

UNLOCKING FREEDOM: A STUDY OF GALATIANS #9
LOCKING UP YOUR FREEDOM
GALATIANS 4:8-20

GETTING STARTED

Have you ever tried to fix a problem, only to find out that your “solution” made the situation worse?

DIGGING IN

In Galatians 4:8-10, Paul is saying that Biblical morality and religion (v 9) can be just as enslaving as an outright pagan life and immoral practices (v8). How would be the same? How would be different? Can you think of some ways that moral and/or religious slavery might be worse?

Why would a person choose to live as a slave obeying a master in fear rather than as a child relating to a Father in love? What does this say about our personal insecurity? What do we do to try and earn God’s approval? List some ways we try to earn favor with God even after he has freed us and called us His children?

Why is the distinction between *knowing God* and *being known by God* important (v 9)?

How would embracing your identity as an adopted heir of the King of the Universe change the way you viewed the “elementary principles of the world” (v 3, v 9)?

Religious people often think of wrong as “doing immoral things,” but idols of the heart are “good and basic things elevated into being ultimate things” (Keller). So, idols can have either a religious or a non-religious bent, but both are equally deficient.

What kinds of things do people seek to give their lives meaning, worth, significance, salvation? It might be easiest to do this by answering the following question: Some people look to _____ to give their lives meaning – to justify their lives and save them – to give them what they should be looking for from God. Can you list ten common idols (try to list some that are religious and some that are non-religious)?

LIVING IT OUT

Print out and complete the diagnostic list on “Identifying Our Idols” that is available on our website (it will be posted on our website as a part of the sermon notes available for download – email or call Jeff if you are having trouble finding it). Pray and ask God to help you discern your heart. (This is a very valuable exercise, but it will take some time and will likely need to be done individually apart from the group. If you can do it before your group time, that would be great for discussion, but some groups will need to do it afterwards.)

After personally reflecting on the idols of your heart, how would you answer the following:

I sometimes look to _____
to give my life meaning, worth, or significance rather than looking to my identity in Christ as a child of God.

In light of your personal brokenness, what is one way that you could seek to trust your identity in Christ rather than seeking to find your meaning in something else?

These sermon notes are produced each week for further study and discussion in our small groups. If you are interested in joining a small group, please contact Leslie Ann Yell at smallgroups@chathamchurch.org or 545-9589.

Identifying Our Idols

The following is a diagnostic tool to help you identify your idols. Pray and ask God to help you discern your heart. This exercise will work best if you have time to let your mind roam freely through your personal experiences and feelings as you think about your life.

Answer the following:

If you are *angry*. Ask: “Is there something that is *too* important to me? Something I am telling myself I have to have? Is that why I am angry, because I am being blocked from having something I think is a necessity when it is not?” Write down what that might be.

If you are *fearful* or *badly worried*. Ask: “Is there something that is *too* important to me? Something I am telling myself I have to have? Is that why I am so scared, because something is being threatened which I think is a necessity when it is not?” Write down what that might be.

If you are *despondent* or *hating yourself*. Ask: “Is there something that is *too* important to me? Something I am telling myself I have to have? Is that why I am so ‘down,’ because I have lost or failed at something which I think is a necessity when it is not?” Write down what that might be.

Circle the thoughts that are lodged in your heart.

Power idolatry: “Life only has meaning / I only have worth if – I have power and influence over others.”

Approval idolatry: “Life only has meaning / I only have worth if – I am loved and respected by _____.”

Comfort idolatry: “Life only has meaning / I only have worth if – I have this kind of pleasure experience, a particular quality of life.”

Image idolatry: “Life only has meaning / I only have worth if – I have a particular kind of look or body image.”

Control idolatry: “Life only has meaning / I only have worth if – I am able to get mastery over my life in the area of _____.”

Helping idolatry: “Life only has meaning / I only have worth if – people are dependent on me and need me.”

This handout on *Identifying Our Idols* was taken from Tim Keller’s *Leaders Guide on Galatians* (Redeemer Presbyterian Church).

Dependence idolatry: "Life only has meaning / I only have worth if – someone is there to protect me and keep me safe."

Independence idolatry: "Life only has meaning / I only have worth if – I am completely free from obligations or responsibilities to take care of someone."

Work idolatry: "Life only has meaning / I only have worth if – I am highly productive and getting a lot done."

Achievement idolatry: "Life only has meaning / I only have worth if – I am being recognized for my accomplishments, if I am excelling at my career."

Materialism idolatry: "Life only has meaning / I only have worth if – I have a certain level of wealth, financial freedom, and very nice possessions."

Religion idolatry: "Life only has meaning / I only have worth if – I am adhering to my religion's moral codes and accomplished in its service and activities."

Individual person idolatry: "Life only has meaning / I only have worth if – *this one person* is in my life and happy there and/or happy with me."

Irreligion idolatry: "Life only has meaning / I only have worth if – I feel I am totally independent of organized religion and with a self-made morality."

Racial / Cultural idolatry: "Life only has meaning / I only have worth if – my race and culture is ascendant and recognized as superior."

Inner ring idolatry: "Life only has meaning / I only have worth if – a particular social grouping or professional grouping or other group lets me in."

Family idolatry: "Life only has meaning / I only have worth if – my children and/or my parents are happy and happy with me."

Relationship idolatry: "Life only has meaning / I only have worth if – Mr. or Mrs. 'Right' is in love with me."

Suffering idolatry: "Life only has meaning / I only have worth if – I am hurting, in a problem – only then do I feel noble or worthy of love or am able to deal with guilt."

Ideology idolatry: "Life only has meaning / I only have worth if – my political or social cause or party is making progress and ascending in influence or power."

Answer these diagnostic questions:

What is my greatest nightmare? What do I worry about the most?

What, if I failed or lost it, would cause me to feel that I did not even want to live? What keeps me going?

What do I rely on to comfort myself with when things go bad or get difficult?

What do I think most easily about? What does my mind go to when I am free? What preoccupies me?

What unanswered prayer would make me seriously think about turning away from God?

What makes me feel the most self-worth? What am I proudest of?

What do I really want and expect out of life? What would really make me happy?

Summary: Now that you've answered the questions above, look for common themes. Write below what you think are your functional masters. What things tend to be too important to you?