



Scott Turansky, Senior Pastor
December 7, 2014

GALATIANS 5:1-15

Galatians Series

Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we do want to thank you for this church. We know that there are other good churches in this area. I think of GraceWay, and Faith Baptist, and Central Baptist, and we think about Princeton Alliance Church, Living Tree Church. I think of the other Calvary Chapels in this area. There are a number of churches, Lord, that are teaching your word so we ask for your blessing on them today. For those pastors that have prepared to teach today, we ask that the word would go forth in a mighty way to those people who are parts of those fellowships.

Lord, we thank you for the people you brought here to this church. We ask that you would work in us, each as individuals, but you'd work among us as we gather together, we fellowship, we build friendships, that your Spirit who draws us together would empower us to be the church that you've called us to be. We thank you for what you've done in us and what you continue to do in our lives.

Lord, I do ask for safety on the trip that I'm taking. I'm leaving today and I ask that you would bless me as I spend time with Ben and Galan and Sahlor over the next several days.

Lord, I ask for others that are here with special needs, some who are coming with sickness that needs to be healed. We come to you because you are the Great Physician and we ask for your healing. For those who are troubled about particular things, have pressure on their lives, or burdens that they're carrying, we ask that you would lighten those with the strength that you provide. So, Lord, we entrust ourselves now to you. We open our hearts to you and ask you to speak to us in a powerful way now as we open your word. In Jesus' name, amen.

Please open your Bibles to Galatians 5:1, which I believe is the key verse for the book of Galatians. If you're going to look at one verse as a key verse, I would suggest that this one is it because it really describes what's happening and what Paul is calling the people to in this book. It calls us to something very important, so I want to spend some time just on this first verse before we continue on into the rest of the passage.

Galatians 5:1 says this: *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.*

This concept of freedom is the theme for the book of Galatians. He starts out by saying *stand firm*. The King James Version says *stand fast*. I just want to pause there because I want us to think about what that means. Take a stand. Stand firm.

The same Greek word is used in 1 Corinthians 16:13 which is – *Be on your guard; stand firm* (or *stand fast*) *in the faith; be courageous; be strong*. It's the same word that's mentioned there. The same word is also used in Philippians 4:1 – to stand fast. 1 Thessalonians 3:8 – stand fast. 2 Thessalonians 2:15 – stand fast. Stand firm.

Before we go on in this passage, I want to make a point that God is making here in the passages that we need to take a stand for something. There's something we stand for and we don't give in to. Even if popular opinion doesn't agree with us, there are certain things that we take a stand for. There are some things that are non-negotiable.

Paul is saying (and I like this particular verse in 1 Corinthians 16:13), *Be on your guard*. Because there are people from the outside or even temptations from within that would cause you to weaken your position. We want to stand firm, we want to stand fast in our faith, and there are things that are non-negotiables, things that are essentials. You've got to know what those are. Some of those are things you believe.

We believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. That is a non-negotiable. There are other people who get together and they'll start talking about how Jesus is only one son of God, one God. He is *the* Son of God. It is a non-negotiable.

The fact that the Bible is the word of God, inspired word of God that God has given to us, that is a non-negotiable.

The fact that salvation comes by faith in Jesus Christ alone, that is a non-negotiable fact.

We stand firm in those points. We don't give in to them because someone else has a different opinion or it might be offensive to someone. We don't give in to them because some other organization is killing Christians for what they believe. We don't give in. We stand firm because of what we believe. We need to just know that.

That's what he's emphasizing right here in the beginning of the passage. I just want you to see there's something worth standing for. We don't compromise that because someone else isn't happy with what we believe. We stand firm in those things.

One of those things is freedom in Christ. That's what he's saying. *Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery*.

So if you think of the things I already mentioned – the word of God, that Jesus is God, that salvation is so important – those are non-negotiable things. And now we're going to add something else – freedom in Christ. Paul is saying this is really important. Really important.

Why is he saying it's so important? Who cares if someone follows a list of rules and regulations? Why is it so important that we have freedom in Christ? I want to share with you why that is.

There are two extremes today that people often experience when they get off track here. You have to understand them. One of them is legalism and the other is license. Legalism is a mixing of faith and works together. License is a faith that doesn't have any works. God would have us have a balance of those in which I would call liberty or freedom that he's describing here in the passage. We need to understand the difference between those so we don't get off track because when we get off track we find ourselves in a serious place.

So I want to explain the difference between those just for a moment to protect you so you're understanding what this is all about. And it's so common. This is a really relevant topic. Twice this week people have asked me advice in my life. As a pastor they've asked about things that have to do with this subject. I'm going to share the answers I gave to them.

The first person is thinking about coming to our church and they asked this question – “What do you guys believe about Halloween, about Christmas and Santa Claus, and about Easter and the Easter Bunny?” That was the question they asked me. I'm going to answer that question for you in a little bit. But that is a question that falls under this category here. Obviously they had a bad experience somewhere else at some other church. They want to know what's going on at this church before they come here.

Another man sent me a Facebook message a couple days ago and he's asking about tithing, whether he should tithe on all that comes in or after taxes. He and his wife disagree about that, so they're trying to decide what to do.

Those are real questions and the answer is found in this material that we're sharing today. I'll come back and answer both those questions in just a moment, but I want to help you understand what's happening in these various words.

Legalism is the problem of the Galatian church. What's happening among those Galatian churches is that they are adding to their faith works and they're establishing a list of things. “You need to do this.” It's not hard to do, and some churches will do this – “You know the spiritual people, they come to prayer meeting.” “The spiritual people go to home Bible study during the week or they come on the Sunday night service.”

Now I'm not saying those things are bad. All those things are good and I would suggest that most of the things on the list that people create are fine, most of them are decent things. But when you start making them a list of things that define spirituality or define whether you're close to God or not, then we get into trouble, especially if you're taking that list and applying it to others. Legalism takes that list and says, “You need to do these things if you're going to be part of our group.” It's a dangerous place to be and it damages our relationship with the Lord.

Now you have to understand there's something very comfortable about creating a list. Because if you can define spirituality and you can do all of those things, then you're spiritual, then you feel pretty good about yourself and you don't have to feel anxious about, “Am I Holy Spirit filled

today? Am I following the Lord today?" There's a dynamic that God wants us to experience regularly that's asking those kinds of questions. As life changes, we continue to be following the Lord.

If you have a list of dos and don'ts, you don't need to have wisdom, you just follow the list of dos and don'ts. You don't have to think subtly or have to make hard choices. You don't have to relate personally to a loving God. You just follow the list. It's a dangerous thing because it creates a container, a container that may not contain the Spirit of God. And although the list might be fine today for you in your life, as life changes if you only keep that list and don't allow the Holy Spirit to work in your life then you're not growing, you're just staying with the list. It's dangerous. It hinders us from understanding what God has for us.

There are people in churches, I would suggest, who don't want us to be free. They don't want us to be free before God except just as we are by grace. They don't want us to be free to express our faith originally and creatively in the world. They insist they all look alike, talk alike, and act alike, thus validating one another's worth. Without being aware of it, we become anxious about what others will say about us, obsessively concerned about what others think we should do. We no longer live the good news, but anxiously try to memorize and recite the script that someone else has assigned to us. We may be secure, but we aren't free.

It's dangerous when legalism creeps into a church. We need to be careful of that. It's also dangerous when legalism creeps into a family. Imagine for example that in a family the husband and wife agree that we're going to spend so much money on groceries. The wife sends the husband or the husband sends the wife, one of them goes to the store to buy some groceries. While they're at the grocery store they have to make certain choices. They choose to purchase certain things and they bring those certain things home.

When they bring those certain things home, the other person's looking at those things that they brought home and making some evaluations of them because we have expectations. "I was expecting that you were going to the store and bringing home these things, but you brought home some different things." Now how are we going to handle that moment? Certainly if we've extended beyond what we've agreed to in our cooperative relationship as a husband and wife, we may have a problem worth talking about. But if we start picking on "Why did you get that bread?" "Well I prefer that bread," and we start being critical of someone, then we're taking this expectation and imposing it on someone else and we become hypercritical in our lives.

This isn't something just for the church; this is something even for the family. We don't want to become critical in our lives. We don't want to be so critical of everything the other person's doing that we form this sense of legalism about what that person needs to do in order to fit into our lives and what we need to do.

I like the story of the man talking to his friend at work. He's describing how his wife is so disorganized about getting things off of the table and washing the dishes in the evening. "It takes her twenty-five minutes to get everything off the table and get all the dishes washed!" This friend says, "Well why don't you just give her some ideas about what to do."

He said, “That’s exactly what I’m going to do. I’ve been telling her all the time she’s doing it wrong. I’m going to go show her how to do it right and tell her what to do.”

So he goes home and he starts telling his wife that what she’s doing is wrong. “You can do this much easier if you would do it this way. If you would take more things off the table at a time, you would make less trips. You would save time. You would save energy. You’d get things done faster.”

His friend asked him the next day, “How’s it going?”

He said, “Well, she used to do it in twenty-five minutes. Now I do it in ten.”

The reality is if we draw the circle so small that everybody has to fit into the circle that we draw around ourselves, we end up being the only people in it. We have to have something else and the passage is going to talk about that as we move forward. We have to have grace with other people.

So when asked the question this week about what our church believes about Halloween, about Christmas and Santa Claus, and about Easter and the Easter Bunny, I’m sure you’re all waiting to hear the answer of what our church believes. Our church believes (and this is what I said to the person) that this is a decision left up to the individual family. God will work in that family’s life according to the traditions that they have and what they want to do in their particular family.

Now I can share dangers, and that’s my job. We can do that with each other. If we see someone walking in an area that may be dangerous, we can say, “Hey, be careful about this.” But who makes the decision about whether they’re going to have Santa Claus in their tradition or not? It’s them in their relationship with God. That’s not my decision to impose on someone else.

So what does our church believe about that? Our church believes that’s up to the individual family to make those particular decisions as they’re moving forward.

2 Corinthians 3:6 says something very similar to that. It says, *Who also hath made us able ministers.* We’re all able ministers. This isn’t just talking about pastors. We are all ministers because God has equipped us with something *of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the Spirit: for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*

There’s something that happens inside of you that you don’t want to lose by creating a list of things that define spirituality for other people. Now you may, and I do, create lists for myself. There are some things that I don’t do. They’re on my “don’t do” list. There are also some things that I do that are on my “do” list. And that’s okay for me. The problem is when I impose those on you or if I make those some sense of standard of spirituality for myself, then I get into trouble.

You’ll see more about how this ties together as we go forward. The main point that I’m trying to make here is that legalism is dangerous. It is demanding certain works take place in order for spirituality to be their closeness in relationship or whatever it might be.

Let's go to the second word that I'd like to talk about and that's the word license. It's equally as dangerous because license basically says I'm a Christian, I've accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, and therefore it doesn't make any difference what I do. It doesn't make any difference what I do because God is going to forgive me for any mistakes I make or any sins I get involved in, so I can do whatever I want.

License damages relationship because sometimes you do whatever you want and it's offensive to other people. It also gets us in trouble sometimes because we start moving in a direction that's starting to captivate us.

If, for example, someone chooses a certain kind of entertainment, let's say playing a video game or a particular online game, there may not be anything wrong with that. I don't want to say there's nothing wrong with that. Maybe there is something wrong with it between you and God. But there may not be anything wrong with that activity. But indulging in that over and over and over again so much it may hinder a person's personal health and growth. That's the point. We have to be careful about license and saying, "Oh I can do anything because I'm a Christian." That's equally bad as legalism and we have to be careful about that.

I would suggest that the balance we want to have is this word liberty, as described in the book of Galatians, that it's faith that we have and it's demonstrated in our works. So we do have works, we do have lists, but it's coming out of that faith that we create those and we don't necessarily impose them on other people. That liberty becomes very important and we need to know how to handle it.

Legalism, as talked about in the passage in Galatians, kills Christian liberty. Let me share with you why it's bad. It's bad because it ruins the work of the Spirit inside of a person. God wants you to be internally motivated. That's why He's given you a heart and that heart that you have is different than an animal. God has given you a spiritual heart that helps you make decisions and He chooses to live there. So the decisions need to be made internally from your heart.

Salvation is different than any other religion. Other religions have activities you need to do in order to accomplish that religion. Salvation is different. It's inviting God to live inside of your heart so that you can be internally motivated. As soon as you create a list and that defines your spirituality, you weaken the work of the Holy Spirit inside of your heart. The heart has desires, it has emotions, it has beliefs, it has passions, it has commitments. But just because something is coming from the heart doesn't make it good.

I like to tell parents that your son might be highly motivated internally to punch his sister because he's angry with her. That's internal motivation, but that doesn't make it right.

God has placed two things inside the human heart to keep the heart going in the right direction. The internal compass, the module – those two things according to the Bible are the conscience (a word used thirty times in the New Testament) – and the Holy Spirit, God, who lives inside of a person to empower them to do what's right. So He prompts the heart to do the right thing, stay on track. That's freedom.

It's the freedom to have the Holy Spirit at work in our hearts and then when you create a list you start limiting the freedom that God wants you to have. If you could put a badge on that says "I'm a Christian" that was external, you would miss something internal that God wants to do. That's the whole point that Paul is trying to make here in verse 1.

Now verse 2. He's going to drill into their particular issue, which was circumcision. *Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.*

Those are interesting words. We'll talk about that in just a moment. In the Jewish tradition, circumcision was very valuable and important as a symbol and an indication of closeness to God or a covenant relationship with God. So Gentiles were becoming Christians, the Jews were saying but you also have to be circumcised. And they were leading people into this belief that that was important enough that that was part of your salvation experience. It was dangerous. So Paul is saying don't do that. If you're going back to get circumcised, you're making a mistake. You've fallen from grace.

Now he's not saying you've lost your salvation. That's not what he's talking about. You've fallen from grace. This gracious way of living and grace is essential for our lives. When we understand grace, it opens up a whole new avenue, a whole new window of life for us. It does so much when grace is present in your life.

Grace allows you to forgive yourself when you make a mistake. Grace allows you to forgive others when they make mistakes. Grace allows you to live with someone who's different than you are. Grace gives you peace inside in the midst of conflict. Grace is the energy from God to strengthen your heart under pressure. Grace is big. It's very big and here when they're creating this list or they're defining spirituality with circumcision, they are moving away from grace. And that is very dangerous.

Circumcision was a surgical procedure on little baby boys and then adult males in order to identify them with Judaism. He's saying that a surgical procedure doesn't matter. A dress code doesn't matter. Diets in themselves don't matter. These things are legalistic, shallow, and false. They're not genuine. The only thing that matters is faith in Jesus Christ.

Satan loves to get Christians to be legalistic. For then he has destroyed their enjoyment of the Spirit. He's destroyed their ability to rely on the Spirit of God and then it wreaks havoc in families. It wreaks havoc in the family of God's church. It ruins a vital active and growing Christian community. Legalism is dangerous.

There's a legalism now contrasted with grace or a Spirit-filled life mentioned here. I think some people create a prison for themselves with legalism that they need to be free from. Understanding God's grace is what is freeing for them.

Let's go on to verse 5. It says, *For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.*

It's one thing to establish this container for yourself. It's another thing to try to establish this container for someone else and say, "You must do all of these things in order to be accepted or in order to be spiritual or in order to measure up or whatever." Whether that's a husband-wife relationship or it happens in the church, we can get ourselves into dangerous territory and develop a whole problem of being hypercritical. So we have to understand this grace is so important.

Now he's saying here the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love. So we're going to talk about relationships with other people, not just our own ideas now about what this looks like.

In order for us to understand it, Paul wants to give us two illustrations in the next few verses. Illustrations that may apply to you. One's from sports and the other's from cooking. Hopefully you like one of those things – sports or cooking – because that's what Paul takes as his illustrations as he's going forward.

Look at verse 7. First we start with the sports illustration. *You were running a good race. Who cut in on you to keep you from obeying the truth? That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you.*

Paul's using an athletic illustration. You come out of the gates strong. It's a freeing thing. You have to imagine you're running a race, not comparing yourself to other people. You're in your own lane running the race, but there's no one else around. You're running the race before God.

There's a freeing thing about running. I know some of you who are runners you know that. There's something really fun about running and it just frees you up. It's an enjoyable thing to do. That's the picture here.

And then all of a sudden you have someone cutting in on you, tripping you. We've all seen the illustrations, like in the Olympics when they're running along and somebody trips and you feel bad for that person because you know that they can get up, but they'll never be able to catch up to the whole group that's running ahead. That's the illustration that he's giving to us – *who cut in on you*. Who is this person? He's going to talk about this person in just a moment.

Then he uses a cooking illustration in verse 9. *"A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough."* In other words, a little bit of influence by one of these bad guys that wants to define your spirituality as a list of dos and don'ts, as soon as that starts happening then that person is influencing you, just like yeast comes into the dough and transforms or changes the constitution of that dough. Dangerous influences. Be careful of them.

Having said that, now he's going to describe this person in verse 10. *I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion, whoever that may*

be, will have to pay the penalty. Apparently there was a teacher in the church there, an influential person, who was saying to everybody, “You know you have to be circumcised in order to be accepted before God.”

Verse 11: *Brothers and sisters, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished. As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!*

What he’s saying here is that these guys were claiming that circumcision was really important. Paul is really frustrated with these guys. So he’s saying instead of just cutting off the foreskin, you ought to go the rest of the way – and I won’t describe the rest of it. But you understand, you get the opinion of Paul of these guys that are trying to bring legalism to the church.

I want to go to the life of Jesus for a moment because Jesus had a message that He brought to His disciples, a message that was counter to the religious teaching of the day.

Jesus’ message to His disciples was it’s all about the heart. You’ve got to think about the heart. *Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.* It’s *out of the heart that the mouth speaks,* Jesus says. He says *if you lust after a woman then you’ve committed adultery in your heart.* Jesus was talking about the heart and how important the heart is. That’s what he was trying to teach His disciples.

But in Matthew 23 (I could preach a whole sermon on Matthew 23, but I just want to point out some points out of this passage) He’s making a condemnation of the Pharisees because the Pharisees were legalistic. They were the examples.

We are sometimes modern day Pharisees and I just want to point out some of the characteristics of Pharisees. I’ll read some verses out of that chapter and just jot down or you might remember or just think about the kind of illustrations that take place in these kind of situations with these Pharisees.

Number one – Pharisees make godliness difficult without offering support. Matthew 23:4 says, *They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.*

Here’s another characteristic of a Pharisee. Pharisees emphasize external appearance and performance over internal purity. The verse says, *Everything they do is done for people to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long.*

A third characteristic of a Pharisee: They seek to elevate their own offices, titles, influence, and authority. Verse 6 says *they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called ‘Rabbi’ by others.*

Another characteristic of a Pharisee, number four: Pharisees major on minors and minor on majors. *Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your*

spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel. Majoring on the minors, minoring on the majors.

Point number five about Pharisees in Matthew 23. Pharisees practice an external religion of appearance. *Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.*

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

When you start creating a list and you look good on the outside, you better be careful because the inside could be very ugly and that's what's happened to the Pharisees.

A sixth point that I want to make about the Pharisees is this. Pharisees persecute those who disagree and resist them. You disagree with a legalistic person? You're going to get it because you're going to be viewed as not so spiritual as they are.

Verse 34: Therefore I am sending you prophets and sages and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town.

Jesus had a lot to say about Pharisees and how about those Pharisees had a dangerous tendency to be legalistic. So I want you to see how powerful this is. This is why Paul is reminding these Galatians this is so important.

We're going to go back now to Galatians 5:13. This is an important warning you have to understand because if you recognize that legalism is wrong, you might move to license and you have to be careful about that. That's why verse 13 in Galatians 5 is so important.

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

Just because you're free doesn't mean you can go and do all kinds of things because even if it's a good thing, that good thing might get you into trouble because it will captivate you and become a lord of your life. It will become an idol. Be careful of the good things. You don't say what's wrong with it about certain things that you're making choices about in your life. You want to ask another question at least and that question is, is it going to take over the rule of the Spirit in my life so that God is doing something amazing inside of me. *And serve one another in love*, it says in verse 13.

Verse 14: For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command (we're back to Jesus here): "Love your neighbor as yourself." That's what Jesus said about that command.

Verse 15: *If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.*

See, that's what happens. If you become legalistic, you start picking at each other's heels like a little dog nipping at your heels as you're going along. You're just nipping at each other and it's just so irritating when the criticism sets in and it damages relationship.

The person who is freed from legalism is free to love. Those who tend to be critical have this internal list of expectations that they place on others. Those who are free in Christ are managed by grace and they extend that grace to others. Then they're able to serve one another with humility and love as this passage describes. Otherwise we become critical. We bite and devour each other and end up destroying each other, as the passage says there in verse 15.

So when the man asks me this question on Facebook a couple days ago, he says, "My wife and I disagree. I really want to start tithing and I want to give based on our gross and my wife isn't on board with that. She's willing to tithe, but she wants to give on the net (that is, after taxes are taken out)." These people live in Canada and they're emailing me.

I said, "Alright. I'll give you the answer." Because I'm studying this. I know what the answer is to the question.

The answer is this: First, it's really good that God is convicting you by His Spirit to do something in the area of giving. That's powerful. You want to go with that and allow God to do a work in your heart. Very powerful that God is doing that and you want to allow the Spirit of God to work in your life to do something different about your giving.

At the same time, your wife is a very important person in your life. God often speaks through a wife to a husband. You need to listen to her. Sometimes a wife speaks and tells a husband to tighten up, sometimes to loosen up. We must listen to our wives. They are valuable people in our lives and God speaks through wives to husbands, so you want to listen. Furthermore, if you want to initiate in your family and lead, you want to be careful that you're leading in sync with the people that are following.

This is not one of those things that's clear in the Bible. So it's a non-essential when we're talking about how much you're giving, whether you're giving on the gross or the net. This is the non-essential, not described in the Bible as to what you're going to do about that particular subject. You want to be careful about the people you're leading because you don't want to lead in a certain way that's really regimented for your wife and her to do it grudgingly. Because what will happen after awhile? She'll do it continually grudgingly.

If you can agree that you want to give based on the net, do that together, watch God bless you, and then see if you want to increase it from there.

The issue is Christian liberty. Let's value our Christian liberty so much that we allow God's grace to work in the relationship to empower families, to empower marriage relationships, to empower our church to go forward.

I want to give another example, a financial example, but it doesn't have anything to do with giving. I want you to imagine your whole life as a bank account. If your whole life were a bank account, maybe you would come to the Lord and you would say, "God, I want to dedicate myself to you. I'm giving you my whole bank account." And what God does then is He gives you back your bank account and He says, "Okay. I want you to withdraw it in quarters and I want you to start giving away quarters, giving those out. Giving several quarters to your wife a day. Not at one time." Every time you give grace to your wife, you're giving her a quarter. Every time you give grace to your husband, you're giving out a quarter.

You're giving grace to people. You're sharing that grace. And when you do, the things that God has entrusted to you now become the things that you're able to share with others and it's this beautiful ministry of grace that we have in the lives of other people.

God has made us ministers, every one of us, and He's given us something to give. So as we're giving that little bit of grace to other people, we are becoming the people that God wants us to be.

What does that do for us? It takes away some of our own selfishness, our expectations. Because we really think it should be done this way. Or "if you do it this way..." and we start pulling some of that back. We're giving grace to each other because we're moving away from legalism to the freedom that Paul is calling us to in Galatians 5. Don't give it up. Stand firm in this freedom. It's really important.

Now most of you if you look at Galatians 5 or you remember it in your minds, think of the last verses in Galatians 5, the fruit of the Spirit. I want to tell you, as we're building toward the fruit of the Spirit passage, those verses are going to mean so much more once you've come out of this whole study of the law versus the Spirit, legalism versus grace and love and humility. When you pull all of that together then you start reading about the fruit of the Spirit and it becomes more powerful.

I'll pick that up with you again in a couple of weeks. I'm already starting to prepare that. I'm looking forward to sharing that with you when we get together again.

If God's speaking to you today, maybe you need to make some changes in your heart and life. We have prayer counselors on the sides when we sing songs and those prayer counselors are there for you to just go and say, "I need help in this area. This is a problem in my life. Would you please pray for me? I just want to dedicate myself again today." So we make those prayer counselors available.

We're going to sing a couple Christmas songs now. As we do, if the Lord is speaking to your heart, please avail yourself to the prayer counselors and talk to the Lord about what God wants to do in your life today.

Let's stand together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, thank you for what you're doing. Teach us more. Give us your grace. Grow us in grace, Lord, so that we can understand more how to live our lives the way you've called us to live. We want that. We're weak. We tend not to give grace as we should. Teach us what that looks like all the more. In Jesus' name, amen.