

WE ARE ALL PRODIGAL

When we Follow Jesus...we have some expectations...we may not realize what they are until Jesus' messes with them. Let me give you a few expectations to have when you are following Jesus. Your life is not going to be easy, and it should not be easy. You will always be on the journey, but not always clear about where you are going. You will be led to places you would rather not go. You will be amazed at how much time you spend wandering around the desert and traveling the roads paved with disappointment.

So why would Jesus lead us down these paths? Maybe the answer to these questions has less to do with either the places to which we are led or the places we leave. **Maybe it has more to do with what happens to us along the way. And along the way is where we learn we always need a savior....every area where we think we can do it on our own power and ability...we will be shown we cant!** The problem of the children of faith is to learn how to follow. When we live out the calling to follow Jesus we have lots of highs and lows because the plans of God takes us to heights and depths. We learn to see Jesus in every storm of life because the world we live in is storm tossed. and we learn that everything is designed to transform us into the image of Jesus...make us more Christ like.

So Our eyes open and begin to be trained to find God in all we do and all we experience...that is the secret. The goal for fatigued disciples of Jesus is not to do less, not to escape but to do the right things in all things.

That is why It is faith from first to Last!

(ESV) Romans 1:¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

Now as Paul was writing to the people of the church of Rome...and the truth that all people sin and need Christ... and are saved by the work of Christ on our behalf ...Paul is faced with a dilemma that he believes the Jews who are part of the church will have to deal with and that is this...if God accepts Gentiles who have lived a life of rebellion and have not served God in any way and have not participated in any of the spiritual and self disciplines that we Jews have and have not partaken arduous religious services or Temple sacrificeswhat is the point of being a Jew?

Romans 3:1 Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? ² Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God. ³ What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? ⁴ By no means! Let God be true though everyone were a liar, as it is written, “That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged.”

- **They have the oracles of God...the actual words from God .. and they carried the seed of the Messiah!**
- **and they also proved you cannot keep the perfect law...therefore you cannot on your own be right before God...**
- **and through them came the way to be right with God...from God whose human seed they carried...from generation to generation..**
- **But there was a problem....having the oracles of God was a responsibility but they often took it as a privilege...and boasted since they were Jews they they were better than others and therefore lived apart from others...whereas God desire was that through them they would draw others to him...**
- **Paul speaks to this...**

*Romans 2:¹⁷ But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God ¹⁸ and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law;¹⁹ and if you are sure that **you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness,** ²⁰ **an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—** ²¹ **you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? ²² You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³ You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law. ²⁴ For, as it is written, “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”***

- **You claim to follow God...but you break the ten commandments ... You claim to know God but you don't love people! adultery, stealing...are actions against neighbors you exclude almost all the world**
- **and in fact...the way you often treat non-believers the Gentiles does not draw them to God**
- **actually causes them to not believe!**

- **You being saved is a faith issue also**

Having the law.. the commandments ..is not the same as obeying them...as you can't...but if someone who doesn't have them as rules ...stills attempts to keep them...that has the same effect before God..

*Romans 2:*²⁵ For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. ²⁶ So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? ²⁷ Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law.²⁸ For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. ²⁹ **But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter.** His praise is not from man but from God.

- **Paul sums it up the condition of all**

*Romans 3:*²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ **whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.** This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

²⁷ **Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith.** ²⁸ **For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.** ²⁹ Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, ³⁰ since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. ³¹ Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

- The law brought us to Faith..by our inability to keep it

Romans 4 What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh?² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” ⁴ Now to the one who

works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. ⁵ And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, ⁶ just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: ⁷ “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; ⁸ blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.”

⁹ Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. ¹⁰ How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. ¹¹ He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father *of all who believe* without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, ¹² and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

- **The Promise Realized Through Faith**

¹³ For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴ For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵ For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression. ¹⁶ *That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, ¹⁷ as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.*

- *Christ’s gives us a parable of this wonderful glimpse of God the Father’s tender, compassionate, even lavish love, as exemplified in the role of the father in the parable, for those who turn from their sins.*
- As we examine this father’s actions, we can come to see how differently God views things than we do.

LK 15:11 (ESV) ¹¹ And he said, “There was a man who had two sons. ¹² And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is

coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. ¹³ Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. ¹⁴ And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! ¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.”’” ²⁰ *And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.*

- **This son was his own worst enemy...he squandered everything his father worked for and gave him He squandered his youth , His energy , his time...his wealth**
- **but his father new there was one thing he knew his son could not squander...His father's love for him**

The story of the prodigal son is the story of God and His Gentile kids...

LK 15: ²¹ And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’^[c] ²² But the father said to his servants,^[d] ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. ²³ And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. ²⁴ For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.

- **The father was not at all concerned with the son’s opinion of himself, but only his opinion. He wanted all his children That is wonderful and greatly encouraging**
- **Now we turn to the older brother... who never strayed... but never rested or truly knew his father's love for him...nor what was available to him...**
- **He can represent the Jews...the older brother..**

LK 15: ²⁵ “Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ And he called one of the servants and asked

what these things meant. ²⁷ And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' ²⁸ But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, ²⁹ but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' ³¹ And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.

- **The elder's sons problem isn't that he doesn't have anything...it's that he had it all along but refused to trust that it was really true. Sometimes the good child ...has a hard time believing in the pure love of God...he thinks he earned it...and has to continue to earn it...**
- **He thought living with dad...was a form of slavery and obedience with no reward... not even a young goat meal with friends**
- **But his Father said....it is all yours...you can do and have what ever you want...it has always been yours...**
- **I believe the others sons life that day changed...his dad was for him and believed in him enough to give him everything he would want**

³² *It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"*

The real deal is just that to believe we are chosen and loved as we are...before we get better....before we are worthy.....because it is true... this kind of Love... draws us to Christ which draws us to repentance

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How God forgives of us... God designed us to enjoy relationship with him forever...

You and I have a major spiritual problem when it comes to our relationship with God...ourselves and others **...here is our problem. We are born sinners, we fall short of the mark...**

- **It isn't our fault, we are just born with a sinful nature...we are genetically contaminated.....it is inherited from our original parents... we inherited from our father Adam.**

RO 5:12 Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death(separated) through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned--

- **But, even though it isn't our fault that we are born this way, it is our fault that we stay this way!**
- *RO 3: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*
- **As we grow older and reach an age where we make choices ...regarding sin, we all choose to sin. Falling way short of Righteousness... the right thing...being right with God and others...**
- **That makes sin a double edged sword! We are guilty by birth and by practice all of us.**

RO 6: 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now, since this is true, we are in deep trouble! there is a death sentence on every person born into the human race. (complete separation)...you see God is a God of Love which necessitates forgiveness...but he is also a God of Justice...just like when we forgive someone ...sometimes Justice must still be administered...

Sin cause death separation... brokenness ...the opposite of life or integration...Human beings are delicate instruments and are often easily knocked off emotional balance...becoming emotionally unstable... ever notice how thin that line can be between love and hate...

HEB 4:12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. 13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

The goal of forgiveness is reconnection...Connectedness is essential to a healthy life...period. We must be connected to God, connected within ourselves and connected to others and connected to absolute values like honesty, goodness and forgiveness. Connecting in these ways deepens life's meaning and purpose...

If you used one word to describe Jesus' mission and Ministry.....Reconciliation would be a good one...

2Cor 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! ¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

- God is love...Jesus is God ... therefore the nature of Jesus is to forgive...we see this even when he is on the cross...

This is how he did it...let's look at the actions that took place while Jesus was on the cross.. exactly how far will Jesus go to forgive us...because most of us have our limits how far we will go in forgiving others....

So when God **set up his society the Israelite people** to introduce the world to God..he set up law ...and a justice system...

...before murder had happened (but he knew it would)...he gave this law..and an exception was made for manslaughter...or accidental murder

*MT 5:17 "Do not think that I have come to **abolish** the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to **abolish** them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.*

this was the law given by God to Moses...and Jesus is asking His Father to adjust his own law of Justice ... *LK 23: 34 Jesus said, "**Father, forgive** them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.*

- **Forgive them of capital murder... the worst offense... it was premeditated and charge them with manslaughter...or accidental murder...why did he say these words?**
- **Could God really take away the death penalty...really forgive all sin?**
- **Because the O.T. makes no allowance for redeeming premeditated murder...the penalty is death. there is no remedy...so this puts Jesus in a bind...**

Jesus has a problem here...the people who killed him did it on purpose...how could he ask the avenger of blood his Father to judge them only for Manslaughter or accidental murder? and **speaking of that three of the Great men of God in Scripture also were guilty of what would be considered premeditated murder...Moses himself**

...David and Paul?...what is up with that?

*LK 23: 34 Jesus said, "**Father, forgive** them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.*

- They all knew what they were doing and yet were ignorant to a degree...
- they were intentional mixed with ignorance, fraility, weakness or blindness... from God's perspective we are all special children!
- That is why we have to be born again...the first one is fatally flawed...it is terminal...
- like Paul said of Himself...and the law..
- they are born in sin, they practice sin...and they are ignorant , blinded, weak...Human!
- They do not know in a sense what they are doing....

1TI 1:8 We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. (there are almost always extenuating circumstances) ⁹ We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious (that covers all of us); for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰ for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders (some of us) and liars and perjurers--and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine ¹¹ that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.

1TI 1:12 I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service. ¹³ Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. ¹⁴ The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

- You see from God's perspective all who sin are not right spiritually...including those who murder or do the worst sins... to murder another you are not Spiritually right...so to a degree we all are ignorant and blind....
- then Jesus tells us are emotions are messed and under judgment...

MT 5:21 "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' ²² But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.....

- **So Jesus ask his father that besides all the other sin he is taking on ...don't charge them with this unforgiveable sin...according to the law given ...charge him**

2Cor 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

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Romans 2:12-16 (ESV)

¹² For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. ¹³ For **it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.**

¹⁴ For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ **They show that the work of the law is written on**

their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them ¹⁶ on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

Paul widens the sin net to include not only the pagan cultures but also the religious culture. Paul wants to make sure sinfulness and God's wrath isn't understood as just being for the "evil" pagans but also for the Jews (and that goes for us as well since we have been grafted in) who follow God's law.

¹⁸In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be." ¹⁹He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness^[b] of Sarah's womb. ²⁰No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. ²²That is why his faith was "counted to him as righteousness." ²³But the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone, ²⁴but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, ²⁵who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.