

Hello. Are we good? It's good to see you. Happy Mother's Day. I want to say just a quick word about that before we get going. One of the things I learned when I became a pastor is for most women today is a happy day. It's a day they get to be honored. It's a day they get to be thanked. It's a day the hard work of what they do is pointed at and celebrated, and there is a lot of gratitude and rightful gratitude toward what our mothers do, but it really wasn't until I became a pastor that I realized there is a whole other group of women who today is extremely painful for.

It's painful either because this is the first Mother's Day without Mom or, and this one I know because of the youthfulness of our church, there are a lot of young women who would love to be mothers and for whatever reason right now that is just simply not happening. I was completely unaware when I became a pastor that there is a whole segment of women who will avoid church like the plague this weekend. They will avoid it because they don't want to be reminded of these things.

So for those of you who are in waiting, those of you who are hurting, I wanted to point out something very quickly in the Scripture, something I saw several years ago that I thought was such a beautiful picture of what God has wired you for, what he has woven into your heart, and then we can move into Galatians. The sermon is not a Mother's Day sermon, but I will mention mothers. It's very important because of how I mention mothers, that you understand it's not a Mother's Day sermon. I want to try to avoid those emails I'll get if you don't see that these things are different.

Let me address this. Adam doesn't name Eve in the beginning. He wakes up. He sees Eve there, and he calls her Woman. Woman. Mine. So literally the biblical narrative is that he wakes up. There is a naked woman there. He doesn't name her anything else except mine. Up until that point he's given everything else a name. There is the naked woman. That's mine. Whatever it is, it's mine! **"...bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh."** He doesn't name her. She doesn't have a name. She's just called Woman, and then in Genesis, chapter 3, verse 20, he names her, and her name has a meaning, and I think it's significant for today.

Genesis, chapter 3, verse 20 simply says this: **"The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living."** Now let me tell you why that is such an interesting text. Because five or six verses later, you get Genesis 4:1. Here is Genesis 4:1: **"Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, 'I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord.'"** Here is why I think this little

progression is pretty profound. Because Eve is called the mother of all living things before she has a child. She is literally considered by God in his design of her to be a mother before she has any children.

So if you're waiting on the Lord or this is a painful day for you, I want to point you to this reality: The community of faith, the covenant family, requires the nurturing heart God has woven in you for us to be all that we would become, and if God has not given you children at this point, that does not mean he has not wired you to nurture and shape the covenant community of faith. So I wanted to encourage your heart today simply by pointing out God has wired you and woven into you something very beautiful.

So today is bigger than just, yes, mothers who work hard and provide. Listen, I've been at home for a week with just my children. My wife by far has a harder job than I do. I don't know how she does it. I don't know how she doesn't harm them. I don't know how she stays sane. I completely understand why she can no longer hear them say, "Mom." I get that. It's an unbelievable task to manage a home in the way she manages a home and the way my mother managed our home growing up.

So yes, there is honor that is due. Yes, there is praise that is due, but really something even larger than that is this reality that God has graciously and beautifully designed the woman's soul to nurture, care, and shape, in a lot of ways, the family (both the nuclear family as well as the covenant community of faith as a family). Thank you, women, for what you bring to the community. Thank you, mothers, for what you bring to your households. God bless you. We're grateful for you and love you.

Now I want to transition into Galatians 4, verses 21 through 31. Again, it will address mothers. Please, this is not a Mother's Day sermon. It's very important for you to understand that, and you'll see why as we get into this text. Now I really love this text in Galatians because he's been unbelievably aggressive this entire book, hasn't he? I mean, he's called them fools. He's asked who has bewitched them. He basically has said they are worshipping demons and not Jesus. That's aggressive. In fact, he even said, the last time I was with you, "I wish I could change my tone with you."

Biblically he's acknowledging, "In our sacred, inerrant literature, my tone is aggressive." He said, "I wish I could change my tone with you, but I'm perplexed by you." Now this whole time he's been pointing out the idiocy of exchanging the law or pursuing the law as opposed to resting in the gospel. He's really been kind of pounding away at it, and now all of a sudden he's not going to let off on the idiocy of it, but he's going to come from a different angle and show you really what you've been invited into that is so much more lovely than what you're submitting to if you're submitting to the law.

So there is a sweetness in this text that hasn't been in the book of Galatians as visibly as it is going to be in today's text, so let's look at this. It's going to reference the Old Testament quite a bit. Galatians, chapter 4.

Picking it up in verse 21. **"Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law?"** Now I'm hoping I've done a good enough job in this book, but if I haven't let me clarify what he means when he talks about being *under the law*. To be *under the law* is not a reference to those who obey the law.

It is the biblical expectation of those who love Jesus Christ to be obedient to the law, so when Paul references those under the law he's not talking about those who obey the law, because God's expectation of you and me is that we do obey the law. When he uses the phrase *under the law*, he's talking about those who would use the law as a means of justification. *I will obey the law, and in my obedience to the law, I'm going to have right standing before God. God will accept me. God will approve of me, and God will bless me because I am doing these things.*

That's being under the law, and he's already said that is demonic. He has already said that is foolish. He's already called them stupid for doing this. He says here, "Those of you who wish to be under the law (this is that aggression still), have you not read the law?" There is kind of a brilliant switch here because he's basically saying, "Hey, the law you're trying to put yourself under doesn't support the salvific weight you're trying to give it. Have you not read the law? The law can't save. The law will even tell you it can't save." Then he gets into an Old Testament story. Look at verse 22.

**"For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman."** Now let me catch you up. I don't know what your church background is, but this is one of the more interesting, compelling stories in the book of Genesis. God comes to Abram and says this verse I quote to you all the time out of Genesis, 12, "I'm going to bless all nations through your offspring (singular)." That is in reference to Jesus Christ. We already read about that in Galatians. "I'm going to make your offspring (plural) like the stars in the skies, like the sand on the beach. You are going to be a nation."

Abraham points out some things. "Hey, I'm really, really old, and my wife is really, really, really old. Not only that, she's been barren for her whole life. I just don't know that all of a sudden we're going to have little miracle babies, all right, so I just don't see this one coming," but he believes and he goes and tells Sarah. What does Sarah do? She laughs, and not like it's a funny joke. Here's a woman who has been barren her whole life.

Now getting way up in age, she's told by God she's going to have a son and that son is going to really have sons who have sons who have sons who ultimately become this great nation who then One will come from among that line who delivers the earth from sin and bondage and destruction. After years of waiting after the promise, Sarah gets a bit antsy and so gives her maidservant, Hagar, to Abraham as a gift. Not an uncommon practice. Not a wise practice. Abraham foolishly accepts the gift. Hagar is pregnant and gives birth to a son (Ishmael), and then Sarah gets pregnant and gives birth to a son (Isaac).

Let me finish reading this now. Verse 23. **"But the son of the slave [Hagar] was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through the promise."** Now you should start to be able to see where Paul is going with this. If his argument throughout the letter to the churches in Galatia is basically, "You can't; God can," you can see where he's going. The child born of the slave woman was born by the flesh, i.e. you didn't need God's help for that. You could do it. You could make it happen. Here's a younger woman who is not barren. Let's go that way, and that is a son born of the slave woman via the flesh not the promise.

But Sarah's baby, Isaac, that baby is miraculous. That son is a son of promise. Then watch where he goes next. Verse 24. **"Now this may be interpreted allegorically..."** Now that's an important little verse, and I know you might not see its importance, but really the greatest error among evangelicals when preaching, teaching, looking at the Old Testament is we want to make everything allegory. Everything is allegory as though it didn't actually historically happen, but it's just a story that teaches us a moral lesson about the God we serve.

The truth is the Old Testament is historical and rarely allegory. You know it is allegory...watch this...when the Bible tells you, "Hey, this is allegory," so let's look at 24 again, because this plays out all the time. What ends up happening in allegory is no story is abused more greatly than David and Goliath. The story of David and Goliath is just butchered, repeatedly. *You can conquer your giants. Where are your five smooth stones? Here are your five smooth stones...* I'm not saying we don't look at David not as a type of Christ, but we look at him as a shadow of Christ.

We look at him as what our God can accomplish, but the story of David and Goliath is about the workings of God, not the workings of man. Jonah is literally swallowed by a fish. He refuses to go to Nineveh, and he is historically and literally swallowed by a fish. *Oh, you can't believe that.* Oh, I believe that, but things get real goofy when all of a sudden everything is allegory and things aren't true anymore. They are just kind of stories that teach a moral lesson. You have kind of taken out from under yourself the miraculous workings of God Almighty in the lives of his people amidst a great deal of mess, and we need that.

We need to understand God works in the mess because we can get a "Yes" and an "Amen" that life is messy. So what we have here is Paul saying, "Hey, listen. That can be taken allegorically." Now let's look at how he does that. **"These women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai..."** What did we get at Mount Sinai? The Law. **"One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children."**

For you and I, that might not come across as unbelievable, but for the Jewish people who heard him say that... I mean, he's already at odds and he just open-hand slapped them with that phrase, because to them Hagar is the mother of the Gentiles whom they despise, whom they are trying to convert to Judaism so they might be Christians. They would not view Hagar as their mother. They would view Sarah as their mother, but he just said Jerusalem (present Jerusalem, this stronghold of Jewish practice), those are the children of Hagar. They are enslaved.

Then look where he goes next. Verse 26. **"But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. 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 that is Paul quoting the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 54, verse 1, who is communicating to the Israelites who have been pushed into exile, who have been dispersed across the nations. Their hope as a great nation is dashed. It's gone. Other nations are becoming powerful. Their once mighty nation is almost dissolved completely.

Really, there is not even hardly a faint hope that they'll be established as a nation again, and the prophet Isaiah reminds them, "Oh, no, no, no. It is when you are weak and barren, when you have no ability to bring forth life that God flexes most mightily." Do you continue to see how Paul subversively is eroding this confidence in the flesh? "No, no, no. It's when you are weak that he is strong. It's when you are barren that he brings life. It is when you have no ability that God makes a way." Then let's look at where he goes next.

**"Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. 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?"** I'm going to come back and read verse 30 at the end of the service. There is something kind of in this text. There is an idea present in this text he hinted at back earlier in this chapter that I want us to take and run with today because I believe it's one of those things that really robs you and me from a real vitality of life when it comes to walking with Jesus Christ.

I think a lot of us really have no problem with seeing God *this* way, but we have a very difficult time seeing God *this* way, and it's important that we see him *both* ways if we're going to kind of grow in intimacy and vitality with the living God. I think one of the reasons we don't pray, we don't read the Word, and we're not all in when it comes to Jesus Christ is that we don't quite understand certain things about him, and that's the sweetness that is kind of woven into this chapter and is hinted at in this text.

If we are children of the promise what we read about in the Scriptures is that we are adopted sons and daughters of God, and that is a beautiful reality. Throughout the book of Galatians what you'll find are these invitations that are laid out for those of us who would hear and believe. We talked early on the offer

on the table is for a former life, that if you would believe in and trust in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, then you could, regardless of how you've come in here today, leave differently.

You could leave differently and point to how you walked in today as who you *used* to be. What you *used* to do. The anxiety you *used* to have. The fear you *used* to walk in. The chains you *used* to... You could have this former life, and now the invitation that is being laid out is...*Do you want to be a slave or do you want to be a son?* You have this idea that there is this adopting push of the God of the universe to pull you out of slavery and into sonship and exposing in that invitation that most of us are enslaved to being under the law.

Let me kind of explain what that looks like. If you're enslaved under the law, if you're in the line of Hagar, if you've chosen to put yourself under the law, and what I mean by that is if you base your understanding of God's approval of you on your behavior, then what ends up happening is you become a slave to modifying that behavior, which does not free you up to pursue an intimate relationship with God. The best illustration I have is the only one I've ever used with you.

How many of you have ever seen a romantic comedy? Then you have seen them all. Let me just say that. Let me tell you. This is the story repeatedly, and I think it makes the point well. A couple meets, maybe in a bar, maybe on the beach, someplace like that. Sparks fly, but there is this thing that needs to be laid out, but they won't do it, so it kind of becomes this kind of hidden lie: *I don't want to talk about it. I don't want to look at it. I don't want to mention it. It could really fracture this kind of spark going on between us, so they try to grow in their relationship, but as they try to grow in their relationship that lie is always there.*

Just about the time they grow in intimacy, oh, there's the lie again. They're just about to have the conversation. There's the lie again, and the lie haunts them and robs them from their ability to progress in the relationship, and they become a slave to the lie. Then you've seen the movie near the end. The lie is brought forth. There are tears. They break apart. A single tear rolls down our cheeks. They could have had it. They could have lived happily ever after and then all of a sudden near the end what happens? Reconciliation. Throughout the whole movie you're like, *Just tell her! I know how this ends. Just tell her. She's going to find out. We've see this before.*

Then once the lie is visible and up front and everybody knows it and things are processed and they're reconciled, they play the emotive music and they live happily ever after, which there is no possible way they could live happily ever after for all the dysfunction that has been in the entire movie, right? I mean, you're just like, *They're going to be in counseling for years to come. You don't clean that junk up overnight. You don't clean that up with a conversation among candles. That's not how this works. I'm not ignorant. Quit painting this lie for me.*

It's very romantic, very beautiful, but not real. So what happens when you put yourself under the law is you become enslaved to the law. You become enslaved to it. You are not free to pursue intimacy. You are not free to pursue God. You are not free to rejoice in God's affection for you because you've enslaved yourself to being under the law. Now you have this offer for you today to leave slavery and walk into sonship. That's hard for us to get our minds around. I don't think we have a problem by and large with the doctrine of justification.

I think if I were to sit down with almost anybody in this room and we were to have a conversation and I were to ask you what it means to be a believer in Christ, you would say, "I am a sinner." I don't think all of you would say this. I think most of you would say this. "I am a sinner. Jesus Christ died for my sins. He rose from the grave, and he has forgiven me," and if you've got any history with us, you'll use words like *spotless, blameless, perfect in his sight*, because there hasn't been a weekend in a decade that I have not used that terminology on purpose to kind of just pound that without mercy into your hearts and minds.

So I think you would gladly go, "God is a just judge who has slammed the gavel down, and he has decreed that I am forgiven, that I am guiltless, spotless, and blameless in his sight," and justification is the crown jewel of the gospel. Without being justified by Christ's life, death, and resurrection, sonship and being daughters of God is impossible. But I have found in my own walk with Jesus Christ and as I've interacted with a great deal of people, although justification is the crown jewel, it's an understanding of God's adopting work of calling you to be sons and daughters that really is a real fuel for me in my pursuit of him, in my rest in him, and in my joy in him.

Let me show you this. Keep your finger here in Galatians, but let's flip over very quickly to your left to Romans, chapter 8. We'll start in verse 14. **"For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear..."** Now do you see some of the parallels here in this Hagar illustration in Galatians 4, this allegory of Hagar? You have not been given a spirit of slavery. You are not sons and daughters of Hagar. That is not what you've been given, because if you are walking in the spirit of slavery, if you have chosen to be under the law, you're going to fall back into what? Fear.

Fear of what? Fear of God's approval. Fear of God's presence. Fear of God's reading you and knowing you, so what you'll do is you'll kind of avoid. Then watch where he goes next, because for me this is such a spectacular verse. **"...but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father! [Daddy!]' The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him."**

You might want to highlight the last part of that verse for the part that you're not going to like about where we're going. Okay? I'm just warning you early on, that will be the one that you're like, *Oh, really?* Here's why I want to point these verses out to you. In this text, we're being moved not past justification in a way that would make us forget about justification, but we're getting to look at what we're being invited into. We are given the Spirit of sonship by which we cry, "Abba! Father! Daddy!"

Now here's why this is really important. Because to see God as the just judge (as good and right) and to hear the gavel fall that declares us spotless and blameless and holy is a relief, but to see God as Dad changes everything. Let me try to put it in more everyday terms. I don't want to go camping with the judge. I don't want to hang out with the judge. I don't want to have dinner with the judge. I don't want to throw the ball with the judge. I don't want to go see *The Avengers* with the judge.

I don't want to hang out with the judge. Now I appreciate that he banged the gavel and said I'm not guilty, but I don't know that we're going to be buddies. I just feel like the whole time we'd be at *The Avengers* and he'd be like, "That's illegal. Somebody's going to have to pay for that. I cannot believe they used gamma radiation like that." I just feel like it would always be this pointing out of what is right and what is wrong, and that's kind of the picture in my mind. Really, when you think about a judge, you don't go, *Man, I'd really like to spend some time with that guy.*

But Dad? Man, I want to camp with Dad. I want to go see *The Avengers* with Dad. I want to play catch with Dad. I want to go on vacation with Dad. I want to hang out with Dad. I want to hear what Dad has to say. I want Dad to hear what I have to say. I want Dad to be proud of me. I want Dad, right? That changes everything if our mind shifts from the good, right, just judge into Abba, Father. Doesn't that change our perception of God? Then on top of just being adopted as sons and daughters, he doesn't adopt us as the black sheep of the family. He doesn't adopt us and then hide us.

People are asking about his kids. He's like, "Check out Jesus." "Well, who is that cat behind you?" "Don't worry about that. Look at Jesus. How cool is Jesus? I'd really rather not talk about that one. He's my favorite son." Do you remember what we just read in Romans 8? We are not just adopted as sons and daughters. He is not just Abba, Father, but we are heirs, co-heirs with Christ, which means God, in his delightful saving work in your heart, doesn't just approve of you but plans to pour out upon you all the blessings that are Christ's rich and beautiful inheritance.

You will not supplant Christ in that inheritance, but you will join with Christ in that inheritance. What do we inherit? Because there are going to be some things you really like in this, and there is going to be one in particular I don't think you're really going to like, but what happens when we start talking inheritance is the



heart gets exposed for what it is, so let's talk about what the Bible tells us we will inherit as sons and daughters of God.

1. *We get God himself.* This is our first and primary inheritance. There is nothing more lovely and nothing we need more than God himself, and our inheritance in Christ, being adopted as sons and daughters, is we get God. Let me tell you quickly why that is so important. Regardless of what you have right now, regardless of how many friends, how many family members, all you have, there is a day coming when all you'll have is him. That's all you'll have. You'll have him, and what we see in the Scriptures are men who talk about God who are in circumstances maybe similar to ours, maybe very different than ours, who find God to be the treasure.

Let me read you a couple of those verses. In Psalm 4:7, he says, "**You have filled my heart with greater joy than when their grain and new wine abound.**" So David is saying here, "When everything is right, when the cupboard is full and joy is overflowing, when life is exactly how I want it, you're still better. You're still better than this. On my happy list, once I've checked everything off my happy list, you're still better." Probably one of my favorites is Psalm 73, verses 25 through 26, and you'll see in this one how necessary this inheritance of God himself is.

**"Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."** Now I want to point out something in that text I think is important for you to know. Did you notice the possibility that our hearts and our flesh may fail? What happens when the heart fails? What happens when the flesh fails? What happens when physically things break down? What happens when our hearts, our emotions, are shipwrecked?

What happens in that moment when we feel betrayed? When we feel taken advantage of? When the world as we have kind of built it out in our mind crumbles around us? God is our strength. God is our portion. God will be enough. God will sustain. So the inheritance of God is of utmost importance, is by far the most beautiful thing we get because he transcends any and all circumstances. If you hope in your flesh, if you hope in your heart, when your heart or flesh fails, what is your portion? You have no portion.

What is your strength if your strength is in your flesh? If your strength is in your heart, where will you draw the resources you'll need to actually survive? You'll have none. David says here, "You are my strength. You are my portion. Even though my heart and flesh fail." Listen. Regardless of how dysfunctional your family is, David's family wins the dysfunction contest. His son rapes his daughter. His other son leads a rebellion against him. He wins today. If nothing else, if you're here from a dysfunctional background, just rest in

someone else had it a lot worse and God worked mightily in their hearts and lives. Trust God in the mess and believe he is good and he does good.

2. *We will get, upon our resurrection, new imperishable bodies.* Starting in verse 42 of 1 Corinthians 15, you get, "This body is weak. It's going to give out. It will be sewn in dishonor. It will be sewn in weakness. It's going to go into the ground." This is me paraphrasing. "Paint it up like a clown. Put it in a box, buried. Coming for all of us." Regardless of how attractive you are right now, your nose and your ears never quit growing. Google it. It means if you live long enough, things start looking strange on you, and you can't hear as well, and you don't have the vitality, and things make you a bit nervous.

This is Ecclesiastes, chapter 12, that would even say desire fails. You're like, *Oh, I woke up again.* Then, in this all the Bible says the body might be sewn like that, but the new body we receive upon the resurrection, it doesn't get sick. It doesn't get tired, and it doesn't cry tears. So not only do we get God himself now and evermore ever increasing in the future, but we get a resurrected, imperishable body, and that's good news.

3. *We will get the world.* The earth becomes the saints of God. The earth is owned by, ruled by, and inhabited by the adopted sons and daughters of God alongside their Savior, Jesus Christ. Now the world we see when all things are made new is not the world we see now. The deserts bloom like roses. The mountaintops produce sweet wine. The wolf lies down with the lamb. They eat together. The lion chews straw like an oxen. You have all the violence, all the kind of aggression, all that removed from the world, and you have a new heaven and a new earth that is inhabited by the adopted sons and daughters of God.

You don't need the sun anymore. The glory of God is that light. God's dwelling place is among us. You can go read about this in Revelation 21 and 22. You get this beautiful picture of an unfettered presence of God right there with us. It's not faith anymore; it's sight. It's not hope anymore; it's presence. All of our hurts and sorrows on this side make sense on that side, and we rule and reign with him. Let me give you a couple of verses. Romans 4:13 says, **"For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith."**

Do you see he is still undermining this idea of being able to earn the favor of God via our behavior? He is still pointing to that as slavery and pointing to Jesus as our ability to be reconciled to God and adopted by God and considered sons by God, and we will inherit, yes, God, yes, an imperishable body, but also the world. I need to point this out just to make sure you hear me carefully. *Not everyone will get this inheritance.* This inheritance is for the children of God alone, which means there are (even in this room today) those who will not inherit God, who will not inherit new, resurrected bodies, who will not inherit the world. Some of them...follow me...are very religious, morally upright people.

Then there is one more thing we get as part of our inheritance package and we saw it there in Romans 8.

4. *We will get suffering, persecution, and tribulation.* Let me read you some verses that are so all-encompassing I wish they weren't. Second Timothy 3:12 says this: **"Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."** So what is the second word in that? All. See, I would like that verse so much more if it said, "Indeed, some," because then I could separate myself out and go, *I need to pray for those people*, but he said, **"Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life will be persecuted."**

Let me unpack this in a way. I believe that to be good citizens of the United States of America and to walk in the freedom and liberty God has given to us we need to be involved in some level in the political process. I do not feel as though I am a political man. I do believe I am a man who loves the Word of God and has been given a calling by God to declare the truths of God, and it's important you know this. To be in glad submission to God Almighty as he has revealed himself in his Word puts us at odds with our culture almost immediately.

God has said, "I have designed it to work like this for the joy of people and for the gladness of their hearts and for the glory of my name. I have wired things like this because I have wired them this way for the good of not just my children, but mankind as a whole." In fact, the first use of the law in the Scriptures is to restrain evil. It's not to transform hearts; it's to restrain evil. So when God says this is what marriage is, when God says this is what sexuality is, when God says this is how these things work, those aren't political statements, but rather they are statements made by a Creator of how his creation is to function and work.

That puts us at odds against a culture that will, once we say we believe, paint us as ignorant, bigots, hate-mongers, hypocrites, and on and on and on I could go. I'm not the biggest fan of issue-based Christianity. I think our issue is the gospel of Jesus Christ, and once we get that settled, we can move on to other things. It is of utmost importance, the gospel is. Once we have that gospel established, let's move on to issues that are implicated in the gospel. If we are who we say we are and we believe what we say we believe we will find ourselves often at odds with the popular notions of our culture.

He made it really clear here, because I think you can just not pursue godliness and not pursue a life shaped by the gospel and go to church and never be under the weight of this verse, so notice what he said here and how he said it. **"Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."** Okay. Now let me point out another one. John 16:33. **"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."**

Once again, I wish it was worded just a bit differently. I wish he would say, "In this world you *might* have tribulation. In this world you *may* have struggles. In this world something bad *might* happen." That's not

what he says. **"In the world you will have tribulation [trouble]. But take heart. I have overcome the world."** I just want to constantly lay before you the reality of living in a fallen and broken world. So my question in all of this would be why is this part of the package? It seems to not fit, doesn't it?

I mean, the other inheritances, we get a piece of it now and all of it later. That's the already, not yet. That's the tension we live in that it's been paid for by Christ but not fully consummated until the return of Christ. In the other pieces of our inheritance, we get part of it now and all of it later. This piece of the inheritance, we get it all now and none of it later. It seems like it doesn't quite fit, so I want to try to unpack for you a bit of why this is a part of our inheritance package. It is not cruel, unjust, or wicked of God to wound you in such a way that it knocks out from under you the props of self-reliance and puts your reliance completely on him.

It would be far more cruel of God to allow you to continue to prop yourself up by means of self-reliance because that makes you a slave, so God disciplines those he calls sons and scourges all of those who are his children. It is not cruel of God at all to take from you what might lead you into an eternity of sorrow, to give to you sorrow now that leads to an eternity of ever increasing joy. What you have is a lack of trust in the sovereign love of God. That's what you have.

*He is the cruel judge. Yes, he decrees me as guiltless and spotless, but he is not the loving Father. He does not delight in me. In fact, he's getting back at me and not giving me what I really need to be happy.* I want to be real honest. In this fallen world, God's primary goal for you is not happiness. I think he'll gift you with seasons of it, but God's not saying, *How can I make them happy?* Happy is fragile. The second you kind of acknowledge you are happy, it tends to go away, doesn't it? It's like the second you think, *Wait a minute. I think I'm happy.* You're like, *Oh, man. I shouldn't have even noticed it!* It's fragile.

So God is after joy, and here I want you to hear me. Again, I think most of us get the idea of God as the just judge. I think most of us struggle with God as Abba, Father, which is really why we're affected in our intimacy with God, and I think the reason most of us doubt that love and doubt that affection is because life hasn't worked out like we thought it would. Early on we built these constructs of what our life was going to be like and they probably included falling in love and getting married and having children and having money and being healthy.

We had this picture in our heads of what life was going to be like, and it didn't go that way, and when it didn't go that way, all of a sudden we got frustrated with God and believed he owed us stuff he never promised us and on and on I could go, so I want to pastorally be very honest with you today. Look right at me. No one's life has gone like they thought it would go, and after 10 years of pastoring this church, it's with a great deal of confidence I would say if you sat down with me and you created a list of all that would

need to happen in your life to make you happy, I would introduce you to the person in our church who has all those things and is miserable.

When God wields the scalpel, it's never an act of cruelty. It is always an act of mercy, and I know the hurt in this place, and I know this is going to be difficult, but I feel like I need to say it to some of you. Some of you are like, *There is no way what happened to me was loving! There is no way. It has led to bitterness and anger and frustration and rage.* Okay. So let's chat. What happened to you did not produce that; you have produced that out of what has happened. God's allowance was to create maturity and a clinging to him for hope and healing.

See, what often happens to those who have been under the blade of a gracious God, those who have been under the scalpel of the Great Surgeon, is they tend to tug at the stitches and pull open the wound and then it festers. It gets infected. Then all of this really bad stuff begins to grow in what was a wound meant to tie you to what you ultimately need in life and pull you away from what you ultimately don't, but because we don't trust his sovereign hand, because we believe we're smarter than him, and again, I don't think anybody in this room would say that.

I don't believe anybody would go, *I'm smarter than him. I think that was wrong,* but I think we'll think that and we'll live that way. It's imperative for you to know, yes, you are forgiven. Yes, you are holy, spotless, and blameless because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but you are also...follow me here...delighted in, rejoiced in, and loved deeply. It is not a begrudging act of God to give you this inheritance. He's not saying, *Well, I guess so.* It's not begrudging. It's with a great deal of joy he gives you these things.

Haven't we already read Paul's testimony in the book of Galatians where he says it pleased the Father to reveal the Son? That is brought pleasure? Do you hear that emotion? It brought pleasure to the heart of God to save Saul. Who was Saul? Saul was on his way to murder and imprison other children of God. How powerful the adopting affections of God are for his children that he would rescue them in the midst of rebellion. He's not rescuing the good kids. He's not rescuing the healthy kids. He's not rescuing the kids who have it all together.

He's rescuing the troubled kids. He's rescuing the kids who don't have it all together, who don't make sense, who are a bit of a problem, who are prone to behavioral issues, and he with pleasure adopts them and calls them his own. This is the invitation. Why would you want to be a slave when you could be a son? Why would you want to walk in slavery when you can walk in sonship and being a daughter of the king and inheriting these beautiful things? So what is our response to this?

Look back in Galatians, verse 30. **"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.' So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman."** What is our response to this invitation of adoption rather than slavery? Repentance of placing ourselves under the law. We repent of trying to position ourselves and our behavior and our actions to try to earn the favor of God. We repent of those. That is playing out in most of your lives as guilt and shame.

The Holy Spirit convicts, but there is a sweetness to conviction that pushes us toward the hope of Christ's forgiveness and his love, but when you place yourself under the law, you become a slave to the law and instead of conviction having a sweetness to it, it has a crushing in it that makes us not run *to* God but rather *away* from God, so our play is to cast out today the slave woman and her son, to repent of trying to earn our favor before God on our own, to repent of trying to be clean enough, and to rest in the forgiving adopting love of our Abba, Father in heaven. Praise him for his just justice, for his banging of the gavel and declaring us guiltless. Oh, praise him as our Father and the one who delights in us. Let's pray.

Holy Spirit, help us understand these things. I think most of us get that you forgive us. I think few understand really that you delight and love us. I pray you would really iron these things into our hearts. God, that you would just press them to the deep places that today it might change everything. It might change how we're about to sing. It might change how we approach you in prayer. It might change how we look at the Bible.

It might change really our outlook on what you're working in us, what you're working through us and what you will accomplish in and through us. We love you. Help us with these truths that are difficult for us. We don't feel as though you love us this way, so I pray your Word and your Spirit would trump our sinful emotions and we might rest in what is true and right. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen. I love you guys.