

Acts 13:13-43

Everyone Who Believes is Freed

Introduction: Acts is the history of earliest christianity. These were the first christians. In the narrative the church has just sent out it's first missionaries Paul and Barnabas by the direction of the Holy Spirit, and they had gone to the Island of Cyprus and preached the Gospel everywhere. Now they have sailed to what is modern day Turkey and arrived in Antioch of Pisidia and as was there practice they went to the Synagogue on the Sabbath and were given the opportunity to share with the congregation. So Paul gives a very typical jewish address, retracing their history, but in a way that is calling them to think again about the writings of scripture and what they were saying and who they were saying them about. He wants them to understand that all that was prophesied about David's offspring, the Messiah, has come to pass through Jesus. God has at long last fulfilled his promises to send a savior. Now Paul says many things that we have already looked at and considered in our studies in Acts and so I want to focus on his conclusion and offer because I think it is an offer that hits home for a people of the 21st century.

Paul says in conclusion, **“Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.”**

1. What is Freedom?

1. Freedom is something that we love to talk about as Americans. Western culture is obsessed with the notion of freedom. Of course we live in “The Land of the free..with Liberty and justice for all.”
2. President Franklin D. Roosevelt famously defined freedom as, “freedom of speech everywhere, freedom of worship everywhere, freedom from want everywhere and freedom from fear everywhere”. Many in our culture think of true freedom as casting off all restraint, any cultural or religious norms, and finding their own way. But is this really freedom? Living in a country and culture that is obsessed with freedom, and enjoys many great and wonderful freedoms, you would think that we would get on living and enjoy these freedoms, but it

seems to me that no matter who I talk to everyone one of us do not truly feel free... so the question is - is freedom false or is the freedom we have and continually try to express not really freedom at all?

1. David Foster Wallace in his speech, "What is water?" says, "The world will not discourage you from operating on your default-settings, because the world of men and money and power hums along quite nicely on the fuel of fear and contempt and frustration and craving and the worship of self. Our own present culture has harnessed these forces in ways that have yielded extraordinary wealth and comfort and personal freedom. The freedom to be lords of our own tiny skull-sized kingdoms, alone at the center of all creation. This kind of freedom has much to recommend it. But of course there are all different kinds of freedom, and the kind that is most precious you will not hear much talked about in the great outside world of winning and achieving and displaying. The really important kind of freedom involves attention, and awareness, and discipline, and effort, and being able truly to care about other people and to sacrifice for them, over and over, in myriad petty little unsexy ways, every day. That is real freedom. The alternative is unconsciousness, the default-setting, the "rat race" — the constant gnawing sense of having had and lost some infinite thing. I know this stuff probably doesn't sound fun and breezy of grandly inspirational. What it is, so far as I can see, is the Truth..."
-DFW
2. You see there are all sorts and types of freedom, and the freedom narrative that our society has bought into simply doesn't satisfy our deep desire for freedom. We're free, but we're not really free. I believe that the Gospel offers us a freedom that is so contrary to our cultural narrative yet it is the freedom our hearts truly long for...

2. Why we need Freedom.

1. The freedom I'm talking about is a freedom from that gnawing at your soul that you feel every day to justify your existence. It's hard to get through a day without feeling snubbed or ignored or feeling stupid, or inadequate, getting down on ourselves. That's because something is wrong with your identity, something is wrong with your ego and your sense of self. We use all sorts of things and people to

get self justification - approval, someone or something to tell us we are beautiful, smart, funny, that we matter - something to justify our existence.

2. Listen to what Madonna once said, "My drive in life comes from a fear of being mediocre. That is always pushing me. I push past one spell of it and discover myself as a special human being but then I feel that I am still mediocre and uninteresting unless I do something else. Because even though I have become somebody, I still have to prove that I am somebody. My struggle has never ended and I guess it never will."
3. Hear what she is saying? She has to prove that she is somebody - just to herself if no one else, it's a never ending struggle and cycle. Though Madonna is a far cry from Judaism - she is really talking about a works righteousness or a work based justification... I do these things I feel justified, the verdict that I am somebody, when I don't do them or when I fail to do them, I fall into deep despair. She is in bondage, in the rat race, never feeling that she can attain to rest or arrive at the goal, the end, the final verdict. I know that there are some of you in this very room and I would dare to say all of us to some degree that feel this. The truth is we are all looking for a freedom from this self justification. Everyone one of us is looking for a final verdict over our lives
4. Why do we feel this? -This sense of not being able to measure up, that we are never good enough, this hunger for approval, this verdict on our lives that we are somebody?
 1. Because everyone of of us is bearing a burden of sin and guilt - whether we know it or not, or call it sin or something else... we all feel this weight on our lives.
 2. I'm not just talking about sins - adultery, murder, racism, hatred, stealing... the things we typically think of when we hear the word sin but I'm talking about sin - which is not centering our lives on God, not worshipping, and serving him with every fiber of our being. That is sin. Sin is that we worship and serve the created world, rather than the God who created the world. And this is where our universal cosmic guilt comes from.
 1. Sin is an infection of the human heart, we are inclined to it. we want it, our will is bent on it and we are powerless to it in changing our inclination and desire toward it. Ed Welch

says, "This enlarged perspective indicates that in sin, we are both hopelessly out of control and shrewdly calculating; victimized yet responsible. All sin is simultaneously pitiable slavery and overt rebelliousness or selfishness."

3. Sin is the reason for the gnawing sense of guilt and the need for "justification" that we feel everyday. And we look to everyone else and everything else but from God to receive it.

3. How Jesus sets us Free.

1. The teaching of the Bible is that we are created by a loving God, to whom we owe everything. Yet we were separated from this loving God not long after our creation - because of our own desire for autonomy. This act of rebellion did not bring freedom as the first humans thought, but instead, bondage to all kind of inconveniences, foolish practices and philosophies because we had been separated from God, our creator, the author of life. This action also brought about death since we were separated now from him who is life and who gives life. The only way to experience true freedom, what it truly means to be human and alive, is to be reunited with God our creator, not through religious piety or good works because this only brings more enslavement and fear and uncertainty - because we can never appease the holiness of Almighty God, we can never do enough good, and we can never repay the evil we have done. But we can be reunited with God through the way that he has made - Through the work of Jesus Christ' perfect life, death, and resurrection. Through accepting Jesus' life offered to God for our imperfect life, him taking our sin upon himself at the cross and giving us his righteousness, by this act we are justified -
2. Paul, in his sermon, presents Jesus as God's anointed servant to deal with the problem of sin. He has come to forgive sin and set the world free from the tyranny of sin and death that it lives under. He says, **"through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses."** The word "freed" that Paul uses is the word justified (Meaning: Just, innocent, free, righteous... nothing to prove, nothing to hide...
 1. "Justification is the judicial act of God pardoning sinners, accepting them as just, and so putting permanently right their

previously estranged relationship with himself. This justifying act is God's gift of righteousness, his bestowal of a status of acceptance for Jesus' sake" -J I Packer

3. Here's the idea - when Jesus died he was not dying for sins that he had done, but he was dying for the sins of the world, Jesus never sinned, he lived all his life in perfect holiness before God. The ascension of Jesus (After his death and resurrection) means that Jesus is 24/7 in the presence of God, the righteous judge, (The cosmic court room) pleading our case -that we who have trusted in his sacrifice for us, are guiltless of sin, and that we are clothed in Christ perfect righteousness. Jesus work on the cross, means, that those who believe in him, their debt of sin has been paid in full, and the righteous life that Jesus lived has been credited to their account. God now sees you as absolutely spotless and beautiful in Jesus.
 1. Paul writes later in Romans - **“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. -Romans 3:21-25 And in Romans 8:1 “there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”** If you have received justification from God the judge of all, no other judgment matters, it holds no weight. Paul in 1 Corinthians says as much, **“it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me.”** -So stop putting yourself i the court of human approval - you have been justified by God if you are in Christ.
 2. We talk often about this idea here at Refuge - justification through faith in Jesus means that the only one in the universe that matters, God, thinks you are amazing, spotless, and beautiful.. because you are hidden in Jesus' righteousness. What does it matter what other people think about you? Only once this truth

has sunk into your heart (by the working of the Holy Spirit) and freed you from the opinions and judgments of others, or even your opinion of yourself, will you be free and truly living under the rule of Jesus as King.

3. This is what all of us long for that the King of the universe the one that created us would look upon us and say JUSTIFIED! Clean!, Pure!! FREE from guilt and judgment. We can have that! we can have it through Jesus' sacrifice for us.

4. But isn't this just trading one form of bondage for another??

1. God's work of justifying us for Jesus' sake makes us free, clean and right, not in order that we can do what we want -That's what led to our need for cleansing in the first place - but in order to be what God has created us to be - creatures that live in fellowship with him and bear his image - creatures that are filled up with his love and his power.
2. Our modern culture sees freedom as the complete absence of any constraints. But think of a fish. since a fish get's it's oxygen from water, is fish more free in water or on land? Maybe freedom isn't about the absence of all restraint but rather accepting the right restraint in order that something can be all that it was created to be?
3. "So (Also) the commandments of God in the Bible are a means of liberation, because through them God calls us to be what He built us to be. Cars work well when you follow the owner's manual and honor the design of the car. If you fail to change the oil, no one will fine you or take you to jail; your car will simply break down because you violated its nature. You suffer a natural consequence. In the same way, human life works properly only when it is conducted in line with God on the throne of our lives and his word as our guide for Truth. If you disobey God's commands, not only do you grieve and dishonor God, you are actually acting against your own nature as God designed you." - Keller
1. "God made us: invented us as a man invents an engine. A car is made to run on petrol, and it would not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other. That is why it is just no good asking God to make us happy in our own

way without bothering about religion. God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there.”
-C.S. Lewis

2. **But how do I know I can trust God and surrender to him?**

Look at Jesus! Jesus lost his freedom in order to bring freedom to you - he was pinned to a cross, he couldn't move, the God of Glory gave up his freedom for you, does that sound oppressive and harmful for your life??

4. Once you realize how Jesus changed for you and gave himself for you, you aren't afraid of giving up your freedom and therefore finding your freedom in him."