Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Paul Preaches Jesus, Part 3
Scripture: Acts 13:38-41
Code: 1745

Continuing in our wonderful study of the Book of Acts, we come returning to chapter 13 for the sermon that the Apostle Paul preached in the City of Antioch of Pisidia. As we know, the church has grown and expanded in the Book of Acts. Thrilling things have happened in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and now thrilling things are beginning to happen in the uttermost part of the earth as the church explodes into the Gentile territory and the Apostle really generating it is none other than the Apostle Paul.

He and Barnabas have begun their first journey. They formerly were pastors of the church in Antioch of Syria. The Spirit of God said, "I want you two to go into the Gentile world and carry the gospel," and so they have gone. They have hit Cyprus first of all. They had a marvelous time preaching the gospel from one end of the island to the other. They won an encounter with Satan...were victorious...and they have thus proceeded to Antioch of Pisidia.

Having arrived there, they went immediately into the synagogue. We find as we study the life of Paul and his ministry that that became a continual pattern. He would go to the synagogue because it was a readymade audience, because as a Jew, a rabbi, one trained in Jewish things, he would very often gain an audience to speak. They were people knowledgeable in Old Testament truth, so he had a foundation on which to build. He also, I'm sure, knew that it was easier to reach a town when he had some help than it was alone and so he would go into the synagogue and, hopefully, some Jews would be saved and they would just multiply the number of people then to reach the Gentile community, and so he would begin in the synagogue here in Antioch and that really set a pattern for what he did.

Now as he begins to preach in Antioch of Pisidia, which is in the general area known as Galatia, to which the letter of Galatians was written, in Asia Minor, he preaches concerning Jesus and we told you a couple of weeks ago that the message is really God presenting Jesus through Paul. Paul is simply a mouthpiece. It is God's presentation of Jesus and in fashion that is very common to the New Testament, whenever the speaker is speaking to Jews, he always puts things in a Jewish context and certainly this is obviously a wise thing to do.

Now to begin with, let me say this. The Jewish mind was dominated by three general themes that seem to have been the most significant features of their theology and their doctrine and their life. These three things are the three things to which Paul speaks. First of all, the Jewish mind was

dominated by the fact that God was active in the history of Israel. They exalted in the fact that they were God's chosen people; that they were the ones that God had called out, set apart, through whom He gave the blessings, the covenants, the promises and so forth. The Jew was absorbed joyously in the concept that God was his God and so the concept of God's involvement in Israel's history was one of the general themes that dominated their minds.

The second general theme that dominated their minds was God's future plans for them through Messiah. The Jew exalted in his nationalism. He exalted in his Jewishness but he also exalted in the future hope of Israel. They dreamed, they hoped, they lived for the day that Messiah would come. It was said that the Jewish mothers used to wish that their son would be the Messiah. This was the dream of every true Jew.

The third thought that dominated their minds was God's attitude in dealing with sin. The Jew never forgot his identity. The Jew never forgot his hope and the Jew never forgot his sin. Those three things absolutely saturated and dominated the life of a Jew and it is to those three things that Paul directs his message, answering to the three great themes of Judaism. Every Jew saw God in control of his destiny. Every Jew saw God's promise of a Messiah as his hope and every Jew was careful to follow the sacrifices set down to deal with sin.

And so Paul, under the direct control of the Holy Spirit, shows that Jesus is the key to each of these areas, that Jewish history resolves in Christ, that the promise of Messiah resolves in Christ, that dealing with sin resolves in Christ. You see? And so Paul is saying all of these things that you're dominated by lead to Jesus Christ. History goes to Him. Messianic hope goes to Him. The problem of sin resolves in Him. So the message is characteristically Jewish. Paul's message then falls into those three categories. Paul presents Jesus as (1) the culmination of history, Jewish history is going toward Christ; (2) the fulfillment of prophesy, all the predictions resolve in Him; (3) Jesus, the justifier of sinners. The issue of sin is settled in Christ.

Now, first of all, two weeks ago, we saw that Jesus was presented as the culmination of history in verses 17 through 23. Jesus was presented as the culmination of history. Yes, history is going somewhere. We don't need to take a fatalistic look at history. We don't need to stand with those people who can't figure out the point in history. We don't need to be those who say history runs endless cycles going nowhere. History goes somewhere. It goes toward Jesus Christ and just to give you a brief...remember we said this. History is the story of man and God created man for a two-fold purpose. One, to have fellowship with Him. God needs fellowship. God is not a cosmic glob that exists in isolation. God needs fellowship. By the very nature of God, He is a Trinity. Consequently, His very nature speaks of the fellowship, not just one, but three, and God desired fellowship; thus, He created angels. Thus, He created man to fellowship with him, but man chose to go his own way, sinned, and the fellowship was broken. Right?

God created man for a second reason. God created man to give Him glory, didn't He? And man refused to do that and man became a sinner and the possibility of man giving glory to God was over with, and so what happens? God looks down and He's got men whom He created for two purposes, fellowship and glory, who have ceased to do either. What then does history become? History becomes the recovery of man's lost destiny. History then is God recovering what He initially created man to do.

Now, God could have said, "Ah, I'm just going to forget the whole thing," and just gone whew and wiped us off the earth and said, "I'll create a whole bunch of new things down there and they'll do it right." But He didn't do that. God said, "I will recover man," and so history, people, from the beginning of the Bible to the end, is God's process of recovering men. He lost them in Genesis in the very beginning. He recovers them and draws them into the heaven and the new earth unto Himself in Revelation in the end, and the whole Bible is the story of God recovering man's lost destiny and the only way that it could ever be done was through the perfect work of Jesus Christ, right?

Jesus said this in John 14:6, "...no man comes unto the Father...what?...but by Me." In other words, Jesus Christ is the only one who can bring man back to God, who can restore fellowship and grant man the capacity to give God glory and that's why we say that when you and I become Christians, we become, as Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians 5, "reconciled unto God," because, you see, that's recovering our lost destiny, isn't it? We were created for God. Colossians, Paul said of Jesus, "All things were made by Him and for Him." Every creature ever created was created for Jesus Christ, for God, for fellowship and glory, but men have ceased and God is in the process today of recovering man's lost destiny...recovering men to himself.

Now the key to all of this, as I said, is Jesus Christ and that was his point. He went through history in verses 17 to 22 and he resolves it in 23, "Of this man's seed...David...hath God according to His promise raised unto Israel a Savior." What's that? A savior is somebody who can bring men to God and who is it? Jesus. And there is his declaration. Jesus alone brings men to God.

Look at Hebrews for just a minute. I can't resist taking a moment of this time to show you Hebrews 2:9 and here you have the recovery of man's lost destiny clearly delineated. We'll just pinpoint a couple of thoughts since we studied this in depth in our Hebrews series. Hebrews 2:9, well, verse 8; let's look at verse 8. Hebrews 2:8, "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet." When God created man, He created man with authority, didn't He? He created man to rule for God in fellowship. "For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him." Man lost his destiny. God made him to be king of the earth and man forfeited all of it. There was no fellowship.

Remember what happened when Adam sinned? The fellowship stopped...right?...and Adam, the first thing he did with Eve was what? They hid. Immediately, the fellowship was over and instead of giving God glory, they were ashamed and so verse 9 introduces the only one who can solve the problem, "But we see Jesus, made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man."

You see, when man cut himself off from God by his sin, there was only one way to get back and that was to deal with his sin...right?...because God can't tolerate sin. There's only one way to deal with sin. That's death, right? The wages of sin is...what?...death. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. Death deals with sin. Somebody has to die for man's sin for man to get back into the presence of God and be restored to his original destiny and so Christ had to come and He, by the grace of God, tasted death, not for Himself but...what?...for every man.

Now watch. Verse 10, "For it became Him...that is God, or it was fitting for God...for whom are all things." In other words, everybody ever made was made for God. If you don't know God, you're out of whack with your purpose of existence. Anyone who ever goes to hell is an intruder there. It wasn't even created for man. It was created for the devil and his angels. You go to hell; you're an intruder. You don't belong there. You were created for God. All things were. Well, it was fitting for God then "...for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

Now here's God's problem. He's got men who were created for Him. He wants to get them from here to glory. In order to get them from there to glory, somebody's going to have to lead them...the captain, archegos, the leader, the pioneer...and in order for Him to do that, He is going to have to be perfect through...what?...suffering. He's going to have to die for their sins. That's exactly what He says and so, you see, Jesus came, paid the penalty for sin; because of that, He became the perfect pioneer, the perfect leader, the perfect archegos, to lead us to God.

God wanted men and I love what it says in verse 12. Jesus talks and He says, "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee...I will put My trust in Him. And again, behold I and the children whom God hath given Me." And here's the group of people that Christ has won and is taking back to God. That's the destiny for which man was created in the beginning. Jesus then in verse 17, "...is a faithful high priest in things pertaining to God. He makes reconciliation for the sins of the people." See? He deals with sin so we're reconciled to God. Adam sinned and lost it all. In Christ, man's destiny is fully restored.

Now, you know, every Jew...going back to the 13th chapter of Acts...every Jew knew that history was moving toward Messiah. What every Jew didn't know was that Jesus was the Messiah. In fact, they killed Jesus as a criminal. But, you see, what Jesus does is He restores the purpose of man's destiny, for it is in Christ that we're kings again and in the kingdom on earth, we shall reign with Him.

The purpose then for men's creation is restored in Christ. That's where history is going. History is God's recovery process and it happens that Christ is the only way it can ever happen.

So he says, "Yes, it's going toward Messiah...Jesus," and, of course, their immediate question is, "Jesus? Why in the world are we to believe He's the Messiah?" And so he comes to his second point in verses 23 through 37, which we saw last week, because of the fulfillment of prophesy. Jesus is not only the culmination of history, He's the fulfillment of prophesy and I believe, friends, that the most devastating and the greatest proof that Jesus is the Messiah is prophesy, fulfilled prophesy. I don't believe honestly that a man could really study the life of Jesus Christ in connection with prophesy and ever conclude anything else, if he was honest, than that Jesus fulfills messianic prophesy to the very letter. You can't see it any other way. It is absolutely overwhelming. That was our study last week which we provided for you on the tape.

Jesus fulfills every single issue of messianic prophesy in His first coming and His second coming. The Jews live for Messiah and so Paul says, "I want you to know that Jesus is, by showing He fulfills prophesy," and he gives three areas of prophesy. One, the forerunner. Verse 24 and 25, he speaks about John the Baptist who preceded Christ. Every Jew knew that before the Messiah came, there would be one to announce His coming. Isaiah said that so clearly. They knew that. "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the paths for the Lord'" and so forth. So when John came announcing the Messiah was Jesus, pointed to Him and said, "Behold the Lamb of God taketh away the sin of the world," there was the prophesy fulfilled.

The second area of prophesy which we saw last time was the area of the crucifixion. When Jesus was dying on the cross, verse 29 says, "When they had fulfilled all that was written of Him, they took Him down." All the time He was on the cross, He was fulfilling prophesy...prophesy after prophesy after prophesy. The third area of prophesy that Jesus fulfilled is the resurrection...the forerunner, the crucifixion and the resurrection. Look at verse 30. God raised Him from the dead. Verse 33, God raised Him from the dead, just as He said in the second Psalm, "...Thou art my Son. This day have I begotten Thee." Verse 37, God raised Him again; and so Jesus fulfills all this prophesy. No other than Jesus ever fulfilled it and Jesus fulfilled all of it. Yes, like history, prophesy is going somewhere. It's going toward Jesus.

Thirdly, and this is the message for today, verses 38 to 41. Jesus is not only the culmination of history, the fulfillment of prophesy, but He's the justifier of sinners...the justifier of sinners. Oh, what a fantastic point this is to give to Jews. Now, before we look at verse 38, I must give you some background. By the time I'm done and we read verse 38, it ought to just explode on your mind. Every Jew had his mind dominated by those three themes...right?...God's plan for Israel, God's promise of a Messiah and God's provision for sin.

Jews were dominated by the concept of sin. You know, in our world today, sin is kind of passed off and we live in an age when people are saying we've got to get rid of all the Victorian hang-ups and all the old Bible morality and all that antiquated kind of stuff and we've got to hurry everybody up and there isn't any sin and whatever's right for you, right? That's the morality of today. If you do it, if you want to do it and it doesn't really mess up anybody else, go do it. There's no code. There's no ethic. There's no morality. And that's pretty standard stuff...open marriage, free sex, free love, this, that and the other thing. Break the law if you don't agree with it.

But in those days, there was a tremendous sensitivity among the Jews to sin. They were overwhelmed by sin. How could they escape it? Every week, they met in the synagogue and they read the Bible and they read it and read it, year in, year out, and you know what it talks about? Sin, sin, sin. All they had to do was read their history. You can hardly find a bright light. Just sin, you know, centuries of it, and how God dealt with it and how serious it was. Jews were tremendously aware of sin and they were also aware of the consequence of it.

Let me just give you a couple of illustrations that I think are vivid. In 2 Samuel...don't try to follow; just write them down if you want them...2 Samuel 24:10 and verse 17. Listen. 2 Samuel 24:10, "And David"...if ever there was a guy who was sensitive to sin, it was David, wasn't it? Listen, "And David's heart smote him after he had numbered the people." He got real happy about how great his country was and how many people he had and what a great thing Israel was, so he thought, "I'll count them and put the numbers on display," and he realized it was nothing but pride and he was sorry. His heart smote him. "And David said unto the Lord, 'I have sinned greatly in what I have done and I beseech Thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of Thy servant; for I have done very foolishly."

Verse 17, "David spoke unto the Lord when he saw the angel that smote the people." The angel came down and punished the people and watch. David said, "Lo, I have sinned. I have done wickedly but these sheep, what have they done? Let Thine hand, I pray Thee, be again me and my father's house." You want to know something? There are three things there that hit me. No. 1, David was sensitive to sin. That's good, right? David was sensitive to sin. No. 2, he knew he deserved punishment, right? No. 3, he asked for it. Give it to me, God. Now most of us do all right on No. 1. We're sensitive to sin, right? We don't do too bad on No. 2. We know we deserve punishment. We really do poorly on No. 3. Give it to me, God; I deserve it. And yet, the Bible is very clear about the fact that chastisement brings about maturity. David was so sensitive to sin, he knew he did it and he knew he deserved the punishment and he asked for it. Give it to me, God. That's sensitivity to sin.

Ezra chapter 9 verse 4, reading several verses, "Then were assembled unto me every one who trembled at the words of the God of Israel because of the transgression of those who had been carried away." The whole nation of Israel shaking, just shaking. They're afraid of God because of their sin, the whole nation. And he says, "At the evening sacrifice, I rose up from my heaviness and I

ripped my garments and my mantle and fell on my knees and spread out my hands unto the Lord." He just flat out, whew, you know. Said, "Oh, my God." He said, "I am ashamed and blessed to lift up my face to Thee, my God." Can't even look up. "For our iniquities are increased over our head and our trespass has grown unto the heavens." "We are drowned in the deluge of sin. We're inundated," he said. "Since the days of our fathers have we been in great trespass unto this day," one whole history of sin. "Our kings and our priests have delivered into the hands of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to a spoil, to confusion of face, as it is this day." He says, "I see a little bit of grace, God, peeking through," in verse 8. But he says, "God, I'm drowned," and it's historic in sin and indeed, he was.

In verse 13, "After all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that Thou our God has punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and has given us such deliverance as this; should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations?" He says, "In all that we've done and You've been good and we continue to do it." They had a tremendous sensitivity to sin. Listen to Nehemiah 1:6, "Let Thine ear now be attentive and Thine eyes open, that Thou mayest hear the prayer of Thy servant which I pray before Thee now, day and night...all the time...for the children of Israel." What are you praying, Nehemiah? Thy servants. I'm praying "...for the children of Israel, Thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against Thee; both I and my father's house have sinned. We have dealt corruptly against Thee and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances." Nehemiah says, "God, I'm overwhelmed by the sin of my own life and the sin of the people of Israel."

The Jews had a tremendous sensitivity to sin because the law was so much a part of their life, you see, that the transgression was so much a part of their life in response to that. And they even sang together. If you read the Psalms...which, of course, is the hymnal of Israel...if you read the Psalms, they even sang about it. "There is no soundness in my flesh," Psalm 38:3, "because of Thine anger. Neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. Mine iniquities are gone over my head." Again, that concept of being drowned in sin. "Like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me." That wouldn't be too popular a chorus nowadays. They even sang about their iniquities, so overwhelmed by them. Psalm 41:4, "I said, 'Lord, be merciful unto me. Heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee.'" Psalm 51, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me from my iniquity. Cleanse me from my sin. Against Thee and Thee only have I sinned. I acknowledge my transgression. My sin is ever before me." And he goes on and on, hopelessly overwhelmed by sin.

To the Jew, there was a tremendous sensitivity to sin and, you know what? In addition to being sensitive to sin, they knew God didn't like sin a bit and they knew that sin had tremendous consequences. Just listen to this. Exodus 32 verse 33, "And the Lord said unto Moses, 'Whosoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book.'" God says, "If they sin against Me and their sin is undealt with, I'll blot them out of My book." What book? This is not the Lamb's Book of Life.

This is the book of life period. What it means is an untimely death. A sinning Jew would die young. Did you get it? Do you remember the Old Testament injunction, "Honor your father and mother, for so shall your days...what?...be long on the earth." The penalty for sin in the Old Testament was very often life. God just executed people at an early age. Jews who lived a long time were the ones who obeyed God and so God says, "If you sin and don't deal with it, I'll take your life." Now that's serious business.

Over in Exodus 34 verse 7, it says that God...now listen..."will by no means clear the guilty." God by no means will clear the guilty. God is so serious in dealing with sin and then the passage that absolutely just...you can hardly almost handle it is in Leviticus 26. This whole passage just absolutely overwhelms you. Verse 14, He says, "If you will not harken unto Me and do these commandments then here's what's going to happen." Boy, if you just want to get overwhelmed with what God thinks of sin, just get 26 Leviticus into your head. "If you don't do what I say, listen what will happen." Verse 15, "If you shall despise My statutes and your soul abhor My ordinances so that you will not do My commandments...all of them...but you break My covenant, here's what's going to happen. I will do this to you. I will even appoint over you terror, consumption and the burning fever that shall consume the eyes. I'll cause sorrow of heart and you shall sew your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it." Plant your crop. Go ahead, but you'll never harvest it. I'll take over your land with your enemies.

"I'll set My face against you and you shall be slain before your enemies." I'll even take your lives. "They that hate you shall reign over you and you shall flee when none pursues you." You're going to be so scared, you're going to be running when nobody's chasing and if you still, for all of this, don't harken to Me, I'll punish you seven times more. I'll break the pride of your power and I'll make your heaven as iron." You know, Chicken Little will be right. "And your strength shall be spent in vain for your land shall not yield your increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield fruits and if you walk contrary to Me and don't harken to Me, I'll bring seven times greater plagues," verse 21. "I'll send wild beasts among you and they'll rob you of your children and they'll eat your cattle, make you few in number. Your highways shall be desolate. If you will not be reformed by these things, then," he says, "I will punish you seven times more for your sins. I'll bring a sword upon you that shall avenge the vengeance of My covenant and when you're gathered together within your cities, I'll send a pestilence among you. You shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy. And when I have broken the staff of your bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver you your bread again by weight and you shall eat and not be satisfied." Disease and famine.

"And if you still don't listen to Me, then I'll bring it again seven times more for your sin. You shall eat the flesh of your sons and the flesh of your daughters shall you eat." Cannibalism. I'll take away everything so you can't have anything to eat except other people, even your own children. "I'll destroy your high places. I'll cut down your images. I'll cast your carcasses on the carcasses of your idols and My soul shall abhor you. I'll bring your cities into waste and your sanctuaries into desolation and I will not even smell the savor of your sweet odors." Now He goes on like that for a long time

through this whole chapter.

Now you get the idea that God's not real happy about sin, don't you? I mean it's absolutely overwhelming. The Jew knew that God hated sin. The Jew had a tremendous pressure on him all the time of trying to live up to the law of God because he knew how much God hated sin and he had such a sensitivity to sin. You say, "Well, boy, I mean what a terrible existence. Didn't he have any idea about God being a forgiving God?" Of course. They knew God was a forgiving God but the forgiveness came and then you'd sin again and you'd be under the weight again. God forgave. Exodus 34:7, Psalm 32 talks about forgiveness. Psalm 103 talks about forgiveness. Isaiah talks about forgiveness in just a beautiful statement in Isaiah 55, I think it is, verse 6, "Seek the Lord while He may be found. Call ye upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly...what?...pardon."

Sure, He's a merciful God and then I love...can't resist old Micah 7:18, so good, "Who is a God like Thee, who pardons iniquity and passes by the transgression of the remnant? He retains not His anger forever because He delights in mercy. He will turn again. He will have compassion on us. He will subdue our iniquities and Thou will cast their sins into the depths of the sea." The Jew knew God was merciful and God was forgiving and God was pardoning but, at the same time, it was so temporary. He would get a forgiveness that would last only as long as he did it and it would take care of it, and he'd go right into sin again and be under the pressure again. You say, "Well, how did a Jew deal with his sins?" Well, God gave him a prescription. Listen to Leviticus 5:5. Here's the prescription. "It shall be when he shall be guilty in one of these things that he shall confess the thing that he has sinned." The first thing a Jew had to do was...what?...confess his sin.

Second thing in verse 6, "And he shall bring his trespass offering unto the Lord for his sin which he hath sinned." The economy that God gave Israel demanded that a Jew do two things in sinning...one, confess it; two, make a sacrifice. And you know what that did? That took care of the sin that he committed. You know what that did for tomorrow? Absolutely zilch. He'd go over there and he'd make his sacrifice and he'd walk out and say, "Well, Sarah, I feel a lot better. I got that sacrifice out of the way, got that confession," and then the next morning, "I feel crummy, Sarah, I blew it again." Under the gun. I got to go back down to that place. I imagine the Jews ran out of animals but, you see, that was the provision, that God would pardon them. Yes, God would pardon them but it was only so temporary, you see, and it was over and over and over and over again. The law never really satisfied anything and so they never had a clear conscience. They were always being condemned, condemned, condemned. That's what the law was supposed to do, you know that? The law was supposed to condemn you.

Some people want to get rid of the law because it condemns. No, it's a good thing. Nothing wrong with the law. Always think about the...if you had a servant sitting in your house and you said, "All

right, servant, go over there and do that job," and the servant got up and tripped over the chair and caught his foot on the end of the chair and fell into your best table and smashed it and knocked the lamp over and the lamp falling hit a vase that was on a shelf and knocked the shelf over and all your crystal fell down and then he, trying to catch the crystal, stumbled, smashed over another thing and fell through the paned front window and landed on your best gladiolas, you'd say, "Well, that's ridiculous. All I said was 'Go over there and do that.'" There wasn't anything wrong with your orders. You just had a clod for a servant, right? It's the same thing with God. There's not one thing wrong with the law. It just shows you what a clod you are when you try to do it. No need to get rid of the law. You need to take some lessons in how to handle yourself.

One thing about the new covenant that's so exciting is you not only have the same orders, but you've got the power within you in the form of the Holy Spirit to carry them out without knocking over everything in sight and so God gave the law to show man what clods they were and that they needed a full and final deliverer and somebody who could dwell in them and empower them and so every Jew, down deep in his heart, longed for freedom from guilt. He longed to experience forgiveness and life was a cycle of sinning and getting forgiven and sinning and getting forgiven and sinning and getting forgiven and sacrificing and sacrificing and sacrificing and Paul has got the best news the Jews ever heard.

Now look at verse 38 and see if it doesn't say something. "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you...what?...the forgiveness of sins." Oh, whoopee, see. I mean that is like good news. This is the thing that's hung up every Jew for so long. You mean through a man, this man Jesus, there comes forgiveness? What kind? Verse 39, I love it. "And by Him all that believe are justified from several things." Oh, all things. He said, "That's what I've been wanting to hear." "...from which you could never be justified by the law of Moses," you see? All the law of Moses did was just cover you up a little bit and cover you up a little bit. He says, "Here comes Jesus and all sins are all dealt with."

Now do you think that's good news to the Jews? Oh, you better believe it. That's good news to me. Forgiveness of sin...Peter had that in his sermon in Acts 10 about forgiveness of sin. Moses' law couldn't do it. Look at it, verse 39, says it, "...from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses." As I said, it was just a cycle of going over and over and over and it never did the job. But old Paul stands up and says, "I've got a sermon you're going to love...forgiveness for sins." Moses couldn't bring it. "But by Him...that refers to Jesus...all that believe are justified." The word "justified" means declared righteous. You're declared to be right before God, by Him, and Moses could never do it. Moses just covered it up for the sacrifices.

To expand on this, I want you to look at Hebrews 9 and this deals so powerfully with this same point. We'll just look at this for a brief moment. Hebrews 9 verse 6, he's just giving a little picture here of the old system. The priest would go in there and he had the outer court and then court of the holy place

and then the holy of holies, the Ark of the Covenant and all the things that were in the holy place and the holy of holies. He's been describing all this. Verse 6, he says, "Now when these things were thus prepared, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God." That's the holy place. "But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and the errors of the people." The sins of the past year gathered up and he'd sprinkle blood and take care of the past sins of the year in a general sense for the nation.

Now watch. You say, "What was all that about?" Well, it was temporary, wasn't it? "The Holy Spirit thus signifying... the Holy Spirit has used this as an object lesson; what was the Holy Spirit trying to teach through all that ceremony?...that the way into the Holiest of all was not yet made manifest," you see? That was only a picture. It was only a little object lesson and it couldn't really be real while the first tabernacle was yet standing. Verse 9, "That was just a figure." Do you know what the word "figure" is in Greek? Parabole, from which we get parable. The whole tabernacle was a parable. The whole tabernacle wasn't the reality; it was a shadow. It was an object lesson and they had gifts and sacrifices that they offered that could not make him that did the service perfect. That means fully access to God, fully righteous, right? It couldn't make him fully righteous as pertaining to the conscience. Now notice, one thing a Jew never got was freedom in his conscience.

You know, I'll say this. This is a personal testimony and I know many of you can agree with it. I think, as a Christian, the thing that I enjoy as much as anything is a conscience free from guilt. It's a fantastic thing to know that my sin has been dealt with by God's son, Jesus Christ, and that God sees me as pure as the driven snow, and I have no condemnation because I'm in Christ. I see people ridden by guilt. You can imagine the Jew just tremendously browbeaten and pressured by the ever, ever conscious presence of his sin. Like David says, "Oh, my sin is ever before me. I can't hack it, God. I'm sick of it." And as a Christian, the fantastic release to know that my sin is dealt with...all of it. Wow, fabulous. And so he says in that first thing, which is only a parable, there wasn't ever any clear conscience, right? Go down in verse 14 and he says, "It was Christ who was able to purge your conscience," and they never had a clear conscience, those poor people.

Over in chapter 10, look at verse 1 and 2. That old ceremonial system with all those animal sacrifices. Verse 1 of chapter 10, "For the law having a shadow...see...the law is the shadow of good things to come and not the very edge of them, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make those who come to it perfect." Righteous; we'll use the word "righteous" instead of perfect. It means that in Hebrews. He says, "The law...look at those two words right in the middle of the verse...can never make man righteous." That was the Jew's dilemma and then verse 2 says if they could have made them righteous, they wouldn't have had to repeat them, right? "For then would they not have ceased to be offered? Because the worshippers, if they could have been once purged, would have had no more reason to make sacrifices." They'd have had no more conscience of sin, but they couldn't do it. Why?

Verse 4, "It's not possible the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin." But Jesus came and I like this, verse 12, "But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever sat down." What does that mean? Work was done. Verse 14, "By one offering, He perfected forever them that are sanctified." See, the law of Moses couldn't justify. The law of Moses couldn't make a man just and the poor Jew, he knew this.

Suppose you got sick, really sick, and you went to your doctor and the doctor said, "I'm going to give you a prescription," and so you got in your little car and tooled down to the drug store and you went in there and you got your little bottle of pills and you started taking your pills and in about, oh, 46, 48 hours, you had taken the cycle of several pills and you were completely well. You felt as good as you'd ever felt in your life. Your disease was gone, terrific, you felt great. Every time you looked at that little bottle, you'd say, "That is what cured me," and that little bottle would remind you that your disease was gone, right?

Now suppose you went to the doctor and the guy gave you a prescription and you went down and you got your little prescription, the little bottle of pills. You went home and you took the pills for months and months and months and you got worse and worse and worse. Every time you looked at that bottle, it would only remind you how sick you were and how lousy those pills were and that all of your effort to take those pills didn't make you any better. There you have in an analogy the difference between the old covenant and the new covenant.

Every time a Jew made a sacrifice, it was like looking at a bottle that never made him any better. When you and I come together for communion and gather around the Lord's table, that's like looking at a bottle and saying, "That is what cured me," and so for us to gather around the Lord's table is a celebration. For the Jew to make a sacrifice is a drag because it's just reminding him of what a mess he is and the fact that all the sacrifices he made in the past didn't do him one bit of good for the mess he's in in the present and yet, when you and I gather and celebrate the death of Jesus Christ, what He did in the past takes care of the mess in the present and the future.

Paul says, "Forgiveness to be justified, made righteous before God once and for all, fully and finally." Fantastic. What a glorious announcement. You say, "Well, how does it happen?" Well, Paul defines it in Romans 3 and I'll just give you a couple of thoughts here. Romans 3:21, this is the greatest passage on justification in the Bible and we've talked about this in detail, so if you're interested in the subject, you can get that tape available on this section, but, anyway, it says in verse 21, "But now the righteousness of God is apart from the law." Oh-ho. Now a Jew would always say, "I need to be righteous before God and God will take me into His heaven." You say, "Well, how do you get righteous?" Well, you want to be very good and do a lot of good things and just work on being righteous. You can't do that. You can't work on being righteous. The only righteousness that'll ever get you into heaven is God's righteous...right?...and you can't be that good, so the righteousness of

God is apart from the law. It's not by doing the rules and all that. It's apart from that.

It is...in verse 22, "The righteousness of God is by faith in Jesus Christ upon all them that believe," right? So you can't earn righteousness. You just get it by faith. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ," see? It's through Christ, by faith in Him. That's Paul's glorious announcement. There is justification. We can be right before God and go into His presence by faith in Jesus Christ...fantastic thought. Then he goes in verse 28 and kind of sums it up. "Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law." You'll never be in God's presence in the future because you were good, only because you put your faith in Jesus Christ and His righteousness was granted to you.

In Galatians 2:16, I like this because it's so obviously trying to get the point across. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid." Now in all of that, he has said about four times you can't be justified by law but only by faith in Christ. He labors to get the point across and the key is this, friends, that it is being in Christ. God looks at you, if you put your faith in Christ, and He doesn't see you; He sees Christ, right?

In 1 Corinthians 1:30...I think it's 1:30...yes, "But of him are ye in Christ...listen...who is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." See? When we're in Christ by faith, then all that He is becomes ours. Read it again. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." It's all granted to us. What a fantastic promise. And so Paul makes just a dramatic announcement to these Jews. You can have full free forgiveness and verse 39 says two "alls." Watch it. "By Him all that believe..." Anybody excluded? Jesus said, "Him that cometh unto Me...what?...I will in no wise cast out." Incidentally, that statement, "all that believe," included Jew and Gentile and that's what blew the cork off everything down in verses 44 and following. We'll see that next week. I'm telling you a riot started because He was going to let Gentiles in. "By Him, all that believe are justified from...what?...all things." What a fabulous thought.

I love Colossians 2 where He says He has forgiven you all your trespasses and the next verse says that the debt of sin was nailed to the cross. How many of my sins were future when Christ died? Every one of them, but they were all in a list nailed to the cross, paid for...fabulous. Jesus wipes the slate clean. Forgiven me all my sins; what a promise. And so says Paul, it's forgiveness. It's free. It's yours. Moses could never, ever grant it through the system, through the law.

In Galatians 3:11, "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident; for the just shall live by faith." Verse 23, "Before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up...," he said;

closed in. "...the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ that we might be justified by faith." So faith is the justification. Well, there he's presented Christ and, really, three things jump out, don't they? Verse 23, Jesus is the Savior. Verse 26, His salvation is for us. Verse 39, His salvation is by faith.

Now in classic fashion, he closes with an invitation and a warning. Verse 40, "Beware...beware therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets." Paul says, "Listen, if you don't respond to Jesus Christ, something's going to happen to you that was spoken of in the prophets and you better beware." You say, "What is it?" He quotes Habakkuk 1:5. Verse 41, "Behold, you despisers...this is what Habakkuk said...and wonder and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no way believe though a man declare it unto you." In Habakkuk's day, Israel was a mess and God said, "Habakkuk, you better tell the people that I'm going to do a work that they're not even going to believe even though you tell them," and the work is the work of judgment, incidentally here. The passage warns against the unbelief of Israel. If Israel rejects as continually as they have the message of God, they're going to get it.

Do you remember what God did to them in Habakkuk? Sent the Chaldeans, sacked Jerusalem, hauled them off to Babylon, wiped out the whole country and Paul says, "You remember what the prophets said God was going to do to Israel of old? Listen," he says to that congregation in Antioch, "You better beware lest what God did then happens to you, when God will work a work of judgment." Notice a couple of notes and it's so powerful. "I'll work a work in your days which you shall in no way believe even though somebody tells it to you." You know it is hard...the hardest thing for me to understand and inevitably, the hardest thing for people to believe is that God is a God of judgment.

The other night on Johnny Carson, I was up late and I watched Johnny Carson and he was talking to Billy Graham. Some of the conversation I liked; some of it, I didn't care for but, nevertheless, one very important question. Johnny Carson asked him...he said this. He said, "You believe in heaven and that other place." People use "hell" a lot until they start talking about the real place. Then they don't like to say the word. But, anyway, he asked him about those two places and Billy Graham said, "Yes, we believe that." He said, "Well, I can't believe that God would send people there." In effect, that was his statement but you know something? You know what my response was? Of course you can't believe it. You're not expected to believe it. The Bible says that God's going to do a work, a work of judgment, which nobody's going to believe.

It's unbelievable because we have a misconstrued idea of the character of God to begin with. We think God is a namby-pamby, senile Santa Claus who pats everybody on the head and says, "Oh, I don't care what you do. You're nice," that kind of thing. It's not so. God is dealing with sin. You read the Old Testament and you get His attitude toward sin. God deals with sin seriously and we know that it's difficult to believe. Someone even in our church called the other day and was very, very upset. They went to a class and they heard about hell and they said, "Oh, I can't believe it. It can't

be. It's not so," and so forth and so on. It's hard to believe that. Even for us who believe it in our hearts, our emotions are hard pressed to handle it, right?

There is a hell and there is a hell where the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth and there's going to be a day of judgment and it's going to come and men don't believe it but that doesn't mean it isn't going to happen. God knew they wouldn't believe it. He said that right here. You won't believe it even though somebody tells you and so the warning closes out Paul's sermon. He says, "I'm giving you an invitation. For all who believe, all things are forgiven and you're justified. But beware, if you don't believe it, God's going to work a work of judgment which you won't believe." So you either believe in Jesus Christ or you don't believe what's going to happen in result...in response. Well, God is a God of grace but Paul closes with a serious warning. A man is a fool who rejects Jesus Christ. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You that Jesus is the culmination of history, the fulfillment of prophesy, and the justifier of sinners. We thank You that He is offered to all who come and all who believe and, Father, those who turn away and reject are even warned to beware, lest that which fell upon Israel of old, that work of judgment which was so serious it was unbelievable, also fall upon them. Father, we pray that no one would leave our fellowship this morning who hasn't settled the heart issue with Jesus Christ, who hasn't put their faith in Him. Father, even as we close by singing a hymn, we ask that Your Spirit would speak to those who need Jesus Christ and encourage them to come forward and come into our little prayer room and meet Christ today that, Father, they might be ready when Jesus comes. We pray in His name. Amen.

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