

### LEAD OFF

For the first time in my life I am on a daily prescribed medication. I was hoping this day would take a few more years to arrive, but low and behold it's here. The medication is omeprazole, which is a prescription strength Prilosec. Prilosec is a medication used to control acid reflux and significant heart burn.

Chronic heart burn is typically caused by three factors:

1. Hereditary (My father and brother both are on daily meds for it)
2. Stress (Who doesn't have that right?)
3. Poor diet (Yeah, definitely me.)

When I was going in for my checkup I knew how the conversation was going to go. I can't control my DNA right, but doc at some point the doctor was going to preach me a sermon on eating better and getting more rest. I would hear the same ole story right? No fatty meats, no sugary drinks, and no fried potatoes. Geez, you might as well just lay me in a casket now.

I had already predetermined before I went in there that no matter what the doctor told me I wasn't going to change. I'm 33... I've got time before I gotta change right? I determined I was going to go in there to check mark my visit and shake my head pretending to be in agreement with Doc and then get out of there with no intention of ever changing.

Sure enough the visit went as I expected. My doctor was giving me recommendations on diet changes in order to create a possibility that I could come off the medication, but I just sat there shaking my head.

Why? Because the medication cost \$3.95 a month and it takes me all of 2 secs to consume the pill. Problem solved right? It's a minor inconvenience with a minor cost, why would I want to give up bacon for that?

All of you in the room are already two steps ahead of where I'm going. The problem is that's near-sided thinking. The problem is, I'm not well.

Sure I can continue taking the medication, but I'm just medicating symptoms, I'm not dealing with the illness. As long as I can pay a small price to feel better, then I'm good. What I'm not paying attention to is the side effects on the side of the bottle if I take this for years at a time. That it can actually destroy the interior layer of my stomach and cause a lot of problems for me down the road. Now, I have those problems and acid reflux. I never got well, I just medicated the symptoms.

### MODERN (WESTERN) CHRISTIANITY

This is essence is a picture of modern Christianity.

- Our approach to God is one that looks for temporary and quick fixes.
  - If I can come to church and put in some God points, I will earn enough to finally bank in an answered prayer.
  - My prayers are centered around what can I get God to change about my circumstances

- I pray hard when I feel pain because I want the pain to leave.
  - I pray hard when the pocketbook is dry because I'm scared about paying my bills.
  - I pray hard when fear creeps on my back door.
- That's why churches fill up when after 9/11 and other things that shake our foundations.
  - But it doesn't last.
  - It doesn't last, because we were just medicating a symptom.
- We get super excited about God changing our circumstances, but we never get excited about God changing us.

The reality is that we aren't well.

My question to you tonight is... do you want to get well?

## SERIES CATCH UP

Tonight is our final installment of our series COPS. It's a four-week series covering four narratives from the Bible where individuals from those stories end up spending time in the slammer.

The whole goal of this series, is that as we investigate these stories they will have great impact on our lives.

So far we have discovered in our investigation the Power of a Comeback, the Power of Perspective, the Power of Worship, and the Power of Forgiveness.

Today we are pulling the trump card and talking about the greatest power of them all... The Power of Salvation found in Jesus. **(SHOW JESUS SCREEN)**

## JESUS ON TRIAL

Today, we look at the events surrounding the arrest and trial of the most innocent man on the face of the planet.

Jesus was brought before the Jewish religious council, who hated him and wanted him dead so badly they were willing to break some of their most important rules regarding their trials.

The problem was these jokers didn't have the authority to actually execute so they sent Jesus before the Roman government with these accusations:

This is how it went down **(SETUP SCENE)**:

Luke 23:20-24 NIV

20 Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. 21 But they kept shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

22 For the third time he spoke to them: "Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will have him punished and then release him."

23 But with loud shouts they insistently demanded that he be crucified, and their shouts prevailed. 24 So Pilate decided to grant their demand. 25 He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, the one they asked for, and surrendered Jesus to their will.

**They released the guilty for the innocent.**

- They willingly chose the devil over God.
- They willingly choose evil over good.
- And even though it's easy to sit back and point fingers at their stupidity and ignorance,
  - they suffer from the same disease that we do. Sin.
  - They are sick just like we are. They are prisoners just like we are.

Even though a majority of them weren't driving the nails or cracking the whip, they were blood-thirsty and rooting those who were on, all because Jesus came along and upset their established order by questioning their intentions and religion.

- He exposed the evil lurking in their heart and brought it out in the open.
  - And nobody likes their private mail read in front of the public.

## ROMANS

I basically just quoted a portion of Scripture found in Romans 1 that is basically what I would call a snapshot of the human condition.

Romans 1:28-32

28 Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done. 29 They have become filled with every kind of

- wickedness,
- evil,
- greed
- and depravity (moral corruption).
- They are full of envy (feeling of discontentment or resentful longing created by someone else's possessions, qualities, or luck),
- murder (the act of or as outlined in Matthew 5, unsettled anger),
- strife (fundamental conflict),
- deceit (act of concealing or misrepresenting the truth) and malice (intention for evil).

- They are gossips (casual or unconstrained conversation about other people involving details that are not confirmed as being true),
- 30 slanderers (making a false statement about someone that damages their reputation),
- God-haters,
- insolent (being rude or showing disrespect),
- arrogant (exaggerated sense of one's own importance) and
- boastful (bragging about your achievements);
- they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; 31 they have no understanding,
- no fidelity (faithful or loyalty to a person, cause or belief),
- no love, no mercy. 32 Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

I don't think a single one of us can escape that list unscathed.

- If you can somehow escape these verses... first of all you are a unicorn.
  - Second, trust me there are lots of other things listed in this chapter that cast an even wider net that for time sake I didn't go there.

## WHO IS THE REAL PRISONER?

I think the question we have to answer tonight is this... who is the real prisoner?

- Is it Jesus, the most innocent man to ever live, or us?
  - Jesus may be locked up physically, but who's locked up spiritually?

Galatians 3:22 NLT

22 But the Scriptures declare that we are all prisoners of sin, so we receive God's promise of freedom only by believing in Jesus Christ.

## THE POWER OF SALVATION

See, I know this isn't easy to hear, and it's just as more so harder to say for me.

- Cause who am I to throw these words around flippantly as if I haven't committed have of them on the list?

The power in hearing this list is that it makes us realize our need to be saved.

- **Before we realize the Power of Salvation, we must realize our need for it.**
- We are all held captive by our vices, our attitudes, our perspectives, our decisions, our selfishness, our greed, our obsessions.
- They have all served to insert and drive wedges in between us and our Heavenly Father.
- And ultimately sin created the divide between us and God that sentences us to eternity in the only place where God doesn't exist... Hell.

## BACCALAUREATE MESSAGE

**(PIC OF ME)** When I was 18, I was asked to speak at my baccalaureate graduation service. I was encouraged to share my testimony. I knew this was going to be boring. I didn't have a cool testimony, because I was a pretty good kid. I didn't have a drastic, jaw-dropping story to tell, and then I realized I did. I got up in front of hundreds of people and I proceeded to tell them exactly that... I was a pretty good kid and got good grades and stayed out of trouble. God didn't save me because I was a bad kid and need behavioral modification, he saved me from myself. It wasn't until a friend begged me to go to youth group that I realized being a good person wasn't good enough. That what I defined as good didn't come close to what good actually was.

I didn't think or realize I needed a Savior, but I so desperately did.

## SIN SHALL NO LONGER BE YOUR JAIL KEEPER

Romans 6:14 NIV

14 For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

What does "not under the law, but under grace" mean?

- It means Christianity isn't behavioral modification and legalism it's about building a relationship with your Heavenly Father. It's about getting closer to our Dad.

## RULES VS RELATIONSHIP

Here is where people get stuck... because unfortunately the approach of many Christians and churches people have developed the idea that being a Christian is all about do's and don'ts and behavioral modifications.

- Because for some of you this was your reality growing up.
  - Your relationship with your parents was such that you were just expected to stay within the confines of the rules.
  - And because of that you only saw following rules as a means to an end to avoid punishment.
  - You never saw it as a way to show respect or love towards your parents.
  - So this whole idea of being obedient to display love and affection doesn't make sense.
- To apply this idea that Christianity is all about keeping a list of rules... can I say that it couldn't be further from the truth!

This doesn't just apply to mess ups, but it also applies to how we serve God.

- Some of you have been operating your Christianity asleep at the wheel.
- You've been going through the motions doing Christian things, but operating without a relationship with Jesus for a long time.
- You are performing the motions to the dance, but you are dancing alone.

Jesus didn't go through all he went through on the cross so you could feel the weight and condemnation of having every sin be tallied and watchdogged by the church or other people.

- Jesus went through what he went through, so he could reestablish the ability to have a relationship with you.
  - That's what really matters.

Here's what happens... when your life has a true and powerful encounter with the Gospel of Jesus, it has no choice but to change.

- Your life used to be in complete opposition to God, so there's no way it can stay the same.

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## CHANGING FROM THE INSIDE-OUT

- Here is the difference between the approaches:
- Behavioral modification is to attempt to change from the outside-in. Which never works.
  - By using your actions to indicate some sort of inward change.
- When you have a real encounter with the Gospel, it changes you from the inside out not the outside in.
  - Catch this... it's a subtle distinction, but very critical:
    - **Being a Christian doesn't mean you stop sinning, it means you stop wanting to.**
    - Because now you understand that it negatively affects your relationship with God and it's not Dad's best for you.
      - So instead of filling some religion quota, you are doing it because you love Jesus and you begin to develop the idea that doing things he hates grieves you.
      - I love my dad... I don't want to do the things that hurts him.
      - I trust my dad... I don't want to do the things that he says are not best for me.
        - And I'll go through phases in my life where I rebel and say essentially that God doesn't know... then just like when we were teenagers we will come back around and realize that he was right all along.
  - See... now it's a different tone entirely.
  - I don't change because I have to in order to escape Hell
    - I change because I want to, because I love my Father.
    - I change because I don't want to medicate a symptom, but I want to get well.
      - I'm sick and I want the great physician to heal me.
      - I'm imprisoned and I want the God of the Universe to set me free.

## CLOSING

Romans 7:21-8:2 NLT

21 I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. 22 I love God’s law with all my heart. 23 But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. 24 Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? 25 Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God’s law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin.

8 So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. 2 And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.

**This was written by Paul... probably the #1 Christian that’s ever existed.**

**So, stop heaping condemnation upon yourself because you can’t keep up with all of the rules.**

- **I want you to focus on one thing tonight: Do you want to get well?**
  - **What’s your sickness?**
    - **For some of you this means that you have never full told Jesus I’m yours.**
  - **What’s the thing that has you locked inside your self-imposed prison?**
    - **Is it unforgiveness?**
    - **Is it selfishness?**
    - **Is it a secret sin?**
    - **Is it an addiction?**
- **Jesus is not here to medicate your symptom, but to make you well.**

**Jesus had to be locked up so we could be set free and made well.**