

† **Could this really be true?**

- **Conversation with a friend I'll never forget. From legalistic religious environment where concepts of God's love, and our worth and acceptability to God, was based on our MORAL PERFORMANCE- how well we met God's expectations. Friend was believer, but living with condemnation- of themselves, but also convinced of how disappointed God was...**
- **Together, started looking at NC teaching about God's GRACE- specifically, how God's love for us, and our worth to God, WHO WE ARE IN RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD- NOT function of how well we meet God's expectations.**
- **Radical truth that IN CHRIST, we are FREE from religious pressure of PERFORMANCE BASED ACCEPTANCE with God. SET FREE from the bondage of measuring our worth by how well we keep all the rules- set free from trying to live by the motivation of LAW. We looked at scriptures like...**

Romans 7:6 *But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.*

Romans 3:21-24 *But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²² This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*

- **THIS IS the amazing truth that GOD HAS JUSTIFIED US- made us completely RIGHT WITH HIM- RIGHTEOUS, by FAITH... and by faith alone.**
- **Looked at Romans 1:17**

For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

- **Told friend- this means now, with your brokenness, questions, pain, struggles... because of your faith in Christ, you are RIGHTEOUS. FULLY FORGIVEN- CHILD OF GOD LOVED BY GOD, HOLY TO HIM... New Creation- HE IS YOUR LIFE- and NOTHING can cause God to love you less or be less present to you.**
- **Friend stopped me, holding back tears- STOP! You have to look me in eye and tell me this is TRUE... If not really true, then I don't want to hear it... because this is so NEW... it's hard for me to believe.**
- **CHURCH! Full, unfettered message of Gospel- and God's invitation to enter into FREEDOM of NEW LIFE in Christ- this message almost defies belief, even when it is told (which it often isn't)**
- **Hard to believe because it stands in contrast to a great paradigm life teaches us- our value, worth, acceptability- to others and to God- is based upon our PERFORMANCE. It is something we ACHIEVE.**
- **This strategy is a certain formula for either PRIDE and self-righteousness on one hand, or BURNOUT our shame on the other. AND YET, it is HARD to let it go, to believe there could be another way.**
- **Difficult because to let go of performance based acceptance requires what our human nature MOST DOESN'T WANT TO DO- SURRENDER. BY FAITH, surrender to God that we can't make life work on our own- that we don't have the wisdom to know what is right and**

best and good- and we yield authority- trusting in His goodness, mercy, and Grace, we yield to him our most cherished idol...CONTROL.

- **BUT when we take that step of faith, scripture proclaims that God accomplishes something that is even greater than being forgiven- something that all of our efforts to measure up to God's moral law & expectations could ever do. He sets us FREE.**
- **THAT MESSAGE is resounding theme of NT/NC, and heart of Paul's writing. And in ACTS 13... we see the first glimpse of this truth- of a freedom you wouldn't believe, even if someone told you.**
- **PRAY HERE!**

✠ **Back on the road! Next stop, Psidian Antioch**

- **ALLRIGHT! Left off with PB&J on Cyprus, with the proconsul AMAZED at the teaching about the Lord. Pick the story up in Chapter 13, verse 13**

¹³ From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ From Perga they went on to Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down. ¹⁵ After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the leaders of the synagogue sent word to them, saying, "Brothers, if you have a word of exhortation for the people, please speak."

- **They take the short trip north from Cyprus to mainland (Turkey), about 125 miles, then another 100 miles north to the city of PSIDIAN ANTIOCH**
- **They found local synagogue, and when it came time for Sabbath gathering, they joined. Normal activity in Jewish Synagogue was to read from LAW (Mosaic) and Prophets, then ask someone to share a word of teaching or encouragement.**
- **Leaders of Synagogue must have known Paul was a teacher- a rabbinical scholar no less- so they invite them to give an EXHORTATION. EXHORT means to emphatically teach and encourage someone to respond, to do something- and this is precisely what Paul did.**

✠ **Paul's message: It's all been leading to Jesus**

- **What follows one of Paul's longer sermons from ACTS- He's going to make three big points-**
- **1) How history of Israel led to God's promise of a messiah- a savior,**
- **2) Savior is JESUS- he is fulfillment of all your scripture, and**
- **3) While God's messiah is something you HAVE been expecting, through Jesus God has done something you have NOT been expecting. It is this final point we really want to see.**
- **SO, lets go through this.**

¹⁶ Standing up, Paul motioned with his hand and said: "Fellow Israelites and you Gentiles who worship God, listen to me! ¹⁷ The God of the people of Israel chose our ancestors; he made the people prosper during their stay in Egypt; with mighty power he led them out of that country; ¹⁸ for about forty years he endured their conduct in the wilderness; ¹⁹ and he overthrew seven nations in Canaan, giving their land to his people as their inheritance. ²⁰ All this took about 450 years. "After this, God gave them judges until the time of Samuel the prophet.

- **This covered first two eras of Israel- From Egypt into promised land, and time of Judges. Led to prophet Samuel, who God used to raise up Israel's first king, SAUL- who, of course, was succeeded by DAVID.**

✠ **The promise of David**

²¹ Then the people asked for a king, and he gave them Saul son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, who ruled forty years. ²² After removing Saul, he made David their king. God testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.'

- **KING DAVID.** As a first century Jew/Hebrew, David was the great hero of your people. He was your greatest King. **EVEN** more importantly, you knew how your scripture- the prophets- proclaimed that God's promised messiah would come from the **LINE OF DAVID.** Paul now jumps 1000 years...

²³ "From this man's descendants God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised.

- **Promised messiah/savior has come, and he is Jesus. HUGE STATEMENT! Then Paul makes takes a slight but very important step back. He brings up J the B.**

✠ The message of John the Baptist

²⁴ Before the coming of Jesus, John preached repentance and baptism to all the people of Israel. ²⁵ As John was completing his work, he said: 'Who do you suppose I am? I am not the one you are looking for. But there is one coming after me whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.'

- **What was the message of JtheB? What was baptism about? It was a sign of REPENTANCE and FORGIVENESS.** "when you repent, confess your sin, turn from sin, God will forgive you" That's good news, right? The promise that God will forgive you.
- **Why mention this? Because John's message wasn't just about forgiveness... it was there is MORE.** John said "I'm not the messiah- not even CLOSE to being the messiah. What I'm telling you is important, essential, but **THERE IS MORE, MUCH MORE!**
- **I come with a message of forgiveness, but in the Messiah- JESUS- there is SALVATION. Paul proclaims...**

²⁶ "Fellow children of Abraham and you God-fearing Gentiles, it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent.

- **Now, Paul gives...**

✠ Evidence

²⁷ The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath. ²⁸ Though they found no proper ground for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him executed. ²⁹ When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the cross and laid him in a tomb.

- **Exhibit A- Your people rejected the messiah, condemned him, and had him killed- which is exactly what your own scripture prophesied would happen. But that's not all.**

³⁰ But God raised him from the dead, ³¹ and for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people.

- **Exhibit B- The resurrection! Jesus was seen by many, and we are now witnesses of this truth to you!**

³² "We tell you the good news: What God promised our ancestors ³³ he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus.

- **Exhibit C- With his resurrection, Jesus fulfilled two of your most famous messianic prophecies...**

As it is written in the second Psalm: "You are my son; today I have become your father.'

- **Psalm 2:7 is a promise that the messiah would be the son of God, one with the Father. With the resurrection, this promise is fulfilled- Jesus is now both messiah and LORD. Paul continues**

³⁴ God raised him from the dead so that he will never be subject to decay. As God has said, "I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David. ³⁵ So it is also stated elsewhere: "You will not let your holy one see decay.' ³⁶ "Now when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his ancestors and his body decayed. ³⁷ But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay.

- **The Jews listening to Paul that day knew exactly what he was saying. God had promised David that He would send his ‘Holy One’- the messiah, whose body would not decay. This implies a physical death, but a temporary physical death. DAVID DIED, and we all know that he is still buried! JESUS ALSO DIED, but HE DEFEATED DEATH, AND HE LIVES.**
- **Then Paul brings it home- and makes a statement that would have shocked all the hearers that day, and that distinguishes Christianity from all other world religions even up to this day.**
- **You see, every world religion based upon some system of LAW. God says “This is expectation, how I want you to live. If do this, I will protect you/bless you. If not, I will not protect you/bless you”**
- **We see this summed up in Deuteronomy 11:26-28**
Deuteronomy 11:26 “See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: ²⁷ the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you today, ²⁸ and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way that I am commanding you today...”
- **BE SURE! For Israel, this was an incredible Gift. God was not distant to them. He came to them, through Moses, and revealed his nature. He gave them a way to live, to prosper, to KNOW HIM. And when they failed, which they inevitably did, He provided a way of repentance and forgiveness, again and again.**
- **THIS WAS THE TEACHING OF THE LAW, and it was the HOPE, the IDENTITY of the Jews.**
- **BUT NOW, Paul proclaims that their expectation of what the messiah would do was TOO SMALL. They were expecting the messiah to come and re-establish the glory of Israel as a nation, to ensure that the observance of the law would last forever.**
- **Instead, Paul proclaims that through faith in him, Jesus would do...**

✠ What the law can never do

³⁸ “Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.

³⁹ Through him everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses.

– **The NASB translates it this way**

³⁸ Therefore let it be known to you, brothers, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, ³⁹ and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.

- **Jews understood concept of God’s forgiveness. It was through system prescribed by the Law and Prophets, which they had read at start of that day.**
- **BUT THEN PAUL SAYS “YES! In Christ, you are forgiven... but not only that! IN CHRIST- through FAITH in Jesus as the resurrected son of God, you aren’t just forgiven your most recent sins, you are SET FREE FROM ALL THINGS, SET FREE from what the law could never free you.**
- **The law was temporary. We could never keep it. We would fail, and need to come to God, go through some sacrificial system, receive forgiveness, and go out and try again.**
- **BUT NOW, we have been JUSTIFIED- Justice for ALL OUR sins has been done by Christ- and we are completely forgiven and right with God, FOR EVER.**

- *You see, the law excels at telling us how to live. It excels at setting the expectation. But the law does not provide any POWER TO LIVE. It can never give us LIFE.*

Galatians 3:12 For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law.

- *The truth Paul was teaching is also the truth so many believers have never heard, or if we have heard, we too often are not realizing in its power and goodness. WHAT CHRIST ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH THE HIS D,B,R, is NOT just about being forgiven, the promise of heaven when we die, and then a life of frustrated effort trying in vain to please a perfect God.*
- *IN CHRIST, we have been set free from the eternal consequence of our sin, which was our separation from God. We have been forgiven, we have been RECONCILED to God. But that's just the foyer to the castle. The MUCH MORE of faith in Christ is that we are NEW CREATIONS. We are forgiven, but MUCH MORE, we have received Christ's presence, HIS LIFE.*
- *See this Truth in Romans 5:9-10...*

Romans 5:9-10 *Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! ¹⁰ For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!*

- *We live in the MUCH MORE of faith in Jesus Christ. NOW, there is MUCH MORE we could say about this, we will explore these themes as P&B continue through their journey.*
- *BUT NOW, bring this part of story to a close- because Paul has one more thing to say, he isn't pulling any punches.*

✠ Freedom you wouldn't believe.. our would you?

⁴⁰ *Take care that what the prophets have said does not happen to you: ⁴¹ "Look, you scoffers, wonder and perish, for I am going to do something in your days that you would never believe, even if someone told you."*

- *That is from prophet Habakkuk, some 600 years earlier. The scoffers of Habakkuk's day were his own people of Judah, who had turned away from God.*
- *His message was... "you may scoff at God, but he will do something in your time you wouldn't believe".. and that was the coming judgment God would bring upon Judah- his own people- through the hand of Babylonians.*
- *The people in Paul's audience would have known that story. Now, Paul is saying... YOU ARE STILL THE SCOFFERS...AND God is doing something in YOUR DAY... NOW...*
- *He has brought you the messiah, to set you free from everything that binds you, beyond what the law could ever do!*
- *BUT some of you will not believe, even though I have told you- and because of your unbelief, you will perish- you will miss out on God's gift of Grace.*
- *But as we will see, many will believe. Today, the same promise of salvation, of freedom in Christ, is given to us.*
- *If you have never made the decision to place your faith in Christ... God invites you to listen, to hear, and SURRENDER- to Trust God with your life and receive the freedom your own effort and wisdom could never achieve.*

- *As believers, Paul's message is also an invitation. We have been forgiven. We have been made new... but too often we still want to be in control, leading us back to the bondage of performance based acceptance.*
- *God invites us to listen, to hear, SURRENDER- and experience the freedom and wholeness our own effort and wisdom can never achieve.*
- *NEXT WEEK the entire town will gather to hear the Word of the Lord from Paul and Barnabas. This will result in their being run out of town, and not for the last time...*

UNTIL THEN... THINK, CONSIDER... and we'll see you...