

Good morning! My name is Lee Lewis. I'm the Fort Worth Campus pastor. I said I pastored at The Village last night, and one of the pastors rebuked me for that, so I'm the Fort Worth Campus pastor. We don't have a campus yet, but that's what y'all were voting on today. Just so you'll know, Shea asked me to preach this Sunday back in December, so it just happened to work out that those things lined up today. I don't think it was a coincidence, but nevertheless, it has been a joy to study Galatians, and really just pick up where Matt left off, so let's go to Galatians 3:23. That's where we're going to pick up.

There are a couple of things I want to say about what has been talked about up to this point. There's going to be some redundancy. Shocker, right? If you've been here through any part of the Galatians series, you've heard a great amount of redundancy, but it's not going to be as redundant as it has been in weeks past. I mean, let's be honest. How much thinner would the Scriptures be if we only had to hear things once and God didn't have to say them over and over and over to his people?

I find some comfort in redundancy, just because I tend to be thickheaded and stiff-necked at times. I feel like what Paul's been doing in this letter to the Galatians is really building some things that I believe culminate at the end of chapter 3, which is what we're about to get into, and then building right into what seems like a totally new and different section, but when you put them together the way I think Paul intends them to be, I think you see a beautiful truth.

As a biblical counselor, I've counseled these two texts separately for the last seven-plus years, so if I'm dealing with a certain type of person, I'll counsel Romans 6, Romans 7, or Galatians 3:23 and following. If I'm counseling a different type of person, I'll go with some texts in Romans that talk about *Abba*, Father, or I'll go with this very text in Galatians, chapter 4, where he builds into that and talks about *Abba*, Father, which we'll get to get into here in a few minutes.

But I don't think I'll ever do that again. After studying that for the last few months, I've seen you can't divorce them! You can't divorce what Paul has been saying about the law and what he has been saying about the bondage of the law, and that it doesn't bring about salvation, and then what God has done through Christ as a loving Father. You can't separate them, and if you do, you're going to have some problems. I think today we get to bring these two incredible ideas together in a way that, really, I think, only Paul could do inspired by the Spirit.

There are a couple of things I want to say that Chandler and Shea have done a great job communicating. They've taken some things Paul said about the law and tried to bring home some points, I think, that we can understand with our language today.

1. *The law is a litmus test.* I think the word Chandler used was a *diagnostic*. Do you remember that? What is a litmus test? Do you remember in chemistry? You put it in the acid or the base, and it reads it. Right? A diagnostic is similar. It's going to read you. The law was intended to expose and read your inability to achieve salvation, to achieve perfection.

2. *The law reveals aspects of the nature and character of God.* When God gave Moses the Mosaic Law, the Ten Commandments, and he says, "Don't covet," what he's saying is, "Don't covet, because that's part of my nature and character. I'm not a God of lust. Don't murder. That's part of my nature and character. I'm not a God of hate." The very laws God would put in place for his people reveal aspects of his nature and his character.

3. *The law constantly reveals our deep need for a Savior.* God never put the law in place, even in the Old Testament, for us to be able to get inside that and dominate it, and to control it, and to achieve salvation. He literally put it in place, even in the Old Testament, as a stepping-stone to the Messiah, to the Christ, to show us salvation isn't inside of us. How loving is that? How loving that he would put us in a position, in the law, to come to our end! I think the danger is we see the law as this negative thing when really it's a beautiful thing, because it's supposed to bring you to your end!

Paul is going to contend for that heavily in verse 23 of chapter 3, so let's get into it. Verse 23 says, "**Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed.**" There are two phrases and words I want to focus on there in verse 23: *held captive*, and *imprisoned*. Are there any freeing, freedom, or salvific implications in that text? I think when you're using words like *captive* and *imprisoned*, I think there's just this idea that there is no salvation. There is no freedom, and so what Paul is saying is that there are absolutely no salvific implications whatsoever in the law, and it was never, ever intended to do so.

Then just a second thing I think he's communicating is inside that imprisonment, inside that bondage, inside those shackles... That gets old, right? Do you think a guy in prison likes prison? No, he doesn't! She doesn't! A person who is confined, a person who is incarcerated, they want to be free! God has created them to want freedom, to seek freedom. You see that freedom in Genesis 1 and 2, and then it's tarnished and lost when sin enters the world in Genesis 3.

Ever since then, the human spirit has desired to be free. It's why our culture says, "Do what makes you feel good." Why? There's a sense of freedom in that, but it's pseudo-freedom, because really, when you do the thing you think makes you feel good, you're right back in bondage. You're just more deceived than you were to begin with. What Paul is saying is God gave the law to hem us in, to put a gate around us, to tie us up, to imprison us so we would know, *I'm not free. I'm shackled*. There's a grace in that. Consider just a lawless culture. Here are a couple of examples in Scripture. I'll just read them to you.

Jonah 4:11. There's a great dialogue between God and Jonah. God is lovingly and aggressively dealing with Jonah in his self-pity, and he says, **"And should not I pity Nineveh...?"** This is God speaking to Jonah. **"...that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left...?"** There was such a lawlessness in Nineveh. There was such a debauchery in Nineveh that they didn't know their right hand from their left.

Can you imagine that culture? Can you imagine that city? I mean, as bad as things can be in some cities in America... I went to grad school in New Orleans. There you go. Nineveh makes New Orleans look tame, because even in New Orleans they have laws. You can only take your foolishness so far. They'll take your money all day though. Trust me.

What God is saying here is, "Man, I'm going to hem you in. I'm going to tie you in, but at the same time, through my common grace, I'm going to put some laws that just keep things in check." You see in Nineveh just this Romans 1 feel, where God has kind of handed them over, but praise be to God, he sends Jonah to preach repentance to the Ninevites! You know the story. Jonah doesn't want to go. God saves him anyway and he brings him to a place of worship.

Judges 17:6 and 21:25 say, **"In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes."** Well, that's scary! Just letting my boys do that in the house... I think the house would have burned down years ago! Everyone just did what was right in his own eyes. The Proverbs are chock-full of texts that say something similar to what 16:25 says. **"There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death."**

Proverbs has this theme throughout the proverbs is saying man's way doesn't lead to life. If God hands him over to his ways, there's a lawlessness and a debauchery that follows. Look at Sodom and Gomorrah. Look at Noah and the ark, and the culture and the city around that period where God is handing them over. He's handing them over, and anything goes, and chaos follows. You're foolish if you think if God maybe just removed his presence from you, you're not capable of any and every sin that's out there.

That's why it's always so sobering when I sit in certain meetings and someone is just at the place of just utter hardness of heart, and they're getting deeper and deeper into dark, dark places. My spirit shudders because the Lord has often said to me, "You depart from me, and my Spirit withdraws from you. You're not that different from this brother, Lee." That's a sobering thought to me, that the presence of God steadies me in such a way where my eyes don't wander nearly as much, and they're tethered to him as his grace continues to guide me to him.

The law exposes our deep need for a Redeemer outside of ourselves so no one in prison would say, *I can get out of this place*. Some of them might have a grand idea to get out, but few of them succeed. You've seen the few who end in some crazy prison riot with tear gas and bullets going into convicts. The Redeemer is outside of our imprisonment. It's not in me, in this prison, under the law, to be able to save myself, to be able to redeem myself.

I'll never forget when I was 18 years old. My grandfather was involved in a prison ministry, and on Saturdays, they would go up to Lamesa, Texas. This is a maximum security prison. You walk in on a Saturday. You go through the initial gate. They've already done the background checks on you. You have to be 18 or older to actually get into the prison beyond the visiting area. I had reached that limit, and I walk in, and there's this massive sign that says, "No hostages beyond this point." The moment I walk through that gate, even though I haven't broken laws to get myself incarcerated, I immediately become imprisoned.

So you can critique anyone else's sins all day long. You can critique anyone else who sits under the law all day long, but even if you're that one who happens to just step inside the prison, you've lost the same rights they have, because if they take you hostage, they're going to shoot you to shoot him. That's what it's saying. If need be, they will shoot you to shoot him, because there are no hostages. "We are not going to let this facility go into a riot and be taken over." The law can find you in such an aggressive way. Why? To punish you, or to bring you to your end? Do you see the grace in that? It's to bring you to your end that you might see your need for a Savior.

In verse 24, he picks up and says, **"So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian..."** Let me stop. That word, *guardian*... He mentions it twice, in 24 and 25. That word, *guardian*, means tutor. Don't think tutor like someone who is going to help get you through algebra, someone who is going to help you get ready for the GRE, somebody who is going to help get you through, for some of us, a whole semester. Right? Think tutor with a cat-o'-nine-tails. You know the cat-o'-nine-tails that whipped Jesus? That's literally what that word means.

So wait. Paul is saying God intended the law to be a guardian, a tutor with a cat-o'-nine-tails? Well, that sounds awful! That sounds unloving? What's he doing there? What's he saying there? Again, the law is a guardian that is meant to chastise you, that is meant to whip you, that is meant to, again, bring you to a place of desperation where you see, *This isn't working! I continue to strive for the things God has called me to do, not out of an act of worship to him, not out of a heart that's grateful toward him, but I'm trying to leverage these things, and it's not working. My marriage is still on fire. It's not working. I'm overwhelmed. I'm still dealing with shame. I'm still dealing with fears. It's not working.* It chastises you.

Do you remember the text in Hebrews where it says God chastises? He disciplines his children, whom he loves. It's actually unloving for me, as a father, to not lovingly discipline my son, especially when he's in the street trying to play, and cars go by all day long. I'm going to chastise him to give him a healthy fear of that street. God uses the law to chastise us. Again, don't hear this as bad. Don't hear this as wrong. There is no salvation in this, but he's bringing you to a place of desperation! He's bringing you to a place where you're so distraught, where you're like, *I'm going to lay it all down. I can't do it any longer.* The law, as guardian, does this.

I'm going to keep reading, and then I want to tell you guys a story to kind of bring this point home. Verse 25. **"But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."**

A good friend of mine... I met him four years ago. I met his wife, initially. She pinged the church and said she needed some grief recovery, so I'm thinking, *Someone has died in her family.* We had temporarily halted the grief recovery ministry because we were retooling some things, and so when people would ping the system, I would meet with them, kind of try to hear them out, and then get them placed with some people in the church to kind of love on them and walk with them. So I was doing that, sitting down with her, and she lays out this just dark, dark, dark story.

A young gal... She and her husband had a daughter who was, I think, a year and a half old. She had come home the night before and there were a dozen cop cars in her yard. She gets out of her car. An officer approaches her and tells her, "We have arrested your husband. He's in a jail in McKinney," and then proceeds to tell her why they arrested him. It was dark. Dark, dark. For years and years and years, this guy had just been pursuing the world, and he had had a lot of means to pursue the world and all of its glory, and he had gotten into deep, deep bondage and brought that into his marriage. They weren't in a good place to begin with, but then his sin found him out and he found himself in jail.

They ended up getting a divorce. She gets plugged in here. Women begin to walk with her, and then from afar, he begins to engage me. I'm going to be honest. I was really, really cynical. I wasn't unloving toward him, but I'm thinking, *This guy has lost everything, and now he wants to use the church to try to at least salvage something.* So I'm just listening to him. We met up a couple of times. He begins to lay his story out, and in that jail, God showed up in a powerful way and saved him, dramatically.

He wasn't looking for God. It never had been on his radar, and God saves him in a dramatic way, and he's a new man. He begins to tell me about the old man. I'm referencing 2 Corinthians, where Paul talks about the old man and the new man. He begins to tell me about his past. His testimony is just filled with debauchery, and then it culminates with these events that night. He gets arrested. He has to come under the law, and he loses everything, but he gains so much.

He gains so much, and then he gets bailed out. He has to live in Oklahoma with his folks, and he is awaiting trial. Two years ago, this month, as the Lord worked on both of their hearts, he brought them back together. They got remarried. Then two years ago, at the end of this month, he had to go to court in McKinney (we drove all day for a couple of days) and sit before a judge. That last day, the judge sends us out. We're out there, for what seemed like hours. It was probably a couple of minutes. I don't know. We were sitting out there, just on pins and needles. Then we go back in and we all rise.

The judge comes in. We all sit down, and he has to come up before the judge and stand there, and then the judge delivers his sentence and drops the gavel, and all of the air was sucked out of the room. I sat there in that moment and I thought, *There's not a man or woman in this room who is not guilty of the same sins he committed by thought, motivation, affection, and some behaviorally, and Jesus doesn't differentiate. If he's getting this for his actions, we stand before God the same way, and nothing is going to save us. Nothing we can present in that moment will satisfy God's perfect justice. Nothing.*

What Paul is saying is Jesus has become accursed for us. He says this earlier in verses 10, 11, and 12. Jesus came before the Judge. God's perfect wrath and perfect justice was beset on him, and we become sons! We become daughters! We're brought into the family of God. *What? I don't have to bring my case! I don't have to defend myself!* So then, why, as a believer in Christ, would I go back to the law? Why would I retreat to something that could never save me to begin with? In that moment, when I begin to leverage the law again, as a believer, I am going before the Lord and I'm saying, "Look at these things I do."

The scary thing for me, as a pastor, is I know the things of God. I know what to do and not do, how to go, how to be, and if my heart isn't doing those things from behind the gospel, as an adopted son, as an overflow, then I am in danger of falling right back into the law. My salvation is not at stake! My sonship isn't

at stake there! But why would I go back to that when Christ has perfectly come before the Judge and he has defended me, he has taken on sin on my behalf, on your behalf?

You've seen the name tags. "Hello, my name is..." and then you write your name. Pre-Christ, my name was *Cursed*. My name was *Death*. Your name was *Accursed*. Your name was *Death*. Your name was not *Son*. It was not *Daughter*. Then when Christ did that on your behalf and on my behalf, God gives me a new name. He calls me *Son*. He calls you *Daughter*. He calls you *Son*. That's your name. He doesn't see *Cursed* anymore. He doesn't see shame anymore. He doesn't see fear anymore. That doesn't mean your sins don't still come out from time to time, but he sees you as *Son*!

It's often that there are these dangers that come in where you'll see these wounds, you'll see these shames and fears you're sitting under. You'll see these sins you're caught in, and in that moment, you'll retreat to the law rather than the Lord! Why would you do that? Then the other danger. This one burdens my heart because we see this one in the baptismal all the time.

You grew up in a family that was religious, and maybe even legalistically religious, and you've seen the things of God, and you've seen, *I don't measure up. I have this propensity, like the young lady, from an early age, just a bent toward these things, and these things don't measure up with what God says and what my parents say. Surely, God will never be pleased with me because I'll never attain those things.* Not even out of anger, they just say, *God, I can't do it, and so I'm going to forsake you altogether*, and they leave Christendom.

This one breaks my heart because God never intended them to measure up. That's what Paul is saying. He didn't give them the law to measure up. He didn't give them the law so they could one day stand before him, just like my friend stood before the judge, and say, "Hey, God. I did this. I did this; I didn't do this," and then God, at some point, is finally pleased with a few of us. That's not what the law was intended for, as a guardian, as imprisoning, as binding us, that God is bringing us to our end to show us our desperate need for a Savior outside of us.

Chapter 4, verse 1. **"I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave..."** Here's what he's saying here. Think of the Prodigal in Luke 15. This is an incredible idea. He's literally saying you have the father, who owns everything, so he owns land, cattle, a ranch, and a farm, whatever. The son is the heir to that, but because the father hasn't passed it down to the heir, he's no better than a slave. Wow. How entitled was the younger son to come to his father, who hadn't been given everything yet, to say, "Hey Pops. Give me what's coming to me"? How entitled was he to do that? Extremely entitled.

So what Paul is saying about the law is we are heirs, and under the law, we're under guardians until God would give us what is meant to be ours, and Christ has freed us from that. Let me keep reading. **"I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world."**

Okay. I have to spend some time breaking this elementary principles idea down. There are a couple of things it could mean. I think it means the second, and I'm going to tell you why in a second, but I have to do a couple of things before I get there. The first thing it could mean is elementary ideas, so think like the A, B, C's or the 1, 2, 3's. Right? I still, literally, from kindergarten remember, "Righty-tighty; lefty-loosey." Right? You know, with the screw, or a bolt? I'll think, *Okay. Righty-tighty; lefty-loosey*, because I don't want to strip the screw. I learned that in kindergarten. That's an elementary principle.

So is Paul saying we were subjected to these elementary ideas of the world? Keep it in context. Keep it in context with chastisement, imprisonment, and bondage. I just don't think elementary school was bondage for me. I mean we had recess. We had snacks. We went on field trips all the time. I really don't think that's what he means in context. Hopefully when Chandler picks this back up in verses 8 and 9, I think with 8 and 9 you really get a feel for what he's talking about. That's what I think the second one is.

What this really means is these elemental spirits of the universe. In other words, the demonic and satanic forces that maybe are at work right now. Satan is called the prince of the air. Do you think he takes advantage of that? Absolutely, he does, but praise God; he's on a leash. Right? Amen, right? Come on. Give me an amen on that one. Praise God; he is on a leash. But he takes advantage. So what Paul is saying is we've been subjected, because of this fallen world, to these elemental spirits. So is Paul saying Satan came up with the law? Is that what he's saying? Satan came up with the law to leverage against us? It's not what he's saying at all.

We know earlier, in chapter 3, the law was given by God to Moses and delivered by God's angels, and the law is perfect and good, and Christ is a fulfillment of the law. I don't think Christ would be a fulfillment of something Satan came up with. That's not what Paul is saying at all. He's saying the law was intended to bring us to our end so it would be a stepping-stone to salvation outside of us in Christ Jesus, and Satan is at work leveraging the law to keep you bound up. Wouldn't this be just like Satan? Wouldn't this be just like his schemes? Satan twists these things, the law, for his evil purposes to enslave.

I see it all the time in counseling. A couple will come in. Their marriage has been on fire for years, but they just finally decided to come in. It's like the too little, too late type. It's like, *Really? It was 15 years ago.*

There's no power of the gospel in their marriage at all. If there was, they wouldn't need to pay somebody to share gospel truths with them. They're just broken. They're a couple of steps away from divorce.

I will see this where you'll have the husband or the wife who sees the state of their marriage, and they could write a thesis on how bad their marriage is. That thesis probably wouldn't include much about them, but they could tell you a lot about what's wrong with their marriage. The danger in this area is they've heard a lot of feel-good sermons about marriage, but not the gospel implications that should be in front of all of those good things about marriage, and so they begin to leverage the things of God about their marriage, void of any gospel power, and so then they begin to posture themselves against their spouse because they can see all the failings of their spouse.

They're like, *I do this as a husband. I don't do this as a wife. I do this, I do this, I do this...* They think they're in right standing with God because of all the things they do because of what he has called the husband or the wife to do in the Scriptures, but it's void of gospel power because they're not doing those things out of an overflow of their heart to the Lord, as a ministry to their spouse. They're doing those things as leverage points *against* their spouse. That's the law at work. That's what he's addressing.

How crafty would it be that the Enemy would tempt our flesh toward this, thinking we're doing what's right? *I'm doing my end. I'm sorry about her, God.* When there's no compassion, grief, and sorrow at the state of their mate, much less intercession... That would tell me, *Oh man, their heart is in a good place.* There's an angst in their heart for their wayward spouse, and they do these things to honor the Lord as a spiritual act of worship, and they're not getting anything in return from their mate. That would tell me a lot about the state of their heart and why they're doing those things God has called them to do: out of an overflow of what he has done for them.

Sons, daughters... God intends his good law to reveal our sin and drive us to Christ. I know people who have come to this church and not come back because they said, "It's so heavy. It's so pressing." I'm like, *Yeah, God is pressing you! He's trying to drive you to Jesus! He's trying to drive you to Christ! Our failing at the law should drive us to Christ.* Satan uses the law to reveal sin and drive us to despair and hopelessness. Isn't the gospel the gospel of hope?

Hopelessness is the antithesis of the gospel of hope. It sounds like a scheme of the Enemy to me. That husband, that wife who is just overwhelmed at the state of their marriage, who continues to leverage the things of God without the results they would have hoped for, but who, out of the wrong heart, finds himself or herself in a place of utter hopelessness and despair and willing to make some foolish, foolish decisions because of where they find themselves circumstantially. God meant the law to be a stepping-stone to freedom and liberty in Christ. Satan uses the law to keep us bound in condemnation.

A couple of months ago... It was a Thursday. That's my Friday. I try to end my week getting my inbox clear, which never happens, and then spend time in the afternoon prepping for any sermons or teachings I have. That particular Thursday, I happened to be teaching at the Steps study, the Recovery Steps study that night, and so I set my day to be able to have a couple of meetings but then really just focus on those two things. I got to a coffee shop in the area first thing in the morning at 6:00. They had to let me in. I was ready to go. I got in there and just started hitting the ground running. I was just making some great progress.

There was nobody in there, hardly. People were coming and going. Out of nowhere... There's no object of lust anywhere to be found. There are no lustful desires I can prey on, that my flesh can gravitate toward in any form or capacity. Out of nowhere, a very real, focused, and intentional voice began to speak over me. (Not audibly. Calm down.) It began to speak over me and say these things over and over. "I wonder if you can get another woman to love you like your wife does." When I first heard it, I think I cursed in my mind. I think I said, *What the...?* I was just like, *What in the world...?*

That continued for hours, so much so that I texted a couple of my brothers and said, "Hey, I don't feel like I'm in any danger of sinning, but this is what's going on right now, and this condemning voice is just speaking to me." Then really around 11:00, it just stopped, and then noon... I worked through lunch, and I started to really aggressively prepare for that night's teaching. Then that same voice, with a different nuance, began to speak over me again and say, "Man, do you remember that temptation earlier?" Keep in mind it wasn't even a temptation. In retrospect, I realize it wasn't even a temptation. He was just trying to get me entangled. He was trying to condemn me.

"Do you remember that temptation earlier? You really haven't grown at all, Lee! You're the same, insecure, fearful young man you've always been. Remember the eighth grader, Lee? You're no different! You haven't grown. You haven't been sanctified. Who are you to preach to these people tonight?" Over and over, that condemning voice was speaking over me, and I just had to back away. Man, I was emotional. I had to back away and I said, "Lord, help me! Where is this coming from? What's happening? I know you've done a work in me. I know I'm not that person anymore. I know you've delivered me from so much. Help me. Make your gospel real to me now."

The Lord drew me in and he began to speak to me. "That's not who you are anymore, Lee. I've finished that work. I'm doing that work, and I'll complete that work. It's not who you are." The voice stopped. That's how the Enemy leverages the law, because everything in my flesh in that moment wants that to stop, and I'll begin to look for things around me to leverage, rather than retreating to my Father and resting in what has been secured for me, resting in the gospel that has placed me outside of that curse.

Once, everything he was saying to me was right. Everything he was speaking over me was right, but not anymore, because I'm a son. This is what he's saying. When he speaks those things over you, when he tries to bind you up in the law, the good law God intended to bring you to Christ, that condemnation is not from God, that sweet conviction from the Spirit that leads us to life and reminds us of sonship and daughtership. *That* is the Lord.

Then he picks up. "**But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son...**" So you see God the Father. "**...born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit...**" So you see God the Father who sends the Son, and now the Spirit. "**...sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'**"

My children, when they were born, were born into this world hostile and as enemies of God. That's what the Scriptures say. Man, as cute, and as cuddly, and as sweet as they are, they were born enemies of God! Part of regeneration (how loving is God to do this?) is to set us apart, bring us into the family, and then put his Spirit into our hearts, where before, we wouldn't even have wanted to cry, "Daddy!" We want to now! What love is this, that as when I'm an enemy toward him, he would give me his Spirit to gravitate toward him as a loving Father?

This word *Abba* has typically been used as Daddy, and I don't think that's fully fair, because I think that's fair to one degree, but really, what the word means is... Think Old Testament. Think of God as sovereign and holy. Right? It provokes all, right? I mean, rooms have been flattened. I mean, Moses was jacked up just seeing his back, remember? Then the New Testament. There's the emphasis of the grace and love. *Abba* is the best of both worlds. *Abba* is the older man who looks at his older Father with such high regard and esteem, but knows his dad is approachable enough to call him Daddy. It's the same as my young boys, who get up in my arms and call me Daddy.

There are not many texts in all of Scripture that cause me to cringe as quickly as this right here, and I'll tell you why. The first reason is a really good reason. I had an amazing grandfather who set the Lewises up really, really well, and I have an amazing father who modeled, over and over, even though he's imperfect, aspects of the nature and character of God. But I know as soon as I read this, there are people in this room who shut down because your earthly father failed you, and I hate that for you. I hate that, because in the context of what Paul has been building, really, since chapter 3, you've been imprisoned, and he intended that to bring you to your end so he could bring you into the family.

The danger, when your earthly father has failed you, is you're putting your presuppositions and your experiences on God. So rather than going to him as a blank slate and letting him show you what a loving Father he is, what a Deliverer he is, what a Redeemer he is, and how gracious he is, you've gone to him with your wounds and your baggage and you've put those things on him. I would ask you... *Do you do that with everything? Do you do that across the board?* Because how spring-loaded are you if you do that? I want to be sensitive here, but I would encourage you.

I think Job teaches us a ton about this. Job, in chapter 1, loses everything in a span of 15-20 minutes. He just gets obliterated, and then chapter after chapter after chapter, he cries out to the Lord. He's questioning the Lord. He's looking to the Lord. He's crying out, and then God shows up in a very real way and he speaks to Job. He doesn't necessarily answer all his questions, but he draws near to Job and flattens him and humbles him, brings him close, sets his feet upon the rock, and redeems him.

I would tell you, if you've been wounded by your dad, if your dad was nowhere in the picture, draw near, over and over and over again. Let him show you what *Father* means. Let him show you *Daddy*. I'm confident when you draw near to him, he will draw near to you and his provision and his protection might not look the way you thought it should, but I promise it will be better.

I shared this story a couple of years ago when I preached through Psalms 120 and 121. In '94, when I was 14, I was diagnosed with Crohn's disease. Part of the story I shared was when we found out about that and how traumatic it was. Part of my small intestine ruptured and they had to rush me to the hospital. I was just probably a couple of minutes away from dying. Then I woke up from surgery, and I'm not trying to be vulgar or inappropriate, but I woke up and my stomach was laid open, but because of the infection that was inside, if they needed to go back in, they just wanted to be able to go back in quickly. That's traumatic for a 14-year-old.

I'm at Texas Tech Medical Center. My boys from junior high are literally across the highway at a baseball camp, and I'm laid up in a bed. My life was drastically altered that day. The story I told a couple of years ago was really my parents just telling me how much they loved me, and telling me they were praying for me, especially my dad. He just pressed me. He said, "Man, I love you, and I'm here for you, but I can't bear this burden for you. You're going to have to take this to the Lord." They just continued to tell me that.

That whole summer, I was just teetering, because when I woke up, I woke up angry. I came to faith at 8 years old. It was legitimate. And here I am now. My life is not going to turn out any way I had hoped. I had doctors saying I could have died, and I still could die. I had doctors saying my life is going to be really hard. I'm 14, and I'm just furious at God. That whole summer, I teetered. I was angry. I was like, "God, you could

have stopped this! What are you doing? Why are you letting these things happen to me? Don't you know the hopes I have?"

I just pressed into him, and I don't think I would have had my parents not pushed me to. I just continued to press him, and I just laid myself bare before him. I probably would have made some people cringe, similar to Job. God just drew near to me. He just pulled me close, and year after year after year, he has done the same. As good as my earthly father is, he's better, and as great as my grandfather is, he's better. As awful as your father might have been, he's better, because the gospel has leveled the playing field, and we don't have to step before the Judge, because we've been made sons and daughters. Let's pray.

Father God, I'm so grateful for your presence that even now, your Spirit is moving. You are drawing men and women to yourself, and so, Holy Spirit, would you move in power? Holy Spirit, would you convict? Would you encourage? Would you build up? Would you bring hope where hope is needed? Would you break strongholds of the Enemy that we might worship you in Spirit and truth, because Christ, our great Mediator, has come on our behalf and now, as sons and daughters, we can worship you and know you hear us and receive us into the family?

So we're humbled and we're grateful. For those men and women in here who do not know you, maybe even those who think they do, but really don't, oh, Holy Spirit, would you move in their hearts right now that they might cry out, "*Abba*, Father," that they might cry out to you, that they might realize their deep need for you, and they've been imprisoned, they've been bound, and you want to set them free from that? Bring them to their end, even today.

Then Lord, for those in here whose fathers were failures, whose fathers sinned against them, whose fathers abandoned, whose fathers did not take up the calling you had given them, I pray, God, that you would grant a supernatural peace to heal wounds, to heal hurts, that you would deliver them from those places of hurt and pain that they might come to you and let you show them how to be their Father, that they might run to you, and that you would wrap them in your arms, and you would love them and hold them and receive them in as sons and daughters.

Lord, we're going to need your help for all of these things because there are so many things, there are so many factors that restrict us at times, and so free us up to worship you now, Lord, as we cry out to you through song. Would you move powerfully? Would you stir in our midst that we might cry out to you and sing out to you, because you are worthy? You are a good God. You are a good Father, and we praise you accordingly. In Jesus' name, amen.