



THE SIMPLE GOSPEL

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GALATIANS-No Turning Back

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Galatians 4:8-23

Today we're in Galatians chapter 4:8-23, "Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. But now that you have come to know God or rather to be known by God, how can you turn your back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world whose slaves you want to be once more? You observe days and months and seasons and years! I am afraid that I may have labored over you in vain. Brothers, I entreat you, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You did me no wrong. You know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first, and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus

What then has become of your blessedness? For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me. Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth? They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them. It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you, my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you! I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I am perplexed about you. Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through the promise." This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Thank you, Brittany. Well, good morning. Good to see you guys. My name is Justin, one of the pastors here, and I am, oh, thanks. Wow, thanks. I feel so good. But it is my joy and honor to continue our look in the book of Galatians. And just by way of context, it's important for us to understand that the whole book of Galatians, the context is about salvation. And that is super important. Obviously that's relevant to us because that's what is important to our faith. We want to understand, how do we get salvation? The context of the book of Galatians is, are you saved and how do you get saved?

In the church, when we say saved, it means ultimate redemption, ultimate life, and ultimate escape from sin and death. So how do we receive salvation? And that is something that is really critical for us to understand because we can get confused about that and we present it to you. What is this simple gospel? You can't add to it. You can't contribute anything to that. And that's what was happening.

And so it's important for us to understand that when we have salvation, like if you know your destiny, if you know that the best is yet to come, you know that there's relief that's going to come, whatever you're going through in life, that's your future. If you go through like times of hardship and struggle and challenges, but you know that up ahead in the future, that glory awaits you, that you're going to see the savior, you know, face to face, then you can withstand the hardship and you can withstand the challenges that you go through life.

So it's important for us to understand, how do we get there? What is salvation and how do we get salvation? And so just for the sake of time, Brittany read for us a big portion of our scripture, but at the very end I'll cover for us what's happening at the end of chapter four. But my outline for today's message is this: we rest in God's promise to be saved. Number two, we rejoice in God's power to be saved and we remove man's pressures to be slaves. And that's more applicational points for us at the end.

But I want to just in the beginning walk us through what Paul is speaking about to us. And I want to begin by asking this, wondering if any of you have ever found yourself in a situation where the way forward was too uncertain or even too scary, and so everything inside of you wanted to just turn back.

So I remember as a youngster, I was at a waterpark on the east coast where I grew up and there was this big water park and everybody was pressuring me, you got to go up this big slide and do that. And I was like, yeah, yeah. But I was scared spitless. I was afraid of heights. So I walked up there and sure enough I could not do it. And I turned around. It's so traumatic. I had to walk down. It was the walk of shame.

Or maybe you're at an amusement park and you got this big rollercoaster and you're with your friends and everybody's like egging you on. You can do this, you can do this. And sure enough, you get there and you're just so scared that you have to turn around and all eyes are on you and you have to walk the walk of shame away from that because you just can't do it.

Or it could even be in a relationship. You've been in a relationship and you thought, man, you know what? Singleness wasn't so bad compared to this. Or maybe it was a job. Have you ever taken a job only to realize, this isn't what I signed up for. And so you begin to strategize your exit. You want to turn back.

After God in the Old Testament, miraculously led the people of God out of Egypt, you know, they were slaves to Egypt, they were standing on the banks of the Promised Land, and they looked over on the other side. This is the land that was promised to them, a land that was flowing with milk and honey. And they were so excited to get there. And then they get word that there are giants over there. There are giants over there.

And then God's people began to say in fear, in Numbers chapter 14, would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt? And then they said to one another, yes, let's choose a leader and go back to Egypt. And the reason why I share all of this is because the Galatians, like the Israelites, have just experienced an exodus-like deliverance from the law. But today they want to go back to Egypt.

And I want to say whether you're conscious of it or not, we woke up this morning and because of our flesh and because of our sinful inclination, we want to go back to slavery as well. And our passage today is telling us, listen, no turning back, you can't turn back. And just to remind you, God declared to us the good news that because of Jesus, we are no longer slaves to sin and death. And better than that we are now sons and daughters. Better than that, we are now heirs of the King. We are irreversibly permanently set up to inherit a new earth and a new heaven. And best of all, the very presence of God himself is to dwell with us forever. This is the good news, the simple gospel, that through Jesus, he now considers you, God considers you, his child. This means that you have a seat at his table. You have a room in his house, and everything that belongs to God is now yours in Christ. This life is the Promised Land's parking lot, if you will.

And so there's no way we're going to go back to Egypt, right? Well look at verses eight and nine, Paul says, "formally, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. But now that you have come to God or rather be known by God," I love this latter part in verse nine. "But now that you have come to know God or rather be known by God," and I think many here, at least to some degree would say, Justin, yes, I know God. And yes, you would say so, but underneath that it's because you are already known by God. And that phrase isn't referring to God's intellectual comprehension, meaning like God's omniscience, which means he knows everyone. He knows everything.

When the Bible talks about this kind of knowing it's actually talking about a particular affection. To be known by God means to be specially, salvifically, loved and known by God. It means he knows everything about you and still loves you. The great theologian, J.I. Packer, in his book, *Knowing God*, he writes this, he writes, "what matters supremely, therefore is not, in the last analysis, the fact that I know God, but the larger fact which underlies it-the fact that he knows me. I am graven on the palms of his hands.

I'm never out of his sight. And my knowledge of him depends on his sustained initiative in knowing me. I know him because he first knew me and continues to know me. He knows me as a friend, one who loves me, and there's no moment when his eye is off me, or his attention distracted from me, and no moment, therefore, when his care falters."

Wow. That's how God knows you and cares for you and loves you. In other words, most of us here today are here today because we know God, at least to some degree, we know him. And why? Because to an infinite degree, God already knows you and loves you with the particular predestinating, paternal love.

And Paul tells the Galatians, okay, if all of that is true, if you know God, better yet, you are known by God (verse nine) how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world whose slaves you want to be once more? Listen, the elementary principles of the world is the worldview that believes you get what you deserve. It's the worldview of cause and effect. So if you were to apply that or to bring that into our relationship with God, it means that we think that when our sinfulness goes up, our standing before God goes down. Or when our sinfulness goes down, then our standing before God goes up. So much is about us and not about who God is and what he's done for us. And God says in verse nine, that type of thinking is weak and worthless and enslaving. So verse nine says this again, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world whose slaves you want to be once more? And in verse 10, you observe days and months and seasons and years.

And Paul was saying, man, this is getting real here. He's saying, you guys, this is getting bad. Have you forgotten the simple gospel? You're down to observing days, again, months and seasons and years. You're becoming a legalist. You're becoming legalistic about all of this. Listen, enjoy the gift of the Sabbath, but don't let the Sabbath enslave you. But the purpose you see of the gift of Sabbath is for Jesus to further prove his love for us and not for you to further prove your love to Jesus. That's the difference. And then verse 11, Paul says, I'm afraid that I have labored over you in vain.

And here let me clearly say that there are two types of people in the world, Christian or non-Christian. And today we see in Galatians in chapter four that there are two types of Christians in the world, free ones and enslaved ones. In every church there are two types of believers, those that are stepping further and further into freedom in Christ and those that are turning back to the law. And Paul's going to flesh that out even more for us. But I just want you to see just this sweet pastoral address to the Galatians that Paul was giving here. In verse 12 he says, brothers, I entreat you. He's saying, I'm pleading with you now. Become as I am, meaning living in the freedom of the gospel of grace. And then verse 13, you know, it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first. And though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus. But then, what then has become of your blessedness? For I testified to you that, if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me. I mean, they have such a sweet and intimate strong relationship, Paul did with the people of Galatia.

Many scholars believe this, that Paul actually had an eye condition maybe going all the way back to his conversion on the Damascus road when he was blinded by the glory of Christ. And for a few days he was literally blind. And so Paul says, gosh, at one point you guys were ready to rip out your eyes and give them to me. But now these Judaizers, these legalists have convinced you that I'm your enemy? What? What's going on here? In verse 16 he says, have I not become your enemy by telling you the truth? And Paul is passionate about this. He loves these people. They're like his children. And if you love them, you've got to give them the truth, even if they don't like it, because you've got to give them what they ultimately need. He's not indifferent. He's not apathetic. He is passionate about giving them the truth of the gospel.

And then in verse 17, they make much of you but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them. Catch that-legalism never makes much of Christ. Apparently it makes much of the legalists. Legalists take a personal conviction and make it into a universal command. Legalists take everything that they excel at and impose it on others so that when other people fail to measure up to the bar that the legalist have set or reached, the only conclusion is that the legalist are spiritually superior to others.

And it may go something like this as an example. Well, you might say, I just don't think Christians should have tattoos. Yes, says the person who has no tattoos, right, and who's trying to use their lack of tattoos to strong arm themselves into a sense of spiritual superiority and judge others. And I want to say here at Doxa, you know, if you have a little tattoo on your left butt cheek, I don't care, like you are so welcomed here. Or if your body is covered with tats, I mean, you are so welcomed here at Doxa. The only people that are not welcomed are 49ers fans because this is Seahawks country. But that's another message for another day. Let me move on.

See, legalism never makes much of Christ. It always makes much of the person or the church who is fulfilling the law that they are now trying to impose on everyone else. Verse 18 says this, he says, it is always good to be made much of for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you. I just want you to hear the pastoral tone here in verse 19 and 20, my little children, for who am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you. I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, but I'm perplexed about you. He is perplexed. He really wants them to hear this. In verse 21 and following, tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law?

For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. You see the Judaizers, these legalists, their whole thing was this. The whole thing was like, hey, we are the sons of Abraham. We are the sons of Abraham. That's first century talk to say we're legitimate. We're legit. We're the true sons of Abraham. And if you want to be a son of Abraham, then you need to be like Abraham. You need to be like Abraham's son. You need to be circumcised.

And Paul says, yes, you are. You are a son of Abraham. But Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. In verses 23 and 24 it says, but the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through the promise. Now this may be interpreted allegorically. These women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children from slavery. She is Hagar. And it goes on. And we didn't read that latter part for the sake of time, but it's important for us to understand that Paul is giving us an example so they can really understand what's going on here. This latter part of chapter four, for me it was rather confusing, but I came to realize is actually really amazing. And what God is doing here, he's taking Galatians and all of us back to the Book of Genesis, the first book of the Bible.

And I just want you to stay with me and ride with me here a little bit. In Genesis 12-21 it's talking about Abram-Abraham and Sarah. In Genesis 12, by God's grace, God comes to Abram. Abraham by the way, is not living for God. He is not worshiping God. And yet by grace, God comes to him and says, hey, leave your country and I will bless you and I will bless you so much that you in turn will bless all the nations. And Abram believes God and leaves his home. And then in Genesis 15, God comes to Abram again and says, this time, I want you to look up to the night sky and do you see all the stars? I'm going to give you more descendants than the stars in the sky. And Abram believed God. And the book of Romans says, and that was counted to him as righteousness Abram believed and trusted in God's promise.

In next chapter, Genesis 16, catch this-it's 10 years later. Ten years later, Abram and his wife have how many children? Zero. Nothing. Nada. They have no children and they've been waiting 10 years. And so Sarah's like, okay, we've got to get things moving here. Nothing is happening. So she tells her husband Abram, go with our slave Hagar. She can bear you a child and then God can give you many descendants. God can fulfill his promise through this child born through you and Hagar. And so Abram gets Hagar pregnant and Ishmael is born.

The next chapter, Genesis 17 is thirteen years later. Thirteen years later! So God comes to Abram, changes his name and says, you're now called Abraham. And Abraham's like, yeah, yes, we actually have a child, Ishmael. And then this is where God says, that wasn't my plan. That was never the plan. That was you trying to control and secure my promise. I'm going to bless Ishmael because I'm merciful. He's going to be a mighty nation. But that wasn't the plan. You see, the promise was that you and Sarah would have a child and it's through his bloodline that the Messiah would come and bless the whole world. And so a few chapters later, Genesis 21, Abraham is now a hundred years old. A hundred years old! I mean, can you imagine getting a party invitation for a baby shower from your hundred year old neighbor? I'm like, oh, gross, but I'll be there! I'm going to be there, right?

Isaac is now born and God's promise is finally fulfilled. Okay? So do you see what the Holy Spirit is telling us here in Galatians four? He's saying all of this is true, but it's also an allegory. It's also a foreshadowing of what's happening in Galatia. God gave the promise of unconditional grace to Abraham and Sarah, and though they believe God, and that was counted to them as righteousness, eventually 10 years later, they turn back and instead of resting and waiting in

God's promise, they try to assist God. They try to strengthen God's promise with their own human contribution. And that led to slavery. And God is saying that when we turn back from the simple gospel of free grace, we're doing the very same thing. We're trying to assist God. We're trying to take his promise and with our own human contribution, strengthen it. And that will only lead to slavery.

So now the question is how do we not turn back? How do we not turn back? And the first application of point for us is this, we rest in God's promise to be saved. We rest in God's promise to be saved. And if I could have spoken to Abraham and Sarah, I would've said, you know, I would've just come to them and said, hey guys, just rest. Just wait. Trust and obey for there is no other way. God is going to give you the descendants he promised. I know it's been 10 years, but if God said it, he would do it. If God spoke it, he will fulfill it.

I can't talk to Abraham and Sarah today, but God is speaking to us saying the same thing. Rest. If God said it, he would do it. Which begs the question, do you know the promises you have to be saved? And again, I want you to not lose sight of this. This is super relevant for us because there is nothing more important than salvation. There's nothing more weightier for us than salvation. All of life can go bad. But if you know Christ or rather be known by God and you have salvation that's secure, then you are good. You are good. Because if you know that the best is yet to come, if you know that your future destination, ultimate destination is glory in heaven, you're going to see the savior face-to-face, no more tears, no more pain, no more suffering, everything that was wrong has been made right, all that was broken will be healed for you-you know if that's coming for you, relief, ultimate rest, that whatever happens in between, from now until then, you can withstand the challenges and the sufferings and the pain because you know that's coming. Salvation is so important. And so, do you know the promises that are offered to us in scripture? The heartache that would've been spared if Abraham and Sarah had just rested and trusted in the promises of Genesis 12 and 15.

And imagine the heartache and the anxiety and the depression and the frenetic lack of peace that will be spared even in this room if we would just rest in the promises of God. Like Romans 10:9, which says that if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. You will be saved. Not might. Not hopefully. But you will be saved. And we are to rest in that promise. Or First John 1:9 says, if we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Not some. Not most. But all unrighteousness. And believe me, some of us, I'm sure we have a lot of unrighteousness. But God says all of our unrighteousness will be cleansed. Just rest in that. Just sit in that. Philippians 1:6, and I'm sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. You can be sure of that. First Thessalonians 5:24, he who calls you is faithful. He will surely do it. Romans 8:38-39, For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels or nor rulers nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord. We rest in that. You'll believe in that or turn back to the law or try to crowbar yourself into that. Those are your options. Rest or work. Grace or law.

D.A. Carson, a theologian today, tells a story of two Israelites. They're talking on the day before the Passover event, when the people of God were in bondage and slavery to Pharaoh. And before the last play the angel of death was to come and judge, these two Israelites were talking and having a conversation. And one of the guys said, dude, man, did you hear God is going to judge Egypt tonight. He's going to kill all the firstborns in the land, but he's going to spare ours! He's going to pass over our homes and listen, all we have to do is to put a little blood of a lamb on our doorpost. It's amazing, right? How merciful is God?! Are you going to do that? And his friend says, uh, I don't know. Do you really think God's going to really do all of that? I don't know. I mean, what's with the blood thing? Is that weird just to me? Yeah. I mean, I guess I'll do it, but I don't think I'm as hyped about it as you are.

Question...whose firstborn child was spared? Answer? Both. Why? Because God's mercy flows not through the confidence in the promise, but the faithfulness of the one who made the promise. And friends, we have to know this, that we will be saved not by the certainty of our faith. We will be saved not by the clarity of our faith or by the intensity of our faith. No. We will be saved by the object of our faith. His name is Jesus. And we need no other plea. It's enough that Jesus died. He died for you and me. He is enough. And for Abraham and Sarah, after 10 years of trusting, they didn't see any movement. And so they tried to assist God's grace through human contribution. And it leads to brokenness, slavery, and death. And if you're looking at your life, if you're looking at your faith, if you're looking at your walk with the Lord and you're saying, okay, nothing is happening, okay, or at least it's not happening fast enough, please don't take matters into your own hands.

Trying to assist God's promise of grace with cleverly devised strategies of law-keeping, it's only going to lead to slavery and death. But instead you just rest on God. You believe in God. You just wait on God and you will be saved. And listen, Doxa, no turning back from the simple gospel. We lost it all, but Jesus did it all. And because of Jesus and the gospel, we now get it all. God doing for us what we can never do for ourselves, that is the gospel. And so Tim Keller, who just passed says this, the gospel is not just the ABCs of the Christian life, but it's the A to Z of the Christian life. We don't say the gospel is A, B, C, and then let's just add our own letters to the thing here. No. The gospel is sufficient. Jesus' life, death and resurrection is sufficient. The only thing that we contribute to our salvation is the sin that makes it necessary. And we are called to just rest in God's promises. Trust him and enjoy him.

But here's the question though. How? How do we rest in God's promises? The second applicational point for us to consider is, we rejoice in God's power to be saved. We rejoice in God's power to be saved. Meaning this is great news because our lives are broken. We've messed up. And we can rejoice though in that God has the power to save us, that we can be saved in God's power. Look at verses 27-28. For it is written, rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor. For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband. Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. Here the Holy Spirit is quoting Isaiah 54:1. And pretty much this text is not

just about Sarah waiting for Isaac, it's also about you, Galatians, it's also about you Doxa, waiting for your salvation to be fully realized.

And what Sarah is supposed to do while she waits, you see it, it's in our text, she's supposed to rejoice. She's supposed to rejoice. Break forth and cry aloud. And what God is telling us today, instead of turning back to the law-keeping or the rule-following, acceptance by performance, dear friends, instead, rejoice. Rejoice in God's power to be saved. And I get it sometimes when we're waiting and nothing is happening, it's hard to rejoice. Shouldn't the Christian be the most happiest person in the Milky Way? Shouldn't the Christian-because you know you have Christ and your eternity's secure; you've got a savior and a father who loves you, unending with an unending love.

And so no matter what you're going through, no matter what, I'm not saying you like, minimize the suffering and the pains of the people in this room. And we're not saying you wear a mask when things are not going well, that you fake it till you make it. No, you are real, you are honest, you are vulnerable with the struggles and the pain and the deep valleys that you are going through, but in the midst of suffering and pain is it not true that if you know Christ, you have everything. Or rather, when Christ knows you, you have everything, that because of the future that awaits for you, the child of God, you can withstand the sufferings of this world. You can have joy, genuine joy, and you can sing even the midst of sorrow. You can worship even in the times of suffering in the storm because he is enough and you have him.

Sarah is supposed to rejoice. Rejoice not in her pregnancy because she's not. She's barren. Not in her labor. She wants to be, but she's not in labor yet. And even despite that things are not happening, no pregnancy, no labor, no baby, she's supposed to rejoice still in God's power to fulfill his promise despite her current situation.

I remember when I was asking my wife to marry me many, many, many years ago. I had Virginia and I said, Virginia, I want to marry you. And, and I surprised her. But before I gave her the ring, I was a young pastor-like a good pastor I gave her a three-point sermon before I asked her to marry me. And that sermon text was from Habakkuk chapter three, verses 17 and 18. And it said this, though the fig tree does not bud, and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails, and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen, no cattle in the stalls, verse 18 says, yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will be joyful in God, my savior.

And I said, Honey, Boo Boo, I want us to live this out. You know, being a pastor is not easy. It's hard. And we don't know what lays ahead. We may be poor for the rest of our lives. We may have nothing go our way. I may pastor a church and people might leave and not come right? We don't know what's going to happen. But highs and lows, mountaintop, valleys, storm or sunshine, whatever happens, let this be our cry. Let's, make this our vow that even if we have nothing, no cattle in the stall, no produce on the vines, whatever, yet let's rejoice in the Lord. Let's be joyful in God our savior. Not because of our circumstances, not because we have or we don't, whatever. But because we can rejoice in the Lord because we have a savior mighty to save.

Can I just acknowledge and confess that I've not lived this out. I've not been faithful to this. And through highs and lows, what my wife has found me is oftentimes complaining, being angry, being upset, raising my fists at God at moments. That's how I responded. And my wife's like, what happened? I said, honey, we're married. Can't go back on me now.

And God said, Sarah, even though you're barren right now, you start singing, even though you're not in labor. I know you want to be, break forth and start celebrating. Why? Because I've promised. The children of the desolate one, that's you Sarah, will be more than those of the one who has a husband. Translation-the way we rest in God's promises is by rejoicing in God's power to fulfill those promises. Despite our lack of progress, despite our current situations. And friends, I don't know about you, but I've been following Jesus for years and there have been so many places in my life that are just so barren and so broken. And if I were to look at them, it's only going to lead me back to the law and try to crowbar those things into transformation. And God is saying, Justin, don't do it. No, you just start rejoicing. The true way, the true way change comes is when we rejoice in God's power and willingness to fulfill his promises despite what we're actually seeing.

It's the difference between a fence and a feast. I don't have a horse, I don't want a horse, but I've heard this about horses. I don't know if it's true, but I've heard that horses are notorious for getting around a fence. Fences don't actually work-that's what I heard. Horses have an uncanny ability to go over the fence or under the fence or around the fence. It's impossible to keep a horse close by using a fence. So how do you do it? I heard this. You give them a big pile of apples. You give them a feast that is. And you probably don't even need the fence if you give them a feast. Those horses are going to be right there on the feast. The feast will keep them. And dear friends, when it comes to your life, don't focus on the fence-that's turning to the law. Focus rather on the feast-that's turning to God. Rejoice in God. Rejoice in God's willingness and power and ability to save and sanctify you.

How do you unhook somebody who loves Taco Time? I don't get that. Like Taco Time is not very good, you know? And so the only way to get her to release her grip on Taco Time is to give her Chipotle. You give her a superior pleasure and a superior taco and all of a sudden, she's like, what is taco time? Right? You see God and his promise is a superior pleasure. And the way you enjoy the promises is by rejoicing in God's willingness and ability to actually come through on the promises even when you don't see much happening around you. And what our soul needs is a feast. And that's Jesus himself, the gospel of grace. So you sit in his presence, you listen to his promises in his word. That's why we read our Bible, not because you've got to read it so you can become a good Christian. No, because you need a feast for your heart, your soul. And the risen Christ wants to speak to you promises through his word. It's why we go through life all day, every day, just doing normal things of everyday stuff, but with the tangible awareness that Jesus is here. That's the feast. It's pushing all of our chips in, moment by moment, that God will come through on what he has promised us. Despite the failure, despite the fall, God will come through. And that actually frees us to love others and to love life and to love God. Doxa, no turning back.

Verses 29 and 30, the apostle Paul says, but just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh, persecuted him who was born according to the spirit, so also it is now. But what does the scripture say? Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman. It's taking us back to Genesis 21. After Isaac is born, he's weaned, probably he's a few years old now. Abraham and Sarah is throwing a feast for Isaac. And it says that Ishmael, who's probably a teenager in the corner, is mocking Isaac. And Sarah, of course, anybody that mocks your child, you're going to be like all upset about it. Sarah sees Isaac being mocked by Ishmael and goes to Abraham and says-and that's what Paul is quoting here in verse 30- cast out that slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman.

And again, Paul is not saying what they did is okay. It's not. It wasn't. He's simply saying that that war, that battle is still happening today. Law or grace. You moving to performance mentality, working, earning salvation, those things, you know, trying to improve yourself- that battle is still happening in our hearts as opposed to receiving, believing, trusting in the free simple gospel of grace that Jesus has given to us. That is still happening all the time in our hearts.

And that leads us to point number three, as I end here. We remove man's pressure to be slaves. We remove man's pressure to be slaves. If Hagar and Ishmael represent a slavery to the law, the legalist, God is telling the Galatians and God is telling us, cast out those who want to bring you back to the law. And the way we do that is we remove man's pressure to be slaves. And I think that's the whole tenor of the book of Galatians. Remember the book begins in Galatians 1:8, but even if we or an angel from heaven shall preach to you a gospel that is contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.

And we read that, and we typically think that the false gospels are coming to us from the left, the gospel of the liberals. Galatians isn't written by the way to protect us from the gospel coming from that side. It's written to protect us from the gospel that's coming to us from the right side, the gospel of legalism, legalists. And verse 30 doesn't say, okay, let's just agree to disagree. Let's live peaceably with each other. No, I mean he's saying this means war. It says in the same way that Abraham and Sarah kicked them to the curb, you should remove any pressure or any person from your presence that is trying to bring you back to the law or any law-keeping to acceptance by performance. You punt that out of your life.

So two subtitles and then I'm done. Number one, radically remove outside pressures. Radically remove outside pressures. The Judaizers for Jesus are dime-a-dozen today. Many of the bestselling Christian books, most listened to preachers and podcasts are legalists. And we love it. Why? Because we have a legalistic heart. We have a legal spirit. And so we're like, okay, just tell me what to do. Give me a list to do. I'll do it if that's what makes God happy about me. If that's what makes God happy, I'll do it. And so if there's a book or a teacher or a podcast, if they give you the impression that God's love and acceptance is based on your behavior rather than the perfect behavior of the perfect son of God, you need to kick that resource across the room. Get that out of your life. Cast it out. If you are told to do things, not to increase your enjoyment

of Jesus, but to increase Jesus' enjoyment in you, get that out! Cast that out. It's bringing you back to the law.

Now, to be clear, friends, we're not afraid of to-do lists. The Bible, by the way, is full of imperatives and commands that we Christians are to be about. But we do them for sanctification, not salvation, out of love, not out of duty. We do them to grow in intimacy with Christ and the imaging of Christ. We don't do them to be saved. The only thing we do to be saved is repent. Believe. Repent. Believe. We are saved by grace and grace alone.

The last thing, regularly resist, not just outside, but inside pressures. Inside pressures. I believe either consciously or subconsciously, each of us have built our own laws that I think we need to keep in order to stand blamelessly before God. Each of us have different things we think that we must do. And Galatians 4:30 says, stop it.

For me, friends, my self-made law, started when I was young as a Christian, was Bible reading. I believed in my bones that in order for God to love me and accept me, I must read my Bible every day. Religiously. It became a legalistic thing. And Bible reading has just been one of those things that's been really easy for me. I've read the Bible many times over. And so one of my mentors in college noticed that this was a law that I had set up in my heart. And he said, Justin, I want you to not read your Bible for an entire month. Now, for 99% of Christians, that is the worst advice and counsel you could ever give. But for this Pharisee of Pharisees, when it came to Bible reading, I needed to resist the pious, prideful, enslaving inclination to keep the law that I had set up in my heart. I used my Bible reading as a source of pride and identity and used it to judge other people.

Now what about you, dear friends? What do you feel like you must do in order to make God smile? The spiritual breakthrough you're waiting for may be in your refusal to do that. Your spiritual breakthrough you're waiting for isn't you finally being able to do it. It's you finally saying, I'm not doing it. Even if I don't perform, even if I don't do these things, he loves me. He is enough. The gospel is enough. And so verse 31, brothers, we are not children of the slave, but of the free woman. And notice God doesn't tell you what to do here. He tells you who you are. He tells you who you are.

You are not the children of the slave, but of the free. And there are two types of Christians in this church, free ones, and enslaved ones. Those who are turning to Christ and enjoying the freeness and the fullness of the gospel and those who are turning back to the law. And I believe God brought us here to church to say that you are free. And here's the thing. You're free, not because Isaac was born, but because another impossible child was born. His birth was impossible. Not because his mother was too old, but because his mother was too young. She was a virgin and virgins can't give birth. But the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary. She conceived a child who grew up and set all the slaves free. Free from the punishment of sin. Free from the pleasure of sin. And free from the power of sin. John Bunion says this, "Run, John, run. The law demands but gives me neither feet nor hands. Better news the gospel brings. It bids me fly, and gives me wings." Let's pray. So heavenly Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for

the power of the gospel that sets us free. Help us not to turn back to legalistic tendencies, trying to prove or to perform or to add, to assist, contribute in any way. Because once we do that, the gospel no longer is the gospel. Lord, we pray that you would help us to see indeed that your word is powerful and the gospel indeed is powerful to set us free. Lord, help us to trust and obey and to trust in your faithful work in us. We pray in Christ's name, Amen.