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GALATIANS 4

Galatians Series

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we do want to sensor our hearts on you today. We want to still our hearts and be still and know that you are our God. When we come here today, we come because we want to be encouraged in our faith. We come because we want to rise to the next level in our personal development. We know that involves you and what you're doing in our lives. We come because we want to enjoy the friendships that are developed in this body of people here. But Lord, many of us come with challenges and struggles, problems that we need to overcome. We are grateful for what you've done in our hearts and our lives and we know, Lord, that when we are connected to you that good solutions can come. We can trust you for what you're doing. You are a faithful God. You love us, you care for us, you give us direction and wisdom. We ask, Lord, for humility. Help us to see our own weaknesses, be willing to change them, to grow, and to be the persons that you want us to be. So today, Lord, as we open your word we ask that you would speak to us and teach us from it. We've come expectantly, ready to listen to you speak to us through your word today. So as we open it up, we ask for you to teach us, to inspire us, to convict us, to encourage us, to spur us on to be the people that you want us to be. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

I'd like you to turn in your Bibles to Galatians 4. At Calvary Chapel we teach the Bible verse by verse. So what we take is a passage of scripture and we try to go through each verse of the Bible and we're trying to draw applications out of that. Our goal is to understand what God would have to say for us because that Bible that you hold in your hand is God's word. So whatever translation you're using is fine.

What we're trying to do is understand what God is saying to you from the word of God for your heart. I'm going to try to go through because I've studied it this week and I'm going to try to make some observations and some application for you to draw your attention to what God would say. But really it's the Spirit of God that's present here today that wants to communicate something to you. So whether you're a young person or an adult, whether you're married or single, wherever you are in your life, I just want you to be sensitive to what God might say because He might say something to you that is different than I had intended. That's okay. This is God's word and He wants to speak to you through it.

Now this passage in particular is a meaningful one to me as you'll find today as I go through it. You'll see why it's meaningful to me.

We're going to start in Galatians 4:1, but if you look at Galatians 3:29 it's what jumps us into this passage because Paul here is wanting us to understand something very important about the

Christian life. So in 3:29 it says this: *If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

Now this idea of being *heirs according to the promise* is going to launch us into an illustration. The illustration is this and I'll read it to you in a minute starting in chapter 4. But get it first in your mind so you understand that the illustration is the difference between being a child that's underage and someone who is an heir (an adult) who receives the blessings and the privileges.

So we've got an heir who is an adult who receives the blessings and privileges or a child who's underage in a rich home. So he's under tutors and guardians that are putting restrictions and rules and guidelines on them. Paul wants us to understand there's a difference between those two and who you are. You are like the adult child. We're coming to that in a minute.

Let me read it starting in verse 1. *What I am saying is that as long as an heir is underage, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. The heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world.*

Do you see that part there? The *elemental spiritual forces of the world* describe the fact that the person who is underage is really being described as a person who is not a believer. In other words, we're all under God's creation, all of us, but there are some people who live in the spiritual forces of the world. They're oppressed, they're under rules and bondage. It's about guilt, it's about pleasing people. It's all about those things in the underage category in the analogy compared to the free person, the son who is free and has benefits. Those are the two things.

So you have to think in terms first of all of the person who's not saved, who hasn't come to know Jesus Christ yet. That person has, if they think about religion they think about rules. I've got to do this, this, and this in order to be pleasing to God. When God wants to give us something He wants to give us freedom in the Spirit and so on, we'll see in a few minutes.

But there's a comparison drawn between those two elements and you either find yourself in one place or another. Everybody here is either on one side – either you're not a believer yet, you're not a Christian and therefore you're living under the world's system. You're like someone under a tutor, a guardian with rules, regulations. Like a military camp in essence. And that's how you're living your life. Or if you're a Christian, you've accepted Christ into your life, then you're free. You are a son. You have the blessings and privileges that come with sonship. So those are the two parts here that we're talking about.

Now Paul is saying I want you to understand Christianity. So I think that's an important message for us. You want to understand Christianity yourself. What does it mean for you? From the scriptures what is God saying for us?

If you are bound to this slavery idea, if you're not a Christian yet then it's all about people pleasing, it's all about guilt, it's all about rules. That's your religion. It's not about a personal relationship. And that's what the world is. There's lots of rules. Many of those rules are

unhelpful and they're kind of built into the thinking patterns of the culture. Rules like look out for number one. If someone gets it, you get even with them. Money is happiness. Pleasure is the ultimate goal. If you're stuck there in a world system, then you're trapped there. You're like a slave as described there. You're under tutelage.

It's not the same as being an heir, a free son with the blessing. So that's what he's going to describe as we go forward here that we as Christians have the freedom and benefits.

Now verses 4 and 5 are so important. I want to spend a few minutes on those verses because they describe the way that we get from this old way of living in the world system of thinking and so on over to this new way of thinking that is to become a Christian, a son with freedom and benefits. So in verses 4 and 5 let me read them to you. It describes how that process takes place. So if you're here today and you don't know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, these are your verses because they're going to help you know how to move from this side over to this side.

Verses 4-5 say this: *But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.*

So the first thing I want to point out is that the words *set time had fully come* refers to the ticking clock in history. We're not in a random life-goes-on, fatalistic world. There is a ticking clock going on in world history. And when the time was fully come, the clock reached a person point. Jesus Christ came to earth, sent by God, as we see and following in the passage. But the ticking clock started way earlier.

Adam learned about the ticking clock because God said to him, "Someday the seed of a woman is going to crush this serpent's head." They were given a hope way back there.

Abraham learned about the ticking clock because he was given a promise that said, "You're going to have a son and descendants that are greater than the sands of the sea or the stars of the sky, more numerous than all of those, and through you all the nations of the earth will be blessed." The clock is ticking. Abraham knew about it.

David was given a promise that someday there's going to be a kingdom that's greater than this, a kingdom of righteousness that will be established forever. David knew there was a ticking clock going on.

Jeremiah predicted the new covenant that would take place where the law would be written on our hearts, as they are today, not on just tablets of stone. There is a ticking clock going through. God has a plan. It's moving through and God knows every one of us and we are on that clock. We know what's happening. We don't know all the details, but God does.

Then the story starts to unfold and so John the Baptist is told, "The time is now." And so he got to be part of the birth of Christ.

Mary was told, “The time is now and you get to be a part of that.” Joseph was told, “The time is now,” and the clock now is reaching the set time that had fully come. Because God had sent His Son born of a woman, born of the law to do something very important.

Let’s look at that next word, the word *redeem*. Now the word *redeem* is a very simple word. You know that word, especially at this time of year, when you get a gift certificate for something. Someone gives you your Amazon gift certificate card or Visa card, or someone gives you a gift certificate and you take that up to the cash register when you’re going to cash out. Do they say, “Pay up. Give us the money”? No. They say, “You don’t owe anything. It’s all paid for.” That’s the gift certificate.

That’s what Christ did when it says He redeemed us. You go to the store, you redeem your gift certificate for the merchandise that you’re going to get. When Jesus Christ died for us, He died so that we have salvation. We don’t have to pay for it ourselves. God redeemed us. He bought us. The payment was Jesus Christ. He was the sacrifice for our sin.

Who do you think He paid it to? Did He pay it to Satan? No. He didn’t pay it to Satan. He paid it to Himself. Because He’s holy and righteous. We can’t have a relationship with God because He’s holy; we are not. And so He paid the price so that we can have that personal relationship. That’s what the word *redeem* means. He bought us back.

There’s no way you can earn your way to heaven. There’s no way you can rely on a list of rules that might exist in this old nature here. “If I do this, and this, and this” or “if I pray this certain way” or “if I attend this that and the other thing, then I’ll be spiritual before God.” There’s nothing you can do. There’s only one way that you can have a relationship with God and that is to accept the gift of Jesus Christ because God redeemed us.

That is His plan. It’s part of the ticking clock. It’s part of the plan that God has laid out for each one of us. Nobody gets to have it except by listening to that word and that message that God wants to have a personal relationship in our lives.

Here’s the fun part. Notice it says what He’s redeemed us to. He’s redeemed us to *adoption*. Now that means a lot to me because I’m an adoptive father.

You would not believe what happens when someone gets adopted. Here is the birth certificate of Elizabeth Amy Turansky. This is her actual birth certificate. Now this was the birth certificate that came to her after she was adopted.

I want to point out a couple things. First of all, do you see the date up there at the top where it says September 7, 1994? That was the date she was adopted. That’s the date of issue. But if you go down below, down here to the date at the bottom, you see that? The date filed with the State Registrar – October 11, 1987 – that’s a month after her birthday. In other words, what the judge did when he stamped this certificate is that he determined back there now she at her birth has different parents. This records her birth parents, here’s her birth parents right here. That’s the dad – Scott Turansky. This is recorded on her birth certificate.

Notice in the last statement of the paragraph there it says, “This is merely a copy of the information supplied for preparation of the original birth certificate.” That’s really significant to me because what this birth certificate did for her when we went before the judge and the judge stamped this and said, “This person is your child. This person, Elizabeth Amy Turansky, this is her dad and this is her mom, and this is the birth certificate that demonstrates that.” Wow. That’s amazing.

See, God does the same thing in our lives. When you accept Jesus Christ into your life, you become adopted into His family. He takes away all of the past, all of the things that are there. You are not held accountable for any of those things. You are now before God. You are free. You’re a child of God. And when you are a child of God, you get a new Father and you get new brothers and sisters, and you get a new name, and you get a new inheritance, and you get new rules, and you get new privileges, and you get new benefits, and you get a new identity. It all comes in this adoption process. That’s amazing what God does in the midst of that.

That’s why this passage is so fun for me is because I think about what God has done in my life. He’s given me the privilege to be adopted into His family. That means that I live in a new family and that new family I’ve got to learn to get to know. There’s some brothers and sisters that might be hard for me to get along with sometimes and I’ve got to deal with sibling conflict within the family of God. That means that my children are my brothers and sisters in Christ. So I treat them with value. Oh it’s so fun. The whole idea I just love it so much.

Let’s go on to verse 6. *Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts.*

Now the whole idea of what the Spirit of God does in our lives is powerful. We’re going to amplify that in the next couple weeks and we’re going to talk about living by the Spirit versus living by the flesh.

Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our heart (that’s what it is – He’s in my heart) the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir. I’m no longer a slave anymore. Now I’m a son. I’m an heir. And I can call Him Abba Father.

So the word *Abba* means daddy. It means we come to Him in this special way. My children don’t call me Scott. That’s my name. Most of you call me Scott. Some of you call me Pastor because that’s one of my roles and we have a pastoral relationship, so you call me that. There’s only a few people who call me Dad. There’s a special relationship that we enjoy together because of that. I love that relationship that I have with God.

When I was a kid, at large family gatherings the adults would sit at the one table and the kids would sit at the other table. You know how they got the little tables for kids. There were times when my knees wouldn’t fit under the table anymore. I’d feel, “How come I have to sit at the little kids table?”

God’s saying, “You don’t have to sit at the little kids table anymore. Sit at the big table with me.” It’s a privilege that we have to be sons, heirs.

We live in a broken world where fatherhood is damaged. You might look at your father and say, “Wow I don’t think I can think about God as Father because my dad, well I don’t even have a dad” or “my dad sure wasn’t an example of fatherhood.” I just want you to know, all of us have imperfect fathers. There is no one that can meet the needs that we have, the fatherhood needs we have except for God Himself. Imperfect fathers just remind us that we need to go to our heavenly Father and enjoy who He is and what He’s done because He’s the one who meets our inner needs in our lives.

Paul is saying to these Galatians, “Look, I’ve sinned. I killed Christians. Bad things happen to me. I used to be a Pharisee, measure my life by all the good things that I did. All of that’s gone now. Now I’m a son. I’m free. I want you to understand what Christianity is all about.” He wants to communicate that message that we are adopted into God’s family.

You know why we have to be adopted, right? Because there’s only one child of God, one biological child of God. John 3:16 says that there’s *the only begotten Son of God*. That Jesus Christ is the only begotten. He is the only one begotten. He is the only biological son of God is Jesus. The rest of us are adopted into the family.

When someone says or you hear someone refer to God as “the man upstairs,” I know they don’t know God. Because they would not refer to Him that way if they really knew who He was. Because there’s a personal dynamic, a relationship that we have that fills us with wonder.

It reminds me of the little child who says, “My dad can beat up your dad.” That sense of wonder that we have and I think we’re going to live the rest of our lives in wonder at the father relationship that we enjoy. That God has provided for us in our lives.

Verse 8: Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. But now that you know God—or rather are known by God (in other words God is the one who initiates, so God knows us)—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.

Now what he’s saying is there’s two sides of this. You’re either saved or you’re not saved. If you’re not saved you’re like a slave living under guardians and tutors, living in the world system. Or you’re a Christian, accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior in your life. Those are the only two choices that you have.

However, once you get saved, there’s some people who say, “Well yeah, I’m saved, but I’d better go back and do some of those rules and regulations. I feel guilty if I don’t do such and such and such and such.” And so they put themselves under rules to define their spirituality and that’s when they get into trouble.

Paul wants to say you don’t do that. In fact, I’m so concerned about you, he’s saying. This is so dangerous for you to do this because it’s robbing you of what? Here’s why it’s dangerous to

define spirituality in terms of rules and regulations instead of the Spirit. Because you become externally motivated instead of internally motivated. God wants us to be internally motivated so that we can enjoy who He is and we can move with the Spirit in our lives. If you define spirituality a certain way, then you create a container of spirituality and that container of spirituality becomes your definition of your relationship with God. That's a mistake.

That's what happened to the Pharisees in the New Testament. They defined spirituality. They had their list of dos and don'ts of things they would do and wouldn't do, and how to do this and how to do that. Those things became their container of spirituality, so their hearts were missing. They didn't have a heart that followed the Lord.

So Paul is saying in verse 11, *I fear for you*. I'm afraid. That's the same feeling that every parent or pastor has when they see someone doing the wrong thing. I'm afraid for you of what this could happen and what this will do for the rest of your life. I see that you're in a dangerous place.

So that's why in verse 12 he says, *I plead with you, brothers and sisters, become like me, for I became like you*. In other words I left Judaism to become a common person. The solution isn't Judaism. I was a Jew. I'm now free.

Continue on in verse 12. *You did me no wrong. As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you*.

Now we don't know what this illness is. We don't quite know what he's referring to. Given the rest of the words we're going to read it seems to have something to do with his eyes that maybe he had an eye problem. We don't even know what circumstances took place. Maybe because he had an eye problem he was stuck there and couldn't travel for a while, so he stopped off in places that he hadn't expected to be and so he taught there. We don't know exactly, but he's referring back to this illness that he had.

Because of this illness I first preached the gospel to you, and even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. In other words, you respected me. You valued me.

Where, then, is your blessing of me now? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. Back then there was so much respect that you had for me then, but now when I'm telling you the truth you guys aren't listening to me. That's basically what he's saying. Why don't you guys listen to me?

Verse 16: *Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?*

Verse 17 – he's now going to talk about here's the problem that they were experiencing. In the Galatian churches there were Christians and they were trying to grow in their faith. But there were some people who believed that in order to be godly and Christian then you must reserve these days of the week, you must be circumcised, you must eat these certain dietary things. And none of those things were specified as black and white in scripture. They're all kind of external

things. So they're pulling people away and they're drawing them away from this internal motivation that I want serve God because of who He is. Not this list of rules that are present.

So if we continue on, he says (verse 17), *Those people* (those ones that are drawing you away) *are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may have zeal for them. It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always, not just when I am with you.*

There are people – and you've just got to ask yourself this question for yourself. Are there some people that are dragging you down? Dragging you away from this personal relationship that you want to enjoy with God? Because if there's people dragging you away, you want to diminish their influence, in this case pushing them away. Sometimes they live in your house, so you can't just push them away, but you want to diminish their influence in your life.

Verse 19: *My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!* See, what he's saying is if I were with you I could change my tone. I'm not with you, so I'm speaking very clearly and strongly to you.

It's hard to communicate via email and text message sometimes. What you want to do is be with the person. When you're with the person they can see your face and you can tone it down a little bit because you can communicate a little bit better. That's basically what he's saying, even though they didn't have email in those days.

Now starting in verse 21 we're going to enter into an analogy. I'll read 21 and 22 and then I want to tell you about this other analogy so you understand the passage here. I've got to tell you the story from the Old Testament so you get it.

Verse 21: *Tell me, you who want to be under the law* (that's over here with the rules), *are you not aware of what the law says? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman.*

So let's stop. Let me tell you the story about the slave woman and the free woman just to remind you of this in case you are not familiar with it. When Abraham was younger, he was given a promise. That promise was that his descendants would be as great as the *sands of the seashores*, as *numerous as the stars in the sky*. In other words, uncountable descendants. And through the descendants *the nations of the earth will be blessed*.

Now there's this promised one, who's going to be Jesus, down through your lineage. But the problem was his wife couldn't have a baby. They couldn't get pregnant. They tried. They tried. They tried. They couldn't get pregnant. They're seeing they can't get pregnant. If you've been in that experience, you know how discouraging that is.

So Sarah, his wife, says to him, "I've got an idea how we can help God out." She doesn't quite use these words, but that's basically what she's doing. She says, "I'll tell you what. I have a servant girl. Her name is Hagar. Why don't you go into her, have a child, I'll kind of adopt her,

and she'll be the one whom all the nations of the earth will be blessed." So Abraham says, "I think that's a good idea."

They go and they have this child. They're trying to help God out. Well, that was only the beginning of some problems.

Their baby's name was Ishmael. He was born as a son, created conflict within that family relationship. Hagar and her son Ishmael had to leave the family, had to be put out. It's out of them that the whole Arab nation, all the Arab nations, come. We continue to have conflict between the Arabs and the Jews because of this mistake that Abraham had of trying to help God out in the midst of all of that.

Well here's what happened. As things went on, Sarah was seventy years old, past the time of childbearing, past menopause. She and Abraham were in their tent under the *big oak of Mamre*, the Bible says, and they had their tent set up there. I wonder if it was one of those small camping tents or my guess is it was one of those tents with a lot of – I mean Abraham was a rich guy, so he probably had lots of parts to his tent. Big tent and these three visitors come up.

When the three visitors come up, Abraham says, "Oh good. We have visitors. Have a seat under the big tree of the oak of Mamre here. Honey, would you go and get some food? Why don't you go make some flour and cook up some bread cakes or something, and I'll go get some meat out of the freezer." (In that case, they didn't have a freezer. They went out to the flock and got an animal, had a servant cut it up, got it all ready). So all the food is being prepared.

The three visitors are talking to Abraham. Messengers of God is who they are. And one of them says to Abraham, "Abraham, I want you to know that God is going to do something great for you and next year at this time your wife Sarah is going to have a baby."

Now Sarah is in the tent and Sarah can hear the conversation that's going on while she's preparing the meal. And she laughs. She laughs and so the visitor says, "How come Sarah's laughing?" Sarah says, "I didn't laugh." She lied. "I didn't laugh." She couldn't handle the pressure.

Nine months later a baby was born and they named the baby Laughter because Sarah said, "*God has brought me laughter* in my old age." *Yitzchaq*. In English we see it translated in our translation Isaac. That's his name and he's the promised one. He's the one who came through supernatural conception, as opposed to the one that was trying to help out.

That's the picture. That's the backdrop. Now we come back to the analogy here in verse 23. Abraham's *son by the slave woman was born according to the flesh, but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a divine promise.*

These things are being taken figuratively. What he's saying is I'm going to use this as an analogy so you can understand what I'm trying to teach you about Christianity and about those under the law and those under the Spirit.

The women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written: "Be glad, barren woman, you who never bore a child; shout for joy and cry aloud, you who were never in labor; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband."

So he gives us an analogy and he wants to make three applications. If you're hanging with me here, you'll see the applications right in the text. I'm just taking you right through the Bible here and pointing them out. Application number one is in verse 28. *Now you, brothers and sisters* (so if earlier we were talking about sons of adoption, you women felt left out. Now we're back to the women here. Brothers and sisters), *like Isaac, are children of promise.*

In other words, we come to Christ by faith. It is a promise. That is application number one. We are children of promise. God has given us this special relationship with Him through this special conception. In other words, there's a special spiritual dynamic. Not by works. Not by trying to help God out. Not by fixing it on our own. Not by people pleasing people. Not by obeying a list of rules and regulations. It's by a promise by supernatural work that God did. That's application number one.

Application number two is that you're going to get persecuted if you're over here on this side. You've got to know that. Let me read verse 29, application number two. *At that time the son born according to the flesh persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now.*

So you see that is the application. Right out of the Bible there, the application that Paul is making is you're going to experience persecution. You know that. You have Thanksgiving dinner with your unsaved relatives and they say, "Let's let Johnny do his thing. We'll let him pray today for the meal," or something like that. There's a sense of persecution. People are going to put you down because you're a Christian. That's verse 29.

The third application is this: get rid of the bad influences in your life. That's what he's saying here. You're over here, you're free, you have blessings, you have privileges. Don't get locked into this stuff and let someone rob you of that.

So look at verse 30. *But what does Scripture say? "Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son."* Get rid of the people that are influencing you is basically what he's saying here. Because they're going to create a problem for you.

Freedom. Freedom is what we have in Christ. Do you know what that freedom means? Oh I know. We live in the land of the free and the home of the brave. We have the Statue of Liberty recognizing freedom, but I've got to tell you today that our greatest hope for our world, the last hope is not America for freedom in our world. The greatest hope we have, the last hope we have is Jesus Christ. He's the one who provides that freedom for us. And that freedom that we have in

our hearts allows us to be directed by the Spirit to live our lives in a particular way. When God is directing us by His Spirit, good things happen.

Now let's make this really practical for a moment. God has given specific things in His word that are right and wrong. It's wrong to have sex outside of marriage. It is wrong to get drunk. We can list other things that are right or wrong in the Bible. They're written right there. There are a lot of things not written in the Bible, like whether you're going to do the dishes right after dinner or you're going to wait a couple hours to do them. That's not written in the Bible. But that causes conflict in family. Did you know that? The husband might have a different idea about how he wants the dishes done in a family. Now if you want to live the life of freedom that we're talking about, then you'll let your wife and you do the dishes two hours later. Whatever you want! In other words, it doesn't make any difference about those things because there's nothing in the Bible about those.

Now we can get in more specific about things that are sometimes – because dishes is really trivial – but how you spend your money and what you spend your leisure time on and what kind of things you eat and how you're going to exercise or do fitness. All those things have questions. Some people would say, “You shouldn't do that or you shouldn't do that.” The scriptures are saying there's a freedom that we have in Christ.

Now I want you to be really careful because just because you have freedom doesn't mean you do it. There are a lot of dangers in doing certain kinds of things that we need to be aware of, but who's going to be the ultimate person deciding that if we're not dealing with black and white things; we're dealing with the freedom that we have in Christ. It's between you and God. The conscience and the Spirit work inside of you and God helps you decide what's best for you.

So if you have a problem, if you find yourself being critical of other people and the way they do things, you better think about freedom. If you find yourself being moved along in an area and you find yourself getting sucked in, then maybe your personal freedom shouldn't be exercised in that way. Maybe other people can do that, but you can't. If you find that your witness to other people is being damaged by this particular activity, you might choose to limit your freedom.

It's all dealing with this idea of freedom because there's only one way to come to Christ and that's through the cross of Jesus Christ. After that, the roads part and as we're going toward heaven, we're all heading toward heaven, but some people take big detours and other people go straight through. Sometimes, like today, our paths have crossed and we get to enjoy that privilege of being together. But there's freedom that you have to live your life differently than mine and we have to allow that to take place in nonessentials described in the gospel.

Some people want freedom. They want freedom from marriage. They want freedom from making drugs illegal. They think marijuana should be legalized. They want freedom from control so they can just get an abortion without someone just hindering that. They want freedom from nativity scenes and crosses so they aren't disturbed by someone else's faith.

Well people want all kinds of freedom, but I think they misunderstand this idea of freedom. If drugs made you free, then a heroin addict would be the most free person in the world, the

happiest person going. If sex made you free and happy, then the prostitute would be the happiest person. That's not what freedom is. Freedom is to choose to live under the umbrella of God's leadership and embrace what He wants you to do, and when you do that amazing things happen. There's a freedom that allows for fulfillment, it allows for blessing, it allows for privilege. Amazing things happen in our lives.

Let's conclude the passage. Look at verse 31. *Therefore, brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.* And God has given you freedom. It's a privilege.

Just look at chapter 5:1. This will launch us into next week. *It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.*

I think we've lost track of what freedom is and we need to be drawn back to this idea that God wants to work in our hearts. His Spirit's going to work and He's going to do some amazing things inside of us. And when He does those things, we're led by the Spirit. That's what the whole book of Galatians is about – being led by the Spirit of God.

We have a tendency to wander, I think. We wander. And when we wander we have to be brought back. It's like when you guys tune your musical instruments, especially the string instruments. You have to tune them up because they get out of tune. So easily they get out tune, so you have to go back and tune them up again in order to make sure they're on track. We need to tune our hearts, I think, to God's grace sometimes so we can praise Him. It's His grace. This whole freedom part is God's grace. We tune our hearts to be in line with God's grace and that's what's going to happen for us.

When Jesus comes into your life, He provides this fountain of blessing inside of you that provides all these freedoms and great things. It's an amazing thing what Christ has done, and I'm excited about this.

This next song that we're going to sing is a song that was written by a pastor when he was twenty-three years old. I can't help but think he must have read Galatians 4 before he wrote this song because it's a song that really comes out of his understanding of what salvation is and the very things we're talking about.

Jesus is this fountain inside of us that produces blessing that we need to tune our hearts. There's this prone to wander that happens in our lives.

As we tie things up today, I want you to have an opportunity in your own heart to allow God to put His finger on something in your life. What does God want you to do? What does He want to say to you? How does He want to speak to you from His word today as we sing this song?

Would you stand with me? Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we come now and we worship you. We're grateful for the song that was created in the 1700s, a song that really embodies this passage that we're reading today.

We ask, Lord, that you would help us understand more about what that freedom is for each of our own hearts. We ask that you'd speak to us, teach us, lead us. I pray for anyone here who hasn't accepted you as their Lord and Savior, that in these next few moments as we sing that they would make that decision to trust you in their own lives. In Jesus' name, amen.