

Life Before and After Salvation: Part A
The So What of Salvation
Introduction

We hear much talk regarding salvation. You might have been asked: are you saved? How would answer that question? Being saved means different things to different people. Some have no interest in "being saved." They would answer by asking: "saved from what and by whom? I am able to take care of myself. I am just fine."

Others might say they belong to a church, go to church, or have been baptized. Others might say they have made a decision for Christ or that they have accepted him. When pushed they might say that they have taken Jesus into their hearts and surrendered to Him. All of these are interesting phrases but are they correct and what do they mean?

The words translated in the Bible as *salvation* and *saved* are pregnant terms and carry the intent of rescue and deliverance. To be saved means that a rescue operation has occurred, deliverance has happened. Notice, each meaning indicates something was done to the person. That something indicates that the person - his whole person including thoughts, desires, and actions - underwent a change. What kind of change? In the surgery suite, on the operating table, a patient may have his bad appendix or gallbladder removed. He was a passive bystander to something done to him. He was operated upon; he was rescued and delivered from a physical illness.

In a similar way, being saved means an operation occurred in the person. However, it was a divine operation done within the person's heart by the Holy Spirit (John 3:3-8; 6:60-64). There are many results of this heart operation one of which is the person is now a believer - a child of God (Galatians 4:4-5) and a new creature in Christ in a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). Radical changes have occurred.

Yet the Bible also teaches that a response to the question, "what must I do to be saved" is necessary. Paul and Silas answered the Philippian jailer's question by encouraging him "to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you and your household will be saved" (Acts 16:31). He did and he was saved.

Salvation is a gift received by the person through the instrument of saving faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). Saving faith does not initiate the gift of salvation. Both are gifts and fit like a glove on the hand. Saving faith is the response to the offer of salvation. The response to the offer is a testimony that the person has been given the gift of saving faith. Scripture uses various terms for saving faith such as believe *on*, believe *in*, or believe *upon* Jesus Christ. By this terminology, Scripture teaches that saving faith is more than mere assent or acknowledgment of a person. Saving faith involves knowledge of and trust in, reliance upon, and dependence on Jesus Christ in contrast to trusting self. The object of faith has changed radically. There is a willful, volitional activity by the person. He trusts the chair will hold him up and proves it when he sits. But he will sit or he would not be a believer!

Life after salvation is a major corollary of the "so what" of salvation. Once saved, what is the big deal? The big deal includes saved from something to something. The believer is saved from the misery of this life and hell eternally. He is saved to a life of God-pleasing as opposed to self-pleasing. As a new creation, the old is gone and the new has come (2 Corinthians 5:17). The meaning of the new creation is not limited to the person but includes every individual believer. The believer is equipped to put off the

habituation of self-pleasing developed while a member of Satan's kingdom and family (Romans 13:12-14; Ephesians 4:22-24). He does this by putting on God-pleasing thoughts, desires, and actions in place of self-pleasing. Self is not on the throne.

Being saved means approaching God, self, others, and daily life in a completely different way. Pleasing-God becomes a modus operandi. Passages such as 2 Corinthians 5:9 (making it your ambition to please God) helps you reevaluate your life situations from God's perspective and respond in a God-honoring manner.

Application:

1. As one saved, how has your thinking about God and self changed? To help you, write out your thoughts about God and self prior to your salvation and since your salvation.
 2. Do the same for desires.
 3. As one saved, how does changed thinking and wanting affect your daily actions?
 4. Put thoughts, desires, and actions together. Repent when any or all of them are self-pleasing and rejoice in the Lord when there is evidence of God-pleasing daily.
- Blessings as you do.

Life Before and After Salvation: Part B The Gospel: Defined

In Christian ministry there is emphasis on preaching the gospel and rightly so. The audiences are varied. From the pulpit the gospel message is preached in the context of the passage. Some groups have emphasized preaching or speaking the gospel to themselves. In that scenario, the individual functions as the preacher and the audience. There is value in knowing and telling the gospel truth because the truth sets you free. Jesus Christ and the Scripture are truth (John 14:6; 17:17).

In a different vein, the term gospel is often mentioned in evangelistic terms. That is, the gospel message is used for “getting people saved.” One other area in which the term gospel is used is in the area of life after salvation. However, this life is often described in terms of using the means of grace such as attending worship services, receiving the sacraments, praying, reading the Bible, and evangelizing. A gospel emphasis is wonderful. However, in order to help people individually and corporately to get victory daily, it is important to define the gospel regarding salvation and life after salvation. It is also important to define how to use the gospel and biblical truth to fulfill God’s original design for mankind. In order to accomplish that goal, we must go back into the eternal counsel of the Godhead. From eternity past, God determined that His people would be in His presence forever in worship and fellowship. Creation and redemption are linked and are the means by which the Triune God accomplishes His original design.

The term gospel means good news or good tidings. Later the term meant God-story – the story about God. Today the word refers to the message that Christ and the prophets before Him and His disciples after Him announced and lived out. In Mark 1:14-15, Jesus proclaimed the gospel as the fulfillment of the times and the coming of the kingdom of God and the call to repent and believe (Matthew 4:17). John the Baptist preached the same message (Matthew 3:2). The fulfillment of the times was a reference to Israel’s expectations. Israel was wrong. She looked for physical deliverance that did not require a heart change. In fact, their religion was “just fine.” The people were their own lawmakers and lawkeepers. They only wanted relief not salvation from the inside-out. The message of the coming of the kingdom is linked with the salvation of God’s people (Luke 4:18-22; Isaiah 61:1-3). Throughout the Bible the coming of the kingdom and the salvation of God’s people are linked to the repentance, faith, and judgment.

Paul further defines the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 and Romans 1:1-4. Paul and Peter preached the fulfillment by Jesus of all Old Testament expectations (Acts 2:16-36; 13:16-41). The gospel message and its proclamation are linked with the Old Testament. The gospel of the kingdom comes through the acts of God in the history of His people (see Romans 4 and Galatians 3-4). The gospel was preached to Abraham (Galatians 3:8). The gospel message is truly the old, old story (Luke 24:25-27).

The good news is always linked to bad news. In explaining the gospel it is helpful to define both the good news and the bad news. The bad news refers to man and mankind’s lost condition. He is blind yet sees but only the things through his senses unaided by biblical truth. The unsaved man and the unsaved world think and desire that which is relevant to their own interests. The unbeliever is deaf to the things of God, but he is attuned to things of self. He is dead and in darkness because his heart is far away

from God. He has no desire to or will to move toward God (Romans 8:5-8; Ephesians 2:1-3). To deny the presence and severity of the bad news is to deny the beauty and awesomeness of the good news. The good news is the continued apostolic message that the Godman Jesus is the Savior of the world who has come to do His Father's will and save a people for the Triune God (1 Corinthians 15:1-8; 1 John 4:1-6).

The gospel then is God's full-orbed message of the what, the why, and the how of salvation and life after salvation. It has been given by His messengers throughout the ages and reached its fulfillment in Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-3). Paul wrote in Romans 1:16-17: *I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for salvation of everyone who believes, first the Jews then the Gentile. For a righteousness from God is being revealed, a righteousness that comes by faith, from first to last just as it is written: "the righteous will live by faith."* This was not a new message. Elsewhere he wrote: *Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the worst* (1 Timothy 1:15). Five times in the Pastoral Epistles Paul used the phrase, *here is a trustworthy saying*, to emphasize a key truth (1 Timothy 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Timothy 2:11; Titus 3:8).

Application:

1. God has preserved His message of salvation for many reasons. Name some.
2. The gospel message is twofold: what are the two sides?
3. What are the key ingredients of the gospel?

Life Before and After Salvation: Part C The Gospel: Trinity

Succinctly, the gospel is the good news of salvation for hell-deserving sinners through the Person and work of Jesus Christ applied by the Holy Spirit. The gospel is good news to be believed; not good deeds to be done. But good deeds will follow once a person is saved. News has to do with something that has already happened; not with something yet to be done. The good news of the gospel is that Christ humbled himself as the Godman, lived perfectly, and died on the cross for guilty and condemned sinners. Christ is not only a crucified Savior. He is a resurrected and seated Savior as the Author and Perfector of saving faith and the Pioneer of entrance into God's presence (Ephesians 1:3; 2:6; Colossians 3:1-3; Hebrews 4:14-16; 6:18-20; 9:11-14).

Christ's sacrificial work as both the Sacrifice and the High Priest is finished but he continues His priestly work of intercession in two venues. First, He returned to heaven as the exalted Son of God (Hebrews 12:1-3). He is seated at the place of prominence and He is always interceding for His people (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25). Please catch the truths: Jesus descended and He ascended. He is enthroned and He is glorified. He is sitting down indicating that His work was complete as Savior. He fulfilled the Triune God's plan to save a people. His finished work is testimony to the integrity of the Trinity. The Triune God will not renege on His promise to save a people for Himself. Second, Jesus continues His priestly work through the Holy Spirit, who among other activities presents the prayers of believers to the throne of God. He energizes and motivates the saints for growth in Christ (Romans 8:26-27).

In 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 Paul described the gospel in terms of a message preached, a message received, and a message acted upon. Paul was making the same gospel message known to them and others. Nothing was new under the sun (Ecclesiastes 1:9; 2:11). In contrast, Paul emphasized that everything was new under the SON. In verse three Paul gives the gospel message according to Scripture. The gospel message is a Savior who died for believers' in their sins and for their sins according to the Scripture. Further, the message speaks of Savior who was buried and rose from the dead. Paul emphasized as did the Scriptures that Jesus lived, died, was buried, and rose. Salvation and resurrection are linked. In Romans 6:9-11, Paul carried this thought into the individual's growth in Christ. In those passages Paul taught that resurrection life begins on this earth at regeneration and union with Christ (John 17:3; Romans 6:9-11). Therefore, the believer is to think forgiven and act forgiven (v.11).

For Paul and all the apostles, the gospel is a message about a Person, Jesus Christ under the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ the Savior lived perfectly and He died perfectly. He is a buried and risen Savior, all according to Scripture. Paul gives the good news but the bad news is linked: mankind was in a horrible condition helpless, hopeless, defiant, debased, and devilish. But unsaved man is blind to his condition and God's answer. There is no good news without bad news. The two are linked in God's redemptive plan.

In 1 Corinthians 1:18 ff, Paul described the gospel as the message of the cross: *For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.* You must remember the context of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. Paul addressed the congregation in order to resolve a number of

serious problems evident in the Church. The situation ridiculed God and the gospel. These problems resulted from self-serving, self-grasping, self-exalting individualism. The people were convinced of their spiritual vitality but factionalism, division, and strife abounded (1 Corinthians 1:11-17). It was in this context that Paul brought biblical, gospel truth. Throughout the letter, Paul used a contrast motif: true theology as expressed in a proper understanding of the cross versus the wisdom of the world. The letter can be considered as an application of truth given in the context of a contrast: the counterfeit wisdom of the world or the wisdom of the cross which is considered foolishness to unbelievers.

The gospel preached and heard is the presentation of God Himself as He gives Himself in His Son by the Holy Spirit. It always demands and gets a response. Gospel truth heard and applied was necessary if the Corinthian people were to honor God individually and corporately.

Application:

1. What is the value for hearing and knowing the gospel?
2. What does one need to hear it correctly and apply it in his or her life?
3. Paul contrasted gospel truth with what? Biblical truth influences a person's thoughts, desires, and actions. How would knowing and applying gospel truth resolve the problems in the Corinthian church (see 1:11-17)?

Life Before and After Salvation: Part D The Gospel: Saved From God the Judge

In order to correctly understand the gospel message, we must determine what sinners are saved from and what they are saved to. The answers link the bad news and the good news. The foregoing sentences assume the presence of sin, sinners, and a Savior who is willing and able to accomplish the redemptive goal of salvation. They also assume a present journey and an eternal destiny for every person.

Every person is conceived and born into a state of condemnation, guilt, misery, and trouble. The sinner remains in that condition unless something supernatural happens. Sometimes the sinner continues in his rebellion against God. As a result there is misery in this life and hell eternally (Romans 5:12-14; 6:23). The sinner may recognize that he is “not right” and seek to *save* himself or he seeks some help, a nudge, from someone or something. In either case, he is his own savior and is in danger. The person who preaches and practices personal lawkeeping to earn the favor or acceptance of God is living a false gospel. Paul cursed these preachers (Galatians 1:6-9). Those who live by this creed have accepted the false gospel.

Salvation involves many aspects. The doctrine of salvation incorporates biblical and theological terms such as redemption, reconciliation, deliverance, rescue, and escape. All of the words are predicated on the condition of the person: misery, trouble, condemnation, and guilt. From these and more the individual is delivered. The sinner has been acted upon by the Holy Spirit (John 3:3-8; 6:60-64). The Holy Spirit is the prime mover. The saved sinner recognizes his true condition as he exercises the gift of saving faith. He recalls, remembers, and mediates on the gospel message of Jesus and John the Baptist and repents and believes (Mark 1:15; Matthew 3:2; 4:17). Fruits of repentance and growth in Christ are continuations of the initial heart change through enabling or sanctifying grace (Matthew 3:8-10; Luke 3:10-14; Acts 2:36-39; 2 Corinthians 5:9, 14-15; Philippians 2:12-13; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-3; Hebrews 12:14).

Salvation is comprehensive in a number of ways. There is the initial heart change (regeneration) and a change in family and kingdom membership (adoption) . There is a life lived as a believer (progressive sanctification). The individual as a whole person – thoughts, desires, and actions - is saved. As a result of the heart change he will begin to think God’s thoughts, desire what God desires, and obey not simply out of duty but out of privilege and blessing. In another sense the comprehensiveness of salvation is pictured by the answers to these questions: who is saved, from what is he saved **AND** what is he saved to. The sinner is saved from God, sin, himself, and Satan. He is saved to God for God by God.

First, the sinner is saved from God by God because God is the just Judge of His creation (Genesis 18:25; Psalm 62:12; Matthew 3:10; 8:12; 24:51). His very nature of holiness, purity, and justice demands that He right all wrongs and punish sinners (2 Thessalonians 1:5-10). He acts this way in part to protect and honor His name – He is a jealous God (Exodus 20:5; 34:7-8, 14; Deuteronomy 4:24). It is important to remember that God saves sinners as Judge for Him. He saves sinners as Redeemer by Him. He saves sinners as Father to Him. In eternity past, the Triune God determined that the Father gifted a people to Jesus (John 6:37-43; 17:1-5). Jesus would live a perfect life and take the death penalty in place of the sinner – as his substitute (Romans 3:21-26; 2 Corinthians

5:21). All mankind deserves the full wrath of God and hell. All mankind deserves the cross NOT as payment but as penalty and justice.

Perfection in terms of active (perfect lawkeeping) and passive (death on the cross as the perfect sacrifice) obedience is the key in redemption. No mere man is or practices perfection. Prior to the cross while on earth, Jesus kept the law perfectly and completely. He ALWAYS pleased His Father. Jesus went to the cross and stayed on the cross as the Perfect Sacrifice in place of the sinner (1 Peter 1:18-19). He completed His Messianic work and declared it complete-done (John 19:38). Jesus went to hell on the cross. He fulfilled the good Law's righteous requirement of death to hell-deserving sinners (Romans 7:12; 1 Timothy 1:8-11). He satisfied the justice of God (Romans 3:21-26). As a result, God removed His wrath toward His people. The enmity and hostility of God the just Judge toward the sinner was removed as far as the east from the west - totally and completely never to return again (Psalm 103:8-12; Romans 5:10-11; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21). Judicial forgiveness is described in the same manner: the person's sins are removed completely and totally for the believer's ledger such that God declares him not guilty (Isaiah 38:17; 43:25; 44:22; Jeremiah 31:34; Micah 7:19; Psalm 51:1, 9; 103:12; Romans 8:1).

The redemptive story is an amazing story of divine origin. Human logic could not and did not conceive of the Triune's God redemptive plan. Fallen man who suppresses and resists the truth of God's Being and power, rejects God (Romans 1:18-20). Any other way is false and a different gospel. Synonymously, man rejects the truth about himself. Therefore, unsaved men reject God and His plan of redemption.

Second and as a corollary, the sinner is saved from something to something. The sinner is saved to God for God by God. The Bible pictures the concept of *saving-to* in several ways. The now-believer has been rescued from Satan's family and kingdom; he has been transferred to God's family and kingdom (Acts 26:18; Colossians 1:13). He has a firm foundation and an inseparable relationship with Christ so that He is God's forever. God is his Father and Jesus is his Brother as his Redeemer. The believer's one purpose in the kingdom is to grow in Christlikeness as he helps advance the kingdom and grow the Church. Salvation is an Intratrinitarian activity as given by Paul Ephesians 2:18 and 3:12. Believers are saved to God, in Christ, by the Holy Spirit.

Application:

1. Summarize the gospel message.
2. What do you learn about Christ and about mankind?
3. What is your understanding of God, you, and the gospel message? What difference does it?

Life Before and After Salvation: Part E
The Gospel: Saved From Sin's Power

To reiterate every sinner is saved from God, sin, himself, and Satan. The subject of the previous blog was saved from God, to God, by God, and for God. Saved from sin has a number of facets. It includes being saved from the power and tyranny of sin and from a previous pattern of sinning.

By way of reminder, the Bible emphasizes a marked concern with sin and sinners. In fact, the Bible radically proclaims the fact of sin, denounces it, and announces consequences of unrepentant sin and God's judgment. One of the primary purposes of Christ's mission was to deal with sin and sinners. Sin is what creates the problem between God and mankind (Isaiah 59:1-2). It is impossible to separate sin and the sinner.

Man was born a sinner as a result of God's judgment upon Adam because of his first sin. As a result all sinned in Adam (Romans 5:12-14; 6:23). As a result, every person of ordinary generation is conceived and born in sin, and as a result he sins (Psalm 51:5; 58:3; Genesis 8:21). These are universal truths that if missed have dire consequences for this life and the next.

Scripture teaches that the sinner is saved from sin. Christ died for sins/our sins (Matthew 1:21; John 1:29; Gal. 1:4; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 John 2:2; 4:10; Revelation 1:5). Yet we know that sin is not hell – sinners are. Scripture also teaches that Christ died for sinners (Mark 2:17; Luke 5:31-32; 19:10; Romans 5:8; 1 Timothy 1:15). What does it mean that the sinner is saved from sin? Consider these several nuances. Saved from sin and saved from sinning are different. Sinners do sin even saved ones. But saved sinners don't continue in sin as a patterned lifestyle (1 John 3:6, 9; 4:10). Moreover, the believer is steeped in several truths. If the believer does sin, he knows that there is no condemnation from God as Judge (Romans 8:1). He also knows that there has been, is, and will be Fatherly forgiveness (1 John 1:7-9). If he sins, and he will, he knows attempting to that forgive himself is competing with God. It is saying that God's redemptive plan did not deliver and the person must do the job that God failed to do.

Scripture also teaches that Christ died for sinners (Mark 2:17; Luke 5:31-32; 19:10; Romans 5:8; 1 Timothy 1:15). What does it mean that the sinner is saved from sin? Consider these several nuances. Saved from sin and saved from sinning are different. Sinners do sin, even saved ones. But saved sinners don't continue in sin as a patterned lifestyle (1 John 3:6, 9; 4:10). Moreover, the believer is steeped in several truths. If the believer does sin, he knows that there is no condemnation from God as Judge (Romans 8:1). He also knows that there has been, is, and will be Fatherly forgiveness (1 John 1:7-9). If he sins, and he will, he knows attempting to forgive himself (if that was possible!) is competing with God. It is saying that God's redemptive plan malfunctioned and Jesus is no Savior. The person must do the job that the Triune God failed to do.

We need to be careful. The word sin can be used as a noun or verb. The word sinner is always a noun. Man sins because he is a sinner as described above. Sin as a verb indicates that the sinner has missed the mark, crossed over the boundary, or is out of step with God's standard. Ethically, sin is an act of omission or commission in relationship to God's law and to God (1 John 3:4; 5:17). Thus, sin is always relational and vertical. It is *Coram Deo*; every sin is against God and may or may be against another person. Sin is always legal and judicial.

Sin is an inner-man (heart) generated whole-person activity of revolt against God. It is not simply an ethical act. It is more than the absence of good; it is the presence of evil. Rebellion is what Adam did in the Garden and that is what every person does when he sins. From another perspective, sin is Satan's hatred of God manifested in the life of an individual. Such is the influence of membership in Satan's family and kingdom. Sin is the display of the satanic influence in the world and within the person including the believer. Sin is much worse than any human logic can perceive. The cross affirms these facts.

In addition, saved from sin and saved from sinfulness are not synonymous. By sinfulness I mean the continued bent, inclination, and orientation that every saved sinner has due to his prior membership in Satan's kingdom and family. Every person is born with the nature – capacity, bent, inclination, and or orientation - to serve self and oppose God.

Sin is much worse than any human logic can perceive. Its essence is anti-god which results in self-pleasing: for me, to me, by me. As a noun sin can mean a governing principle such as in Romans 6:14: *For sin shall not be your master because you are not under law but grace.* Here Paul perceives sin as an enslaving power or influence. Sin is thus personified. Certainly it is more than a principle or an abstraction. Sin is real. The sinner is real. God's wrath is real. Hell is real. The cross is real. Paul's point is that sin functions as an operating principle for the whole person. In verses 16-19, Paul speaks of two kinds of slavery: that to unrighteousness and that to righteousness. Paul presents the unbeliever as a sinner and one who is under the influence – either satanic influence that leads to self-pleasing, antigod thoughts, desires, and actions or Holy-Spirit wrought and directed activity in the believer which results in Christlike growth and God-pleasing thoughts, desires, and actions. Paul captures this contrast in such passages as Galatians 2:20 and 5:16-18.

Application:

1. In the Bible sin is both a noun and a verb. What is the significance?
2. Give some characteristics of sin.
3. How do you know sin is a big deal?

Life Before and After Salvation: Part F
The Gospel: Saved From Sin's Power and Penalty

The believer is saved from the power of sin but not from sinning. The saved sinner is able not to sin in principle but in practice he still does. The believer is saved from sin but not sinfulness which is summarized by the tendency to and acts of self-pleasing that continue in his life.

What is sin's power? It is the patterned desire to please self and thereby compete with God as His enemy and as a rebel. Sin holds a person in bondage. Sin and its resultant lifestyle offers much but delivers little (Psalm 36:1-2; Proverbs 5:21-22; 13:15b). Unless there is a supernatural change from the inside-out, the sinner persists always returning to the vomit of self-pleasing (Proverbs 26:11). Self remains on the throne to the degree that it can as if it deserves to be there.

When the Bible teaches that the believer has been saved from the power of sin, it refers to the bondage of sin as an operating principle, a driving force, a lifestyle patterned after Satan as a legacy from membership in Satan's family and kingdom (Ephesians 2:1-3). Yes sin is more than that as discussed in the previous blog, but it at least that which drives a person to please self in lieu of God and others. Sin is anti-Matthew 22:37-40. .

What gives sin its power? It is the law and death (1 Corinthians 15:56; Hebrews 2:14-15; 9:27). Actually is it the desire to make and keep one's own law in one's strength. Post-fall, it includes misinterpreting the true nature and purpose of God's law (Exodus 20:18-21; Romans 5:19-21; Galatians 3:19). Ignorantly and arrogantly, man seeks to be his own lawmaker and lawkeeper. This is inherent in all men post-fall. Law from whatever source calls for lawkeeping. The person will either establish other laws such as the Pharisees did. Their laws were not God's law, but they were *keep-able* in the person's own strength. Their mindset was: who needs a personal Savior when I have me!

The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law and personal lawkeeping. If there is no law, there is no required lawkeeping and there would be no death. God did not design Himself in that way. There is Intratrinitarian unity, functionality, and lawkeeping. God did not design man without law within him and outside of him (Romans 1:18-20; 2:14-15). Man by nature is a covenant being, a worshipper, and a lawkeeper. The issue for every person is which law and by whose law keeping? However, God's law is good and for a good purpose (Exodus 20:18-21; Romans 7:7-12, 13; 1 Timothy 1:8-11). Try as a person might perfect obedience to God's law is impossible. In response a person will generate more efforts to obey, establish a new law that can be kept by him, or depend on Christ's personal lawkeeping.

God's purpose for the law is also given in Romans 5:20-21 and Galatians 3:19. The law has a condemning function to drive people to Christ and His lawkeeping. The law has a knowledge function, a constraining function, and a humbling function. It points out who God is, who man is, and what sin is. It shows sin's deception and the sinner's sinful view of self and God.

Sin as a verb and as a noun is an ever-present reality. There was physical death prior to Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. Thus the sting of death and the power of sin have also been a present reality post-fall. Personal lawkeeping by sinners has never been God's design for salvation. God require perfect obedience from Adam prior to the fall. As given in Romans 5:20-21 and Galatians 3:19, the purpose of the law was never for salvation. It

functioned as “pointer.” It pointed to the way of salvation through a perfect Lawkeeper who kept the law to its fullest. The law pointed to Christ.

A person will either establish laws other than God’s such as the Pharisees did. Their laws were not God’s law but they were *keep-able* in their own strength. Who needs a personal Savior when we have ourselves? The sting of death is sin. If no law and no required lawkeeping, then there would be no sin. If no sin, then there would be no death. The power of sin is the law. Man by nature is a covenant being, a worshipper, and a lawkeeper. The issue for every person is which law, by whose lawkeeping, and for what reason?

The power of sin is the law and its call for lawkeeping. Moreover what lies behind lawkeeping is crucial. Every person is aware that there is a God who they will meet at the Judgement seat. An atheist can deny this fact verbally but the Bible teaches that everyone must and will give an account (Matthew 12:33-36). God set eternity in the heart of man (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

At salvation the power of sin as an operating principle or an influence has been broken. The believer has been saved from his bad heart. Now indwelt by the Holy Spirit, the believer does have the capacity to please God in all areas of life – thoughts, desires, and actions. The believer has the capacity not to sin. There is a radical transformation! What he has is the capacity and orientation to please God. This fact does not eliminate sinning. The believer is a saved sinner such that he will sin.

Moreover, the believer has been saved from the penalty of sin. He has been saved from the condemning function of the law (Romans 7:1-6; 8:1-3). At salvation the now-believer renounced his allegiance to self and his own lawkeeping. He professed his trusting and resting on Christ’s lawkeeping. Therefore, even though miseries in this life continue the believer is free to trust, hope, and obey and enjoy his God (Genesis 3:8-10; Psalm 34:8; Proverbs 13:15; Romans 5:12-14; 2 Corinthians 5:9, 14-15; Galatians 2:20; 1 John 5:3-4). Life is simplified so that pleasing God becomes an ever-increasing present reality and blessing (Roman 6:9-10; 1 John 3:1-3).

The believer is set free from the condemnation, guilt, and shame that came from God’s judgment of Adam’s first and the sinner’s present sins. The law has a convicting function. Aware of his sinfulness and even sinning thoughts, desires, and actions, the believer knows that there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. The believer knows and trusts that he has been saved from his bad record (Romans 3:21-26; 8:1). This was possible because Jesus took upon himself the now-believer’s record of enmity and rebellion against God. Jesus was considered guilty and paid the price of hell on the cross. Jesus paid it all. Yet the true believer never uses his freedom as an excuse to sin (verb) or to have sin be his guiding light (sin as noun) – see Romans 6:1, 15.

Sin is associated with separation from God. However, the Bible teaches that God is no longer separated from the now-believer. God took the initiative to place on Christ the bad record of every now-believer. He reconciled himself to the believer as only He can as a true Promise-maker and Promise-keeper (Romans 5:10-11; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21; Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 1:20-21).

Application:

1. The believer has been freed from the power of sin, the penalty of sin, and the condemnation of sin. How does that freedom influence you daily as you consider your thoughts, desires, and actions?
2. What is the power of sin and how does lawkeeping fit into the concept of sin's power?
3. What is the penalty of sin?
4. What is the joy of the new freedoms in Christ? Be specific.

Life Before and After Salvation: Part G
The Gospel: Saved From Self and from Satan

Let me complete the thought that the sinner is saved from sin. Yes he is saved from its power and its penalty. But the believer is not saved from its practice. The saved sinner is able not to sin in principle but in practice he still does. The believer is saved from sin but not sinfulness which is summarized as the tendency and acts of self-pleasing that continue throughout his earthly life.

A question arises: is the sinner saved from the presence of sin? Again terms need clarification. Is the question referring to sin as a verb? In other words, is the believer saved from sinning? The answer is no. The believer will continue to please himself. Is the question referring to continued corruption in the believer's heart? The usual answer is yes, there is remaining corruption in the whole person. Even though the believer is a new creation living in the new creation ushered in by Christ's first coming, the believer still sins (2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 John 1:8-10 – 2:1).

The coming of Christ and the new kingdom is much bigger than an individual believer. That fact should be a blessing, comfort, and encouragement to every believer. Jesus' coming ushered in a new world order – the new creation (John 1:4-5). Jesus' coming was fulfillment of the promised and long-awaited Messiah, who would lead His people out of bondage and oppression into a new existence. Jesus' coming changed the whole world order. The new order includes salvation and life after salvation.

The believer has been regenerated – given a new heart and a new nature. He is a believer because he has been regenerated (John 3:3-8). Also he has positional holiness – he has been set apart by God for God (1 Corinthians 1:2; Acts 20:32; 26:18). According to Romans 6:9-10 and Romans 8:30, resurrection life and glorification begin now – in this present life - for the believer. There is a future fulfillment, but eternal life begins on this earth. Yet we all know that the believer – you and me - still sins. In that case, sin is a verb and an ethical act. Sin as a noun, an operating principle of self-pleasing, continues until the believer goes home. On earth, the believer dies more and more to self and sinfulness as he lives as the new creature he is in the new creation.

To repeat: first, the sinner is saved from God; second, the sinner is saved from sin's power and penalty, Third the sinner is saved from himself. Left to himself and his own resources the unbeliever thinks, desires, and acts as if he is his own god and this is his world. He lives the lie. He exchanged truth – the reality that God is Creator and Controller – for the lie that man is number one and God does not exist or is not the Being that the Bible teaches that He is (Romans 1:18-23). Proverbs 4:18-19 provides a contrast: *The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining brighter till the full light of day; but the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.* Unfortunately, for a time believers can still function in the same manner as an unbeliever. There is remaining sinfulness and the habituation of self-pleasing. Self-pleasing as a pattern developed during membership in Satan's kingdom and family. Habituation continues and must be replaced. You might say the believer must be re-habituated! The unbeliever is destined to a life of darkness and deadness thinking all the while that he is *top dog* and making headway to somewhere. Left to himself he has no use for God and does not seek him. In reality, his life is one of discontent, dissatisfaction, and misery all the while denying the reality of his condition.

One of the beauties of salvation is the reality that the truth sets you free. The believer does not live a patterned lifestyle of denying truth and exchanging the truth for a lie. Rather he denies himself by denying self-pleasing. He is busy being enamored with and enjoying God. His desire is to honor God by pleasing Him thereby imitating Christ.

Fourth, the sinner is saved from Satan. 1 John 5:18 expresses this fact: *We know that anyone born of God does not continue in sin. The one who was born of God keeps him safe and the evil one cannot harm him.* Although satanic influence remains in the believer, the believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit and not Satan. The believer's heart is exclusive the Holy Spirit's dominion. Satan and the Holy Spirit don't co-exist. Man, believer and unbeliever, has only one nature. The saved sinner was a member in Satan's family and kingdom. Membership in that kingdom had devastating results. It consumed and motivated the unbeliever daily. Within every believer, there remains a legacy of self-pleasing which is manifested by the mantras of *I want* and *I deserves*. Satan is the master of this lifestyle. But the believer has been removed from and transferred into God's family and kingdom (Colossians 1:13). Even this removal does not remove remaining sinfulness and habituation of thoughts, desires, and action that are anti-God and pro-self. At salvation, even though the believer has a new heart (John 3) and is a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17), satanic influence remains but doesn't not have to control him. At times believers deny this fact of control because habits are hard to break. They require grace! A radical supernatural change began salvation and the believer continues to change into Christlikeness. However, all the while he is aware of the war within (Galatians 5:16-18).

Application:

1. Write out your view of the bad and the good news.
2. Personalize the bad news: how does it fit you as an unbeliever and now as a believer? Write out how the bad news is really bad.
3. Do the same with the good news and write out how the good news is really good.
4. Consider how you functioned as a member of Satan's family and kingdom with all your self-pleasing tendencies and activities.
5. Consider how you are to function as a believer and member of God's kingdom and household.
6. Consider the fact that unless God saves you, what awaits you in this life and the next life is the bad news. If God has saved you, what awaits you in this life and the next is summarized in the good news. Write out your response.

Life Before and After Salvation: Part H
The Gospel and Progressive Sanctification
Saved to God, for God, by God

Not only is the sinner saved from God as Judge; from sin's penalty and power; from himself; and from Satan, the sinner is saved to something. He is saved to God, for God, by God. Accordingly, he properly praises God as Paul did in Romans 11:33-36. Paul had completed expounding God's redemptive plan in terms of:

- Persons - the Father who planned, the Son who purchased, and the Spirit who applied the benefits of Christ's mediatorial work;
- persons – salvation came to both Jews and Gentiles;
- Means: salvation and life after salvation came by grace alone, both saving and sanctifying, and through faith alone.

In chapters 1-3 of the book of Romans, Paul had set forth mankind's (both Jew and Gentile) depravity, deadness, defiance, and darkness – the bad news, really horrible news. Beginning in the later part of chapter 3 though chapter 8 or some say chapter 11, Paul expounded the good news about a great God. The Triune God had saved a people for Himself, both Jew and Gentile!

In response, Paul burst out with a doxology – a type of *Gloria Excelsis Deo*: glory to God in the highest (Luke 2:14). Verse 36 of Romans 11 reads: *For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever amen.* Paul reflected back on mankind's condition and God's wisdom, knowledge, power, love, and justice. He was in awe personally, corporately, and cosmically. His logical response was to glorify his God.

The believer has been supernaturally removed from Satan's kingdom and family and he was placed into God's family and kingdom (Colossians 1:13). This is a remarkable and majestic transfer to say the least (John 3:3-8; 6:60-64). The believer is God's. He has been saved by God to God – he is a member of God's family and kingdom; and he has saved for God – as His child he is grow in Christlikeness and pleasing the Father.

The believer is now a God-pleaser in principle and develops more and more as a God-pleaser. The believer is called into God's service and is equipped for that work. The believer is to "work out" his salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12-13). The working out of one's salvation is called progressive sanctification. Progressive sanctification is another term for life after salvation.

Believers are saved as a testimony to God's love, mercy, and trustworthiness. The believer's salvation – both regeneration and growth in grace – are truths to be known, enjoyed, and lived out to the praise and glory of God. Moreover, God saves/saved individuals and corporately. God's Church, as well as individual believers, is to be growing in Christlikeness (Ephesians 2:11-16; 4:11-14).

Paul knew himself (1 Timothy 1:12-16 – chief of sinners; Ephesians 3:8 – least of the saints; 1 Corinthians 15:9 – least of the apostles). For Paul, his salvation was "out-of-this-world." It was unbelievable. His view of salvation linked the bad news – man's total depravity and enmity for God – and the good news – the wisdom, power, love, mercy, and justice of the Triune God. God saved not simply sinners but His enemies. Paul took his salvation seriously, in part, because he God took it seriously. God gave Himself and

of Himself. He did what no Being can or desired to do or will do (Romans 5:6-10). Paul knew that his God was an awesome God which is truly an understatement.

Paul was a Hebrew of Hebrews (Philippians 3:3-6). He was steeped in the sacrificial ritual system detailed in the book of Leviticus. Daily the head of the family would bring a choice male animal without defect. The offering cost the person and his family. From the heart, the offering was the best the family had to offer. The man would slit the throat, blood would be spilled, and the high priest would complete the offering as a sacrificial atonement. Clean and unclean would not mix. The offering was the Lord's, for the Lord, and to the Lord who deserved the best. Once a year, the privileged high priest took the blood of the animal – bull and ram – and presented it as a sin offering in the Holy of Holies (Leviticus 16). Paul understood the holy/clean-unholy/unclean motif. He understood the cost to enter into the presence of God.

Today, on this side of the cross, believers have received the once-and-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ. They have been bought and are no longer their own. The ransom has been paid in full. The believer is God's. Now the believer offers himself, not a dead animal to God (Romans 12:1-2). This offering is to be daily or better – 24/7. God sets the rules, gives insight and encouragement through the Holy Spirit by the Word, and gives sustaining grace so that the believer develops as Christ did – pleasing the Father. Following in Christ's steps is logical because the believer is not his own and Jesus is the only person the Father was well-pleased (Matthew 3:17; 17:5).

Saved for God is summarized as becoming more like Christ in thought, desire, and action for God's sake and glory. God is most glorified when His people are becoming more like Christ simply because God is pleased. The believer has God as his Father; Christ the Lord of lords and King of kings is the believer's Brother; and the Holy Spirit is the believer's constant companion who has poured truth and love into the believer's heart (Romans 5:5; 2 Corinthians 5:5). As a result, the believer puts on Christ one thought by one thought, one desire by one desire, and one action by one action daily. Becoming more like Christ means growing in knowledge and grace (2 Peter 3:18). Jesus learned and practiced trusting and obeying the Father in the problem for God's glory and the good of His people (Hebrews 5:8). So, too, will His people.

Application:

1. What does the phrase, saved to God for God mean to you? What is its significance?
2. The trilogy: saved by God, to God, for God – focuses on salvation and life salvation. Explain.
3. Saved for God involves growth in Christlikeness and producing the fruit of the Spirit. How are you doing in these areas?

Before and After Salvation: Part I
The Gospel and Progressive Sanctification
Saved From Self, Satan, and Hell

The sinner has been saved from God, sin, and also self. Left to his own resources the sinner acting as if he is his own god in his own world is destined to a life of darkness and deadness thinking all the while that he is top dog. Left to himself he will search and not find the living God. His life will be one of discontent, dissatisfaction, and misery all the while denying those facts.

The sinner has also been saved from Satan. The unsaved sinner was a member in Satan's family and kingdom. Membership in that kingdom left a legacy of self pleasing – manifested by *I want* and *I deserve* - characterizes Satan's family and kingdom. Satan is the master of this lifestyle. The believer has been rescued from Satan's family and kingdom (Colossians 1:13-14). Even a supernatural removal from Satan's kingdom leaves its mark: habituation in thoughts, desires, and action that are anti-God and pro-self. At salvation the believer has a new heart (John 3) and is a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17), but satanic influence remains. However, it does not control even though patterned sinfulness is a lifelong companion. The sinner is no longer in like his father the devil (John 8:44). He has been set free by truth – Jesus Christ, the Word, and the Holy Spirit (John 14:6; 17:17; 16:13).

Briefly, the believer is saved from hell. Consider these four descriptive words regarding hell. Hell is factual; Jesus teaches more on the subject of hell than He does heaven. Hell is final, fearful, and fair (Revelation 20:10-15; Matthew 13:42; 22:13; 23:33; Hebrews 9:27; Romans 14:10,12; 2 C 5:10; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10; Luke 16:19-31). It is a reality as is heaven. It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10:26-31)

The sinner is saved to God, for God, by God. He is saved from sin, self, and Satan. He is now a God-pleaser in principle. The believer is a member of God's family and he has been called into God's service. He is well-equipped for the work of living as a child of the King. His resources include a new heart (regeneration), a new standing and record (justification), status (adopted into God's family), resurrection life that begins at salvation (John 17:3; Romans 6:9-10), and the indwelling Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9-11). Given these gifts and provisions, the believer is privileged to "work out" his salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12-13).

The working out of one's salvation is called progressive sanctification which has been a subject in a previous blog. The believer is to die daily to self, Satan, and sin. He puts off what he wants in place of what God wants. In this way, he imitates Christ. He grows in Christlikeness looking forward to the race itself and especially the winner's crown. He endures because Christ endured (Hebrews 6:18-20; 12:1-3).

Consider freedom from bondage according to the following chart:

- Bondage to the "right now" sensual philosophy of life characterize by pleasure, possessions, position, and power now: Psalm 37 and 73; Genesis 25:29-34.
- Bondage to self-pleasing which never ends. The drive to get for self only gets stronger and more compelling: John 4:31-34; 2 Corinthians 5:9,14-15; Hebrews 11:24-26;

- Bondage to a complicated life which is denied because falsehood has many faces but truth has one: Proverbs 5:21-22; 13:15b; 26:11; Matthew 11:28-30.

Application:

1. Write out the bad and the good news in terms of bondage and freedom.
2. Personalize your bad news. How have you and how do you function as a member of Satan's family and kingdom with all your self-pleasing tendencies and activities.
3. Write out the good news and personalize how the good news is really good in specific ways in your life. In order to help you, consider the fact that unless God saves you, what awaits you in this life and the next life is bondage and misery.
4. Once saved life is simplified and your life lived for and in Christ is a blessing, privilege as well as a duty. See 1 John 3:1-3 and 5:3-4.