**Mike Hipes – Facebook Lesson, August 19, 2020**

Good afternoon!

“If it doesn’t fit you must acquit.” You may remember this famous statement from Jonnie Cochran, one of O J Simpson’s lawyer’s referring to a pair of gloves that were part of the evidence presented during this famous murder trial in 1995. In the end, Simpson was acquitted on two counts of murder. According to USA Today, this case was the most publicized criminal case in history. The definition of being acquitted is “free from a criminal charge by a verdict of not guilty.” However, spiritually speaking when it comes to the sins that we commit, unfortunately, we are all guilty regardless of any court findings! Romans 3:23 says, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Fortunately, although we are guilty, we can still be free from the charge! How? We can be pardoned! Pardoned is when we are guilty but forgiven, excused, or released of the consequences and blame of the sin and still get to go free. Amazing! Romans 3:24 tells us how. “Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Being justified is easier to understand when we say it this way: It is, just- as- if- id, never sinned! In other words, guilty, but still set free, pardoned, justified by His amazing grace! In the end, even though we are guilty we are pardoned from getting what we deserved because of Jesus.

Listen to a few encouraging verses about being pardoned:

· “Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” Isaiah 55:7

· “May the good Lord pardon everyone who prepares his heart to seek God...” 2 Chronicles 30:18-19

· “For Your name’s sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great.” Psalm 25:11

Not being pardoned and getting what we deserve at times can be painful. One morning, years ago when I lived in NY, I needed to drive into NYC for a doctor’s appointment. The doctor was an eye specialist and this appointment was an important visit to the New York Eye institute. Just traveling from Long Island to Manhattan is an overwhelming task due to the morning rush hour traffic. About 7 million people live on L.I. and approx. 8 million live in NYC. That’s a lot of people; a lot of cars on the road too! When people start traveling from the island to the city for work each morning, it is quite the test of patience. It’s no wonder due to the slow commute and constant gridlock that the Long Island Expressway earned the name the biggest parking lot of the world. After a grueling trip in to see my doctor that morning and a parking ticket due to my meter running out at the curb, I was finally on my way home. However, it was just the start of the afternoon traffic heading back. This time when I hit the first wave of traffic coming out of the midtown tunnel, I had enough. I pulled onto the right shoulder and began to drive alongside the right lane passing everyone by. I ignored all the honking of disapproval and just kept driving! Of course, this was a major traffic sin that I gave in to! Regardless, all seemed to be worth the risk until I was met head-on by a motorcycle cop coming in the opposite direction on the shoulder who promptly stopped me to write me a ticket! I didn’t argue the ticket as I deserved it! However, while the officer was writing me the traffic ticket, all of the cars that I passed were now slowly passing me by in the crawling traffic. As they passed, they rolled down their windows verbally lambasting me saying, you are getting just what you deserve! They were actually hostile toward me! I responded, I know I deserve the ticket, but go easy on the verbal abuse and hostility would-ya! Yes, getting what we deserve can be painful at times!

When it comes to our spiritual transgressions, getting what we deserve is to be expected and often painful! Being pardoned and not receiving what we deserve is a beautiful thing! This is what Jesus did for us on the cross!

· “When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” Colossians 2:13-14

Thank you, Jesus! My spiritual debt and ticket have been paid in full!

Blessings, Mike.