

## **Galatians - God's Promises & Warnings**

Good morning Southwest Family Fellowship. So good to be with you this morning and share the message with you today. To all of you Fathers in the seats and watching online I want to wish you a Happy Father's Day and thank you for all you do as dad's. My dad was here last week for a quick trip and it was great being with him and thanking him for all he does as my dad. Now that we live across the country from him I don't get to see him as much for Father's Day or my birthday. Which it is in fact my birthday today as well.

The last time I preached, I preached out of Galatians and we will be diving back into Galatians today and for a couple weeks here. We will be learning about the promises God has for us and also the warnings he has for us.

As a kid and even today I struggle with broken promises and people saying they are going to do something and then they don't. I have had to learn grace and patience over the years and realize that it's not going to work out 100% like people say every time. But for a long time it really bothered me. And honestly I would struggle really hard when I would break a promise to someone.

I remember when I was in middle school I loved helping out at my church and serving in different ways. It was coming up on Christmas time and my brother in law was setting up a space outside to have a live nativity scene. So like donkeys, pigs, cows, lambs, chickens and more. I was going to be one of the wisemen so before each Christmas Eve service I sat outside in the snow with the animals. Now it wasn't child endangerment, I wore the proper coats and gear and then just put my costume over.

But we had talked about putting lights on the bushes to make it look pretty and light up the area a bit more. It was supposed to storm and blizzard that night so we weren't sure if we were going to do it but I told him if he was going to work on it that I would help. Well I went home from dinner and got invited by my best friend to go play basketball with his family and some friends at an indoor gym. And now most of you know how much I like playing basketball.. so I asked my dad if it was alright if I went and played. (Hold up basketball and have picture of blizzard behind me) Which would y'all have picked??

I hadn't heard yet if my brother in law was going to go back to church to set up the lights. Shortly before I was about to leave with my best friend I got word from my brother in law that they were going. Now I felt bad that they would be out in the cold snowy blizzard conditions but I

was already on my way to the gym with my friend, so I didn't go. I told my brother in law I wouldn't make it, but then the next day when I saw him, he was pretty upset with me and honestly I was super upset with myself because I had broken my promise.

I apologized and it ended up being okay, but I still feel bad about ditching him that night like 15 years ago. I have always really struggled with broken promises. It has honestly been a thing I have had to work on when growing in my faith and trusting God's promises.

We are going to be diving into Galatians 4 today and we will see his promises he has for us and we will start with verses 1-7, it says, Galatians 4:1-7

“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. 2 The heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time

set by his father. 3 So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world. 4 But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. 6 Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." 7 So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir."

Galatians 4:1-7 is a portion of Paul's letter to the Galatians in which he discusses the concept of sonship in Christ and the freedom that comes with it. Through Jesus we are set free from slavery and become full heirs.

This leads us into our first point for the day, **Through faith we are promised adoption into Sonship (Everyone).**

What does that mean to be adopted into sonship? We are going to answer that here together.

In Galatians 4, Paul uses the analogy of an heir coming of age to illustrate how believers are no longer slaves but sons of God. This highlights the promise of sonship that comes with faith in Christ, which brings freedom, intimacy, and inheritance. This explains the significance of being a son or daughter of God, and how this should shape our identity, relationships, and priorities.

Scot McKnight in the NIV Application Commentary on Galatians explains, **"Full rights (freedom from the law) do not come until after**

Christ's work is done. The time of the law is a time of slavery; the time of Christ is a time of freedom. What Paul does not say, but what he implies, is that the time of slavery was a time of "works of the law" and the time of Christ is the time of "faith."

There has been a few times in my life where I set out in my mind to save some money over a period of time to get a bigger thing that I had always really wanted. And honestly for the most part I'm pretty patient and do well waiting to get it, and I stick to my financial plan. But other times I get impatient and want to buy something else or a lesser product that I could get sooner rather than the one I really want.

In High school when I got my first job I set out in my mind that I wanted to create a movie theater/game room in our house. We had an

extra room upstairs that my dad would use for reading but wasn't used much. So I told my parents my plan and they agreed to furnish the room with a sectional couch, rug and table if I saved up for the projector, screen and sound system myself. So that was my end goal. Movie theater room.

But... As I started working and I started getting my paychecks and earning money, I decided I really needed **Beats headphones**. Kind of like these, but way heavier, way clunkier and overall just a lot of money for something I barely ended up using. But I was coming up on football season and I thought I would look so cool rolling up to games wearing these headphones on the bus and onto the field.

I got off track from my original goal, I wanted something cool now, I wanted to spend

my money now. And it caused my original plan to take longer. It still eventually happened but I could have gotten to my goal sooner and not wasted my money on heavy uncomfortable headphones if I would have just stayed the course.

My downfall while waiting to save up for my movie theater room was that the whole time I was waiting for my end goal, I didn't have anything during that time. Even though I knew the patience and waiting would pay off, during the waiting I had nothing and I wanted something. This passage in Galatians talks about how heirs that are children are the same as slaves because even though they are promised something later they have equivalent current wealth and valuables as a slave with nothing.

Before Christ came and died for our sins and redeemed us from the law, and before we accept God's free grace, we are like heirs who are children. We have this promise of immense blessing and gifts and inheritance in the Kingdom of God but we have not yet received it. We are still enslaved to the law and sin. We are held back from this immense inheritance.

Now obviously the grace we receive from God and becoming adopted into sonship with him and becoming heirs with Christ is a much better reward and payout than my movie theater room. But the period before both were received teaches similar truths, in that time before, in that waiting we had received nothing yet, we maybe knew it was on the horizon and coming but until the money was saved, and until Christ redeemed us and we received his grace, we were not heirs or released from that bondage yet.

Before Christ came and made a way for us to be saved and adopted into sonship and become an heir, we were slaves to the law and sin. We had no way of receiving salvation and God's grace. But we are no longer slaves to the law or sin, because Christ redeemed us.

Let's unpack this passage in Galatians 4 together. In verse 1 Paul begins by using the analogy of a child who is an heir to an estate but is still underage. While the child may technically own the estate, he is still under the authority of others and is not able to enjoy the full benefits of his inheritance.

In verses 2 and 3 Paul explains that in the same way, believers were once like children who were under the authority of guardians and trustees, and were enslaved to the elemental spiritual forces of the world. These spiritual forces may refer to the false beliefs, idolatry, and

other harmful practices that characterized the culture and religion of the time.

In verse 4 Paul explains that God sent his Son, Jesus, to redeem believers from the bondage of sin and death. Jesus was born of a woman and was born under the law, meaning that he was fully human and subject to the same limitations and weaknesses as other human beings.

Verse 5 says: "He redeemed those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship."

Through his death and resurrection, Jesus redeemed believers who were under the law and enslaved to sin. This redemption made it possible for believers to be adopted as children of God and to enjoy the privileges and blessings that come with sonship.

In the time that Paul was writing adoption had a very significant purpose and meaning in

the Roman Empire, and it is important to understand this purpose to get a better understanding of why he writes this letter the way he does.

In ancient Rome, adoption was a legal practice used to ensure the continuation of the family line and secure an heir. It was often used by childless couples or to strengthen political alliances. Adopted children gained the same legal rights as biological children, including the right to inherit property and bear the family name. Adoptees were often chosen from the extended family or among prominent families in society, and the process was typically marked by a formal ceremony.

Through verse 6 he explains, As children of God, believers are given the gift of the Holy Spirit, who lives in their hearts and helps them to cry out to God as their loving Father. This

relationship of love and intimacy with God is one of the central aspects of the Christian faith.

Intimacy with the father is an aspect of this adoption of sonship that I want to explain more. The promise of sonship implies a deep and personal relationship with God as our Father. As Paul says in Galatians 4:6, "Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" This cry of "Abba," which means "Daddy" or "Papa" in Aramaic, reflects a close and affectionate relationship between a child and their father. Through faith in Christ, we are given the privilege of calling God our Father and approaching Him with intimacy and trust.

In verse 7 Paul concludes by emphasizing the freedom and blessings that come with being a child of God. Believers are no longer slaves to sin and death, but are children of God who have been made heirs of his kingdom. As heirs,

believers are promised eternal life, the presence of the Holy Spirit, and the hope of a new heaven and earth.

Overall, Galatians 4:1-7 is a powerful reminder of the love and grace of God, and the incredible privileges that come with being a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ. As believers, we are called to embrace our identity as sons and daughters of God and to live with freedom, confidence, and hope, knowing that we belong to a loving and faithful Heavenly Father who has promised us an eternal inheritance.

This takes us into our second point for today, **We are no longer slaves, we are heirs through Christ.**

The idea that we are no longer slaves but are now heirs with Christ is a significant theme in Galatians 4 that highlights the privileges and

blessings that come with being a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Sometimes we are so used to being a slave to the law and “living up” to God’s grace and redemption that we trap ourselves in this slavery mindset. We do not find the true freedom and joy in our salvation and free gift of Grace.

Timothy Keller explains this well in his book *Galatians For You*, “This is a picture of how Christians may to some degree fail to experience the freedom and joy of their salvation. Christians can continue to live day by day as slaves, instead of as the adopted sons of God that they are. Paul will return to this in verses 8-9 (and 5:1). Though we are rich in the gospel, adopted children of God with complete and direct access to the Father, we can go back to relating to Him only through our record and moral merits. It's as though we are given a gift, but give it back to the



giver so that we can strive to earn it. Slavery is our natural state. But Paul is going to show first how people can "come of age"; and then how people can enjoy being of age."

I want to reiterate one line from that quote again, Keller says, "It's as though we are given a gift, but give it back to the giver so that we can strive to earn it." We don't accept being adopted into sonship, we don't accept becoming an heir, we don't accept that God can just redeem our broken, filthy selves that easy. We subconsciously put God in a box and say he's not that powerful. When we refuse the gift he's given us or hand it back and try to earn it, we are saying we don't believe God's actually that powerful. We need to be a participant and MAKE ourselves better so we can commune with him. At the end of the day that is arrogant of us and displays a lack of faith.

In Galatians 4:7 it says: "So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir."

This status of becoming heirs through Christ promises us these three things.

1. **Freedom from bondage** - As Paul notes in Galatians 4:7, believers are no longer slaves but are now heirs through Christ. This means that we have been set free from the bondage of sin, death, and the law, and have been given a new identity and purpose. We are no longer defined by our past mistakes or failures, but by our relationship with our Heavenly Father. This freedom should lead us to live with confidence and boldness in Christ.

In the context of the Bible, the relationship between a slave and an heir is a metaphorical one that reflects the difference between being bound to the law and being free in Christ.

In the Old Testament, God's people, the Israelites, were under the law of Moses, which included many rules and regulations that they had to follow in order to be considered righteous before God. This was often described as being in a state of slavery, as they were bound to these laws and had to obey them or face punishment. In the New Testament, however, Jesus came to fulfill the law and offer a new covenant of grace, in which believers are freed from the law and given the opportunity to become heirs of God's kingdom. This is often described as being adopted as sons and daughters of God, and having the freedom to live in obedience to Him out of love, rather than obligation.

So the contrast between a slave and an heir in the Bible represents the difference between being bound to the law and being freed by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

2. **Adoption as children** - The idea of being heirs with Christ also implies that we have been adopted as children of God. As Paul says in Galatians 4:5, we have been "redeemed" and given the "adoption as sons" through Christ. This adoption implies a deep and personal relationship with God as our Father, as well as the privileges and blessings that come with being a child of God.

3. **Inheritance with Christ** - The idea of being heirs with Christ also implies that we have an inheritance with Him. We are co-heirs with Christ and in Romans 8:17 Paul discusses this idea

further, it says, “Now if we are children, then we are heirs— heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”

I like how Timothy Keller describes this aspect of our inheritance and salvation, “Yet it is very easy and common to think of our salvation only in terms of the first and not the second--that is, only as the transfer **from us** of our sins, but not as the transfer **to us** of the Son's rights and privileges. When we think like that, we are really only "half-saved by grace". We can get pardon, but now we have to live a good life to earn and maintain God's favor and rewards. Paul wants to show the Galatians, and us, that not only did Christ remove the curse we deserved, but He also gives us the blessing He deserved. God's

honor and reward are just as secure and guaranteed as our pardon.”

Through this we are promised eternal life, the forgiveness of sins, righteousness, the presence of the Holy Spirit, and a renewed life through Jesus Christ. This inheritance is rooted in God's faithfulness and love, and it should inspire us to live with hope and purpose, knowing that our identity and new lives are secure in Christ.

He transferred **from us** our sins and took those and died for us on the cross, but he also transferred **to us** his rights and privileges as the Son of God. We became co-heirs with Christ. We read those passages and we say those things, but too often we focus on Jesus took our sins.. and that's it, we stop there. We forget the other

aspect of him making us co-heirs with him where we receive his privileges and rights.

This reminds me of the Princess Diaries movies.

Mia Thermopolis is going to High School in San Francisco, barely surviving the awkwardness and treachery of high school. Then out of nowhere she is told she is Genovian royalty and will eventually one day take the throne from her grandmother. She is transported out of her awkward high school years and into a brand new world where she is heir to the throne. This is how I think of us and our relationship with God, out of nowhere one day we have a relationship with Christ and we are then set to become royalty, heirs to the throne, and adopted as sons into the Kingdom of God. We go from slaves to the law to royalty and heir with Christ. Sounds like we've all got a little bit of Mia Thermopolis in us.

Overall, the idea of no longer being slaves but rather now heirs with Christ is an amazing reminder of the love and grace of God, and the incredible blessings that come with being a child of God. As we embrace this truth through faith in Christ, we are invited to live with freedom, confidence, and hope, knowing that we belong to a loving and faithful Heavenly Father and that we have an eternal inheritance with Him.

As much as we talk about this freedom and aspire to live through it, it is very easy for us to fall into different mindsets where we feel we must earn our place in God's kingdom. We give that gift back and strive to earn it. We create this long list of rules and regulations we must meet in our heads.

This leads into our third point for today, **We must avoid the dangers of legalism and live through the freedom in Christ.**

Another theme in Galatians 4 is the danger of falling back into legalism and bondage to the law. Paul rebukes the Galatian believers for trying to earn their salvation through obedience to the law, and reminds them that only faith in Christ can bring true righteousness and freedom.

Galatians 4:8-18

8 Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods.

9 But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—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?

10 You are observing special days and months

and seasons and years! 11 I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.

12 I plead with you, brothers and sisters, become like me, for I became like you. You did me no wrong. 13 As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you, 14 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.

15 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. 16 Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?

17 Those people 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.

18 It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose

is good, and to be so always, not just when I am with you.

Timothy Keller says it well when describing what Paul was explaining to the Galatians, "Therefore, Paul is saying that earning ones own salvation through scrupulous biblical morality and religion is just as much enslavement to idols as outright paganism and all its immoral practices! In the end, the religious person is as lost and enslaved as the irreligious person. Why? Both are trying to be their own savior and lord, but in different ways." Galatians for You

The dangers of legalism in Galatians 4 are a significant warning against trying to earn our salvation through obedience to the law or human effort. We become just as lost and enslaved when we approach salvation and grace in this way, as those who are not even trying to follow

Christ. Here are some ways the dangers of legalism can be unpacked further:

-False gospel - One of the primary dangers of legalism is that it presents a false gospel that is based on works rather than grace. As Paul notes in Galatians 4:8-9, the Galatians had been "enslaved" to "elemental spirits" by trying to observe the law as a means of salvation. This false gospel is not only ineffective in saving us but also distorts our understanding of God's character and undermines the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

-Burden of performance - Legalism also creates a burden of performance that can lead to feelings of guilt, shame, and inadequacy. When we try to earn God's favor through our own efforts, we inevitably fall short and feel the weight of our failure. This can lead to a sense of

despair and discouragement, as well as a tendency to judge ourselves and others based on external standards rather than the grace of God.

I struggle mightily with this one. I feel I must always be loving others, doing good, being patient, doing my spiritual disciplines so that I can earn and deserve God's love, but that's a false gospel rooted in a burden of performance.

-Pride and division - Legalism can also lead to pride and division within the church. When we start to view our own obedience to the law as a source of merit or superiority, we risk creating a hierarchy of holiness that can divide the body of Christ. This can also lead to a judgmental and self-righteous spirit that undermines the unity and love that should characterize the church.

The dangers of legalism in Galatians 4 serve as a warning against the temptation to rely on our own efforts or achievements for salvation. Instead, we are called to trust in the grace of God and the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice on our behalf. This frees us from the burden of performance, cultivates humility and unity within the church, and allows us to experience the fullness of God's love and grace in our lives.

One last passage I want to dive into from Galatians 4 references the time of Abraham and Sarah. Abraham and his wife Sarah were very old and still childless when they received a promise from God that they would conceive of a child. It still didn't happen for a while longer when they were in their 90s. Can you imagine raising a child in your 90s?

But over time as the promise had not culminated yet, Abraham and Sarah decided to take the promise into their own hands. Sarah gave one of her servants to Abraham, Hagar, to sleep with and have as a concubine wife. He ended up having a child with her and then shortly thereafter having a child with Sarah.

This background on Abraham, Sarah and Hagar sets us up for what Paul says in this passage,

Galatians 4:21-26

“Hagar and Sarah

21 Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? 22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman.

23 His 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.

24 These things are being taken figuratively: The women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. 25 Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. 26 But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother.”

Galatians 4:21-26 is a section of Paul's letter to the Galatians in which he uses an allegory to illustrate the difference between slavery to the law and freedom in Christ.

The story of Hagar and Sarah is a powerful illustration of the difference between the law and the gospel. The law leads to slavery, but the gospel leads to freedom.



In this passage Paul is addressing those who are trying to find salvation through the law rather than through faith in Christ. He is challenging them to consider the implications of what they are doing and pointing out that they should know what the law actually says.

Paul uses the story of Abraham and his two sons to illustrate the difference between living by the law and living by faith. Abraham's first son, Ishmael, was born through Hagar, a slave woman, while his second son, Isaac, was born through Sarah, his wife. Ishmael represents those who try to gain salvation through their own effort or through the law, while Isaac represents those who receive salvation through faith and the grace of God.

Paul explains that the story of Hagar and Sarah is an allegory that represents two covenants. Hagar, who represents the law, gives birth to children who are slaves. This corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, which was under the law and was in bondage to sin and death.

In contrast to the present city of Jerusalem, Paul introduces the idea of the heavenly Jerusalem, which is free and is the mother of believers. This Jerusalem represents the new covenant that God established through Christ, which provides freedom and salvation to all who believe.

Overall, Galatians 4:21-26 is a powerful illustration of the difference between living under the law and living by faith in Christ. Paul uses the story of Abraham and his two sons to show that salvation cannot be earned through human effort

or obedience to the law, but only through faith in Christ and the grace of God. As believers, we are called to live in the freedom that comes from our identity as children of God and to trust in the promises of the new covenant established through Christ.

We are no longer bound by the law, the Old Testament takes us on a journey to Christ's sacrifice and then through that sacrifice we are no longer held to the standards of the Law. We had our bondage and slavery to the law removed from us by Jesus and his redemption and we were given adoption into sonship where we were transferred to us the inheritance Christ is promised and receives. We became co-heirs with Christ and receive it through the free gift of grace, not through our own merit or works.

We must remember that, Through faith we are promised adoption into Sonship (Everyone). We are no longer slaves, we are heirs through Christ. And we must avoid the dangers of legalism and live through the freedom in Christ.

Let's pray...