dead.

This ultimate act of rebellion – leads us to all other sin because ...

2) Self-salvation enslaves us to demonic forces that feed our sin addiction.

We are not just dabbling in broken religion when we turn back to believing I can earn God’s favor, pleasure, closeness, right standing. We are actually chaining ourselves back to demons we have been freed from and opening ourselves up to all sorts of other sin. **VIDEO - Jarramplas Festival - The Spanish boast some of the weirdest festivals in the world, such as the bull running of Pamplona and the world’s biggest tomato fight, but the Jarramplas Festival definitely tops the list. The annual festival in Piornal, Spain involves hundreds of villagers attacking a man dressed in a devils mask with more than 15,000 turnips. A young man from the village is selected to be the 'Jarramplas' (lit. - the scape goat) and dresses up in a costume made from colorful strips of fabric, donning a devil-like mask with great horns and nose. The Jarramplas then enters the streets, banging his drum to call out the**

villagers who gather in their hundreds with armfuls of turnips to pummel the devil-like figure.

This is cute and fun and ... probably a good reason to go to Spain to party. But – it is an altogether horrible picture of Satan. 1) He is not a color animated character that 2) can be defeated with Turnips. 3) He is deadly.

Satan & his demons have one goal for you - feed your addiction to sin so they can steal, kill, & destroy you & others. Jesus told us in the book of ... **John 10:10 (ESV) The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.**

3rd reason God is urgently warning us.

3) The fruit of self-salvation – is loss, death, and destruction to ourselves and to others.

The purpose of the enemy is always to steal our joy and our peace from us – to kill our hope, our relationships – and to literally destroy the influence of the gospel in us and through us.

Let me give you an example of the slavery I live in and how it heaps death on others. When I am gripped by fear – I have one of three response: 1) I hide and avoid the world. TV or the bed or lust. 2) I put my head down and work hard to make the fear go away. I plow into work like a mad man believing I can somehow save myself from this fear – if I work hard enough. The problem with this – A) is it may work for a moment but the fear always returns with a vengeance. B) I get real judgmental and condemning to all who are not working as hard as I am. And ... C) I teach all those around me that to be afraid is silly or if you are afraid – just plow into it on your own hard work and it will go away. I am pointing others (my wife, kids, co-workers, you to self-salvation and away from Christ. Which by the way is the 3rd option. I will come back to.

Why is turning from self-salvation so hard?

1) Ultimately, we return to self-salvation – *because we are never really sure God is pleased with us.*

If we are not sure of God's full pleasure with us – then we will seek to earn it over & over. What's even worse: living in self-salvation just increases this fear because it lies and says God's pleasure must continually be earned.

2) We are being healed from sin – *but we are still addicted.* **It is still a part of our Condition ... vs Position**

3) It is comfortable – *what we know.* **The box – we have only known the inside. Now we live in both places but when we live in self-salvation we are returning to what is comfortable. It is what we know.**

4) It is pleasing for a moment – *but it brings death.*

Having an attainable target so we can feel good about myself before you or God – is comforting.

Living with an extra measure of security in a world where God's love seems shaky – is good.

Even more – we see the immediate effects of self-salvation. I can do something that makes me feel better.

However, we cannot see the long term slow death – we are heaping on us and others. It often takes years and months to see these effects. It is why 30 years after being immersed in Broken Religion some of your friends and family are done with church and you are done. The death has been slow – but it has murdered your soul. 20

Living in self-salvation enslaves us ... to death and the fear that God is never pleased.

This whole passage is a warning a strong, pleading warning! God doesn't want us to live in this death and fear. But there are two verses that point us to our hope. *That 3rd option when I am gripped in fear.*

Galatians 4:9, 19 (ESV) But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, 19 my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!

As Christ followers, it is here we see what draws us out of our addiction to sin – gospel salvation in Jesus.

As Christ followers, it is here God gives us the ability to experience life outside our old box where we only know sin.

02. Gospel-Salvation frees us ... to live in the never-ending pleasure of God.

Jesus came to do away with this broken religion of self-salvation because it defames God and enslaves us to demons who feed our sin addiction. *So what did do? He gave us gospel-salvation – LIFE! (John 10:10 – I have come to give you life.)*

So – how do we go live in this new life outside of the box of sin and enslavement to demons?

See and embrace the power and majesty of who Jesus is and what He has done.

• **Gospel-salvation originated in the goodness of God & continues because of the goodness of Jesus.**

Vs. 8 – starts with “formerly, you did not know God”. This spoke of our life before faith in Christ. Vs. 9 says, **9 ...now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God,** speaks to us as Christ followers. So he flips the phrase – “did not know God” – “to now that you have come to know God”. And, then he sounds like he is correcting himself – but he is not. **Rather – he is declaring to us our only hope against self-salvation – GOD's goodness! God is good – and he pursued us from eternity past because He was good - not us. And, today God continues to pursue you – His son/daughter – not because your good, but because Jesus perfectly redeemed us.** He pursues you in love – not condemnation. And he pursues ...**19 ... until Christ is formed in you!**

• **Jesus “knows you” fully – and yet is still pleased with you!**

Self-salvation – enslaves us to demons and our sin and ... the fear we will never be fully pleasing to God.
Gospel-salvation – the work of Jesus – frees us to live without having to ever again earn God’s pleasure.

I love my 2 boys and know them about as fully as anyone. Both of them recently have told me uber-encouraging things about God’s impact through me to them that every father only hopes they can hear once in a life time from their son. And, during the same time frame – both have done things that make me say – “really” - and to say I was not pleased is a huge understatement.

My wife knows me about as fully as anyone and is committed to me in love – yet she is not always pleased with me. Just the other day she told me – “there are a A LOT of things you do that I don’t like but I overlook them.” A LOT? In the best of our relationships – where we are committed in love to another – we are never fully pleased with the other person. GOD fully loves you AND is fully pleased with you – why? 1) Low standards? NO! 2) Loves like a grandma – unconditional but she knows she can give you back. NO! 3) The perfect Spirit of Christ is in you.

Jesus – took all your thoughts, actions, and nature (that which makes you addicted to sin) and carried it all to the cross. There everything that is displeasing to holy God – he consumed in His punishment for you. Now – you get his perfect pleasing life in exchange – and because of that you are forever pleasing to God.

To be fully known and yet still fully loved and pleasing to God – only happens in gospel salvation.

• **Jesus is the All-Sufficient Savior who walks hand in hand with us – freeing us to live in the never-ending pleasure of God.**

Jesus alone saves us from the punishment of our sin. But he also saves us from shame, guilt, fear, and hopelessness. Jesus’ salvation - alone gives us his favor, his comfort, his closeness, his peace, his presence, his pleasure. Jesus alone is our All-Sufficient Savior. He completely saves.

Apart from Jesus, we are self-saviors who walk hand in hand with demons – bringing death and fear to us and others. Gospel-Salvation in Jesus frees us ... to live in the never-ending pleasure of God.

Practical steps to walk in freedom from self-salvation:

1) Don’t walk alone toward freedom. (CGs, DNA Groups -training Sunday, 3/19, 9am)

Charles Plumb, 75 missions in Vietnam - Kitty Hawk, 6 yrs in prison. I packed your chute. Whose packing your chute?

2) Ask God to increase you knowing the majesty and power of Jesus as All-Sufficient Savior.

Imagine that – never again wondering if God is pleased, never again having to prove you belong, never again feeling like you can’t pray for a while after you sin (but running to him in prayer in your sin), never again having to carry the unbearable weight of shame and pretend you are ok – when you are not. 14

1) Repent 2) Declare the Jesus as All-Sufficient Savior (Prayer and Song) 3) Communion

Prayer of Repentance – from self-salvation to see the majesty and power of Jesus.

We are going to spend time in prayer and worship and asking God to increase our vision, the reality of Jesus being all-sufficient Savior.