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Galatians
Chapter 4 - Man's Way Enslaves
Divine Deliverance (vs.4-7)

Galatians 4:4-7: But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

God wants to redeem us from the Law. Galatians 5. It was for freedom that Christ came to set us free. There is a liberation. Where the Spirit of God is, there is liberty, there's freedom. In John 8, Christ turns to those that have been under the Law and He says, "If you'll come to Me and you'll abide in My word, then the truth will come, and the truth will set you free." The point of the matter is that God doesn't want us under the oppression of Law. He wants us in the Spirit of His Son. He wants us to do what we do because we want to; that's the desire that He's always had.

We think about the Law, and we think about the Old Testament in particular, and when you go to, say, Exodus 20 and it goes through the 10 Commandments, you begin to realize, "Wow, these are things that just my conscience would tell me that I need to do these things." Clearly, the fact that there is a God is unmistakable, and that He's the only One that's unmistakable as well. Then as it goes on and it says that I shouldn't steal, or I shouldn't kill somebody, I mean, you realize that's stuff that I shouldn't do. I know that, but then he goes into the details of the Law as you go a little bit further in the Old Testament, and you say, "But why all these other laws?" And the answer is pretty clear, as Galatians tells us, the laws go into greater depth because of man's tendency to keep pushing the boundaries. So, he says, because of transgressions, more laws. The same thing is true in our own country. We have more laws than we've ever had. Why? More transgressions and there's more things to sin against. So, the more that transgressions exist, the more laws we have to have to protect us from each other, literally. When you think about the different kinds of laws that were in the Old Testament; laws about sacrifices, why would he have all these laws of the sacrifices? Well, here again, it's a good reminder of the consequences of sin. It's unfortunate that you would have to remind somebody

of that. You'd have to remind somebody that's immature, "You do know that that's going to hurt somebody?" That you would have to tell them that, is a sorrowful thing. That there would have to be all kinds of sacrifices in order to remind man of that which is just a demonstration of the hardness of man's heart. I mean, you have to take a life in order for you to begin to realize what your sin does. The wage of sin is death, right? That's what happens. So, God has all these sacrifices in the Old Testament and has them do that to remind them of the things that they do. When He has them have feasts, and He says, "Here are the laws of the feast," it's a reminder that God is a supplier of all things. It's a reminder to give thanks. Why would you have to remind somebody to give thanks? Why would you have to remind them that? It's a form of childishness that you would have to tell them. You know, it's sort of like your parents saying, "Ok, tell grandma 'Thank you.'" Why do you have to tell them? I mean, the adults in the room are already doing it, but you have to have a law in order to get people to do things that they wouldn't normally do because their heart's not in it. That's what the Law does.

When you think about the tabernacle and all the things of the tabernacle, you realize that God was saying, "You do know I want to be with you?" Tabernacle actually means "to abide with," and God's desire was to abide with men. In fact, at the end of Revelation, it says that God will tabernacle among men. It was a constant reminder that God wanted to be among men. He wanted to be with us, and they even made the tabernacle to where it was something that you could move. So, every time they left, well, God tabernacled with them. The interesting picture, of course, is that you have the tabernacle made of skins, which is a picture of the fact that someday Jesus Christ was going to come in the flesh and tabernacle among us. God was revealing to us that He wanted to have a relationship with us and have fellowship with us. Sometimes you have to sit down a young person and say, "Would you just sit down with me and talk with me a little bit?" Why do you have to remind them? Because they have a lot of other things that are important to them, and they're not thinking about what really is valuable, what really is important. So, you have to sit them down in order to make them think that way. All the laws in the Old Testament were to stimulate a sense of conscience, as well as when you send somebody to school, and they have all these rules and regulations; hopefully it is a tutelage to bring them to a kind of maturity and a kind of mature thinking. You give them a list of dos and don'ts, right and wrongs, and you begin to learn the things that are valuable. God starts off with the Law as it gives an interesting picture of literally a nation growing up. We have a picture of starting with immaturity and going into maturity and God is doing a great work.

Well, we now come to Galatians, and the passage is talking about what is called the fullness of time. The fullness of time is a picture of coming of age and growing up. When you go into 1 Peter 4, one of the statements that he makes is he goes, "The time has already passed for you to go after your own desire. It's now time to grow up." And what we realize is that growing up means that you're operating in the realm of the Spirit. You're not operating in the realm of the

Law. When he writes this letter to the Galatians, the understanding is that the Galatians had received Christ as Lord and Savior, but now they have gone back into their old way of living. More specifically, they have regressed into childhood. They started off by receiving the Spirit of God, doing the things that God had wanted them to do by virtue of a desire of the heart.

If you look with me in Galatians 3:1, what he states is,

“You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?”

(Galatians 3:2) This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

(Galatians 3:3) Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?”

In other words, “Are you going back to the old way of life?”

One of the statements that he makes in Galatians 4:15 is, “What happened? Where's that sense of blessing that you once had?” His point is that you were operating in the realm of desire and sense of blessing, but now somehow, you're not doing that anymore. You've gone back into the ropes of legalism, and you begin to see that they're regressing back into, as Paul would say, which is really an insult to those that were perceiving themselves that they're of great reputation; Falling away is giving the cutting moment and downsizing them and stating, “You're just acting like kids.” Now, all these people of great position are being told that they're acting like children, and of course, they're obviously not going to like that, but Paul's point is, “Why would you want to go back into acting that way? Why would you want to go back into that way of living?” And when you begin to understand, what he's saying is that Christ has come, as he'll state in Galatians 5, to set you free from this. More specifically, Christ has come to set you free from childish perceptions; from the way of thinking, more specifically, as a child might think, “Well, can I do this? Can I do that?” He's always wondering if he's going to get his hand slapped. I know that there are some adults walking around, “Is God going to strike me by lightning?” And they think in those kinds of terms, and I'm going, “Why are you thinking in childish terms?” Christ came to set you free, and you're no longer under the oppression of legalism. I mean, I know a child thinks that way because he first of all, doesn't want to do the right thing a lot of times and doesn't have that sense of, “You know, we're just going to do the right thing today.” He has a bunch of friends around him, and they say, “Hey, how about doing this?” And most kids aren't thinking, “You know what, we need to do the right thing. “Let's think of ways that we can edify people.” Kids aren't normally thinking that way. So, what they feel is, “Wow, if I do that, I'm going to be in trouble. I can't do that. That somebody would go back into that repressive way of thinking is crazy, and that's why he's going, “Did somebody hypnotize you? Is

that what happened?" I mean, why would an adult go back to a regressive way of thinking? Why would you be afraid of what man is thinking? If you think about the way that people oftentimes respond to Scripture, how bizarre is it that we would actually compete with one another in our faith? For instance, 1 Corinthians 1, the Corinthians were known to be child-like. Paul addresses them as such, but what were they doing? Well, they were competing about who they knew. Have you ever been to a Bible conference, and people began to drop names? I'm going, "What are we talking about here?" "I'm of Apollos." "I'm of Paul." "I'm of Cephas." Of course, we have our famous places, and people are saying, "Well, I graduated under this. I went to this university. I went to that college." And you go, "What are you talking about? We're all of Christ." Wouldn't the greatest thing be to say, "I know God." And you wouldn't think that people would be competing in holiness and spiritual gifts, but 1 Corinthians 14, what are they doing? They're fighting over whose gift is better than the other. "I'm more spiritual than you." Ok, that sounds pretty childish to me. They're not operating in that particular realm, but what is probably most disturbing in all of this is the desire to go back into that authoritarian type of lifestyle that they would place themselves under. It's always amazing to me how people will receive Christ and then we'll oftentimes go back to churches that are very authoritative, whether it's legalism in one way or legalism in another, we won't go into the details of that, but they'll place himself under an authoritative position because why? I mean, have you not received Christ? Have you not found freedom?

Interesting article, and I've shared with you before about this particular one dealing with the psychologist Stanley Milgram, who actually did a study shortly after the Holocaust and all of the things that happened in Germany, because the question was always, "Why would people do what they did? Why would they allow somebody like Hitler to tell them to do things that were so atrocious, and why would they give in to that? Why would they submit to those kinds of rules and regulations seeing the damage and the hurt that it would cause?" I mean, really, authoritarianism is a strict obedience to authority at the expense of personal freedom, but more specifically, it's showing a lack of concern for the wishes of others. It's just somebody pushing. Why would you go, "Ok, I'm fine with that. In fact, I feel more comfortable with that"? Why would somebody go into the rigidity of something like that? I mean the Law of God is good, there's no doubt about that, but the cruelty of man takes the good law and uses it to oppress. We know that according to Matthew 23. So, you have this authoritarianism that was infiltrating Judaism, to the Galatians, and they were submitting to it and Paul's going, "Why are you doing that? Why are you listening to these guys?" Anyway, this interesting study goes, and here again I won't go into the details of it, but basically, I'll synopsise it; he thought he would try to find out why people did what they did. So, he'd have people in another room, and you would be in this room and your job was to give an electric shock to the person in the other room. You had an authoritative individual hanging over your shoulder saying, "Ok, you want to give a

shock now," and the person that's sitting in the chair, because he's got authority breathing down his neck, pushes the button. Well, it starts off with maybe 10 volts, then 20 volts, and anyway, 82.5% of those tested went all the way to the 450 volts. This is a very interesting point, even though in the other room they could hear the screams. Now, the fact of the matter is that the experiment was done in such a way that nobody ever got any volts, but they were to scream as if they did. The person in the chair that was pushing the button had no idea that was true, but they would just keep on doing it because they had authority over their shoulder telling them to do that. So, the guy doing the experiment, that is to say, Stanley Milgram, wanted to know, "Why would people do that?" That's a good question, don't you think? Why would you do that? He comes up with a list of five things and let me just list them for you.

The first reason is because it's just the power of authority. People see authority and by virtue of somebody being authoritative, they have a tendency to submit to that. It's one of the points that it's important who you make your authority. As Paul was even saying to Timothy, "You have your mother and your grandmother who loves you and have a sincere faith. So, you do what they tell you to do." There is certain authority you realize that that they do love you and care for you, but the fact of the matter is that we're prone to submit to authority just by nature of authority.

The second thing that they realized was that there's a power of limited information. That is to say, if the person that is sitting in the seat that is supposed to be pushing the button doesn't have all the facts or doesn't understand all the dynamics of what's going on, but he has somebody over his shoulder that's supposed to be a professional or supposed to be an expert, and the experts saying something like, "Go ahead, it's ok." What do you mean, 'It's ok'?" "It's ok. Just go ahead." The point of the matter is that the person sitting in the chair doesn't have enough information. How does he know it's ok? He doesn't know it's ok, but he has an authority that's telling him it's ok. So, he submits, and goes along with it because "He's the guy that knows more than I do. He knows more than I do." One of the problems in our faith is, and I see this all the time, people are submitting themselves to people that are telling them to do certain things, and the problem is that they haven't read in Scripture themselves to know what the truth is. The Bible tells us that we ought to grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior. To know what Scripture says is very comforting and it will shore you up in times of people coming with great dogma and pontificating, "You need to do this." You go, "No, I don't." So, limited information will cause you to submit, and what you have in this particular passage is the Galatians, who are submitting to the Judaism because, hey, they're the religious experts. Paul's trying to bring them back to, "But you know what Christ said. You know what the truth is." As Jesus would say, "You know the truth. That's what's going to set you free." If you listen to everybody else, it's not going to set you free. People go, "I love being stupid." And God goes, "You don't want to be stupid." Because it's that lack of knowledge that will take away your

confidence, but if you can say, "I know what I believe, and I'm persuaded that He's able." If you can come with that kind of confidence, then it will keep you from going into that realm of "Well, somebody told me that I had to do it."

The third thing that they mentioned is the power of gradual increase of wrong. In other words, one of the statements that is made in Corinthians is a little leaven leavens the whole lump, and you go, "What's the big deal? It's just a little bit of sin." All that authority has to do is to get you to sin a little bit and then they'll get you a little bit more and they'll get you in a little bit more. Before long, you're in a place where you can't stop. I mean, if you could imagine that you've gone up to 250 volts, now, there's no turning back. You've already done damage. You've already gone to a place that you never thought you would go before, and you find yourself irreversible. Now, the only place you have to go is continuing, and that's the way people find themselves in sin. The same thing is true when they find themselves placing themselves under the wrong authority, as in their own mind, they've gone too far, they say to themselves, "The gradual increase of the demands has brought me to a point where I never thought I'd go before, and now there's no turning back." So, they submit to that authority.

The fourth thing that they have found within this particular setting is the power of avoiding personal responsibility. It's one of the benefits of middle management. I don't know if you ever noticed that or not, but middle management goes, "Company policy. I wouldn't do it. I wouldn't do it, but company policy." And middle management is telling you that you don't have to be responsible because there's somebody else that is telling you what to do. So, you can keep pushing the button. You can keep zapping the person because hey, it's not your fault. Somebody's telling you to do it. People love to be in under a kind of authority that takes the responsibility away from them. It's one of the reasons why Scripture says you have to admit that you're a sinner. You have to get right with God yourself; that we never are placed in the realm of somebody in between us. It's us and God, and God says, "Your life has to get right." The person that can always blame somebody else and not take responsibility will always be free to take it to the limit and do the wrong thing, but the person that realizes, "It's my responsibility."

If you come to the end of this particular study, he rates probably the highest, the power of fear. Man is just afraid of the ramifications of what might happen, of what the authority may do. I mean, he may be ostracized. Really, when you think about the fact that the legalism uses force; it will use oppression; it will use ostracizing people, isolation, all those kinds of things. I mean, they're afraid of not being accepted anymore. All these fears come to mind. They go, "Why don't you do the right thing?" Do you have any idea what's going to happen? You see, this is why our gospel is so different. We're not motivated by fear anymore. So, the mature person is not motivated by fear, they're motivated by love. That's why 1 John says love casts out fear.

There is no fear in love. So, he's conveying that you don't have to be afraid anymore. I mean, God has motivated us.

I want you to go back to Galatians 3 here because he is pulling them back to their original relationship with Christ when they first came, and they were liberated in Christ. Now, they're going back, and he goes, "Ok, let's go back to when you were liberated."

(Galatians 3:2) "This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?"

In other words, how did the Spirit of God come into your life? Was it because you did a whole bunch of dos and don'ts or was it because of the grace of God and you believed God's goodness?

As Titus 3 will so aptly put it, we come to God in the sense of we were sinners, but Christ came to save us, and His mercy was what changed us. 'By the mercies of God,' now, according to Romans, "we present our bodies a living sacrifice," but it's according to His mercies. It's because of what He did for us. Here again, my motivation is my gratitude towards Him.

So, he goes on and says,

(Galatians 3:3) "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?"

(Galatians 3:4) Did you suffer so many things in vain..."

Remember us talking about that word, "*paschō*," "suffer"? What does that mean? Well, he's dealing with not as much somebody's suffering and pain and anguish, but he's talking about the fact "*paschō*" could actually be good or bad; he's talking about an intense passion that moves to do something. So, it could be suffering, obviously, in the context, or it could simply be this deep feeling that moves you, stirs you to do something. Have you been so deeply moved that you felt like you just had to do something even though you knew it might be hard to do, but you just felt that the compelled love of Christ compels you? Well, that's the picture. His point is, did you go through this intensity of passion for nothing? When you received Christ, remember the passion that you felt? Remember how you longed to tell somebody else about the Lord, and the deep concern that you felt about your own sins that nailed Him on the cross? The way he puts it in verse 1,

"You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?"

"It was like He was there in front of you, dying for your sins. You saw Him in your mind's eye. You saw Him dying for you. You were there, weren't you?" I remember when they were

describing to me that Christ died on the cross for my sins. I wasn't thinking about everybody else standing around the cross. I was thinking about me standing before the cross. That was me, and he says, "what happened? What happened to that? What happened to the passion that moved you?"

He goes on and he says not only does the passion move you, but he says in verse 5,

"So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles..."

Actually, the word there, "*dynamis*" (miracles) means "power." The point is that you had a power to forgive. You had a power to do things that you never would have done before. Let me give you an example of that.

If you look with me in Hebrews 10, you see in this particular passage that you have need of endurance. It's really one of the great points, but his statement in verse 32 is, "Remember the former days?"

(Hebrews 10:32) "But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings."

Who would have power to do that? Where did you get the power to do that? I mean, if somebody just walked up to you on a given day, and said, "I'd like for you to go suffer, and I'd like for all the stuff that you have to be taken away, and I want you to be happy about that." How would that work? I mean, you would have to have a different spirit in order for you to do that.

His point is,

"But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings,

(Hebrews 10:33) partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated.

(Hebrews 10:34) For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property..."

"Take it. Take it. I'm going to have a seizure party day." Anyway, people will probably misunderstand that phrase.

"... knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.

(Hebrews 10:35) Therefore, do not throw away your confidence..."

Why would you throw away the confidence? How would you throw away the confidence? Well, you go back into the shadows. You go back into doing things because you had to rather than wanting to. What happened to the Spirit? Why isn't the Spirit of God motivating you? It's one of the reasons why Ephesians says, be being filled by the Spirit, because we have to keep reining ourselves back in to this, "Lord, I want to have Your heart. I don't want to do this because it's expected of me. That's childish." Think about that. That's just childish to do things because it's expected, or because "I have to do this." "What happened?" is the question that Paul asked the Galatians. "Why did you go away?"

Now, as you come to Galatians 4, it is this point that I really wanted to focus on. His point is that the Spirit of God came upon us, and he identifies the Spirit of God in a very unique way. In which he says, if you drop on down,

(Galatians 4:4) "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,

(Galatians 4:5) so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."

Now, just a key point here, the word "adoption" actually has the word "son" in it. Once again, not the word "son" in the general sense as, say, a child, but more specifically, "*huios*," which makes reference to a child with the same nature of His Father. More specifically, a grown-up child like His Father. It's a word that will only be used to describe Christ as the Son of God. It will not describe Him as a child of God but will always describe Him as one having the same nature as God. So, the picture is, "like father, like son." Hebrews 1, having the exact same nature as the Father. This is the emphasis. So, as we're adopted through Christ, we take on the nature of the mature. Up to this point, people have been telling us, "You've got to do this. You've got to do that." Why did we do anything that we did? It was to please the people around us. I mean, that's the way children think, isn't it? "What will people think? Do they like me anymore?" Kids are thinking in terms of "What about me? What do I want? Has anybody ever asked me? Isn't that the way kids are thinking?" That's not the Spirit of Christ. That's one of the ways you know you're not walking in the Spirit of Christ, because you're thinking about you. That's just childish.

(Galatians 4:6) "Because you are sons..."

See that? Now, once again, it's using the word of the mature son that looks like his father.

"...God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!""

Now, oftentimes we translate this in the sense of "Daddy," which is not fully wrong. Obviously, one of the emphases of the phrase itself is to convey a closeness. There's no doubt about that. However, it's less about "Daddy," and it's more about "Father God" than anything. The reason

why we state this is very interesting. This word is only used three times that we know of in the New Testament. In each case, the emphasis is a spirit of submission or being subservient from the heart. It is a picture of one coming to the Father, and what is interesting about the word is that the word is really not a Jewish word, it's Aramaic. Now, if you've ever read Daniel, if you were to go back to original text of Daniel, part of Daniel is written in Hebrew, part of it is written in Aramaic. The part of Daniel that's written in Aramaic is the time in which he was really in the realm of other nations, and the picture in the Book of Daniel is kind of giving that the time of the Gentiles has come because Aramaic was mainly the general language. The Chaldeans even would use Aramaic at that time. So, the word "abba" is an Aramaic word. More specifically, it would be used to address God as the One that's supreme. Now, it's a picture of "I'm close to God," but it's a picture of God. So, it's not as much a child going, "Daddy," as it is one going, "Father," in the sense of, "You're in charge."

I had interesting talk with my mother this past week because she sat me down; she was concerned that maybe she was getting in the way or something. So, she says, "You just tell me if there's something you want me to do." And I said, "Mom, you're my mother. I'm not going to tell you to do anything. You're my mother." The picture of the text is, "He's our Father, we're not telling Him what to do." Now, a child might tend to rebel against his dad, but somebody mature would say, "No, you're in charge," "Abba." And it's an interesting picture. What makes it more interesting is, of course is the context, and that is to say that the Jews were influencing the Galatians at this time, and Paul was saying, "You do know that you Gentiles influenced the Jews?" Because the Jews actually adopted the word "Abba" from the Gentiles, and it's an interesting picture of how we as believers actually should be influencing, even the Jews, by virtue of our relationship with God through this. There are three places that I mentioned that this word is used. One is right here, the other is in Mark and let me just read it to you. It's found in Mark 14, if you want to read along with me. In which, if you remember, Christ was going to the cross and was in the garden. In Mark 4, we actually have a picture of the hurt and the pain of Christ in this, and the sorrow that He's going through.

The statement is read in Mark 14:34,

"And He said to them," His disciples, as He turns to them in Gethsemane, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death..."

This is a very difficult time. He goes on a little bit further, and He prays, and then in verse 36,

"And He was saying, "Abba! Father!" ..."

He's not crying out, "Daddy," He's crying out, "You're in charge." If you finish reading this, you understand the context,

“... All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will.”

That's a cry of a mature Son that says, “Father, you're in charge. I'm subservient to whatever you want.” Now, this spirit is not natural for the immature, but it certainly is a spirit of a son that believes and trusts in His Father.

Romans 8, if you look with me, the context, once again, is defining for you the comprehension of what this word is really about.

(Romans 8:12) “So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—

(Romans 8:13) for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

(Romans 8:14) For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.”

Once again, he uses the word which describes him as the mature son. There are some people that are not living by the Spirit, they're under the Law, and they're still acting like children. Thus, Paul will refer to them as such in both Galatians and in Corinthians.

(Romans 8:15) “For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again...”

In other words, you're not operating in the realm of “Do I have to,” or “I'm afraid if I don't, I'm in trouble.” You've received a spirit of adoption as sons, which we cry out, “I willingly submit to Your will.” You go, “How would you get that within this particular passage?” Watch, because the context is always going to put it in the realm of willingly suffering. The passage reads this way,

(Romans 8:16) “The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,

(Romans 8:17) and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him...”

This is not a child crying out, “Daddy!” This is a child saying, “I trust You. You won't steer me wrong. I'm going to do whatever You tell me to do, willingly.” And it's the Spirit that God has placed within us to willingly do the right thing because we love the Father out of respect, out of honor, out of adoration, out of love for the Father. So, the word “Abba” gives that wonderful picture within the passage.

What he's telling us in the book of Galatians is that because your sons of God, you've been given this same Spirit. If you look in Galatians 4:6, it's the Spirit of His Son in us. Once again, that mature Spirit of Christ, that now begins to cry out and says something like, “You know what,

Father? I don't care what everybody else is saying. I don't care what everybody else is doing. I don't even care what they're thinking about me. All I care about is pleasing You." That's maturity; when somebody is not working off of how they feel or what's happening around them, or even in the capriciousness of just being concerned about conforming to those around you. Why is it that people consent to place themselves under authority that is pointing them in the wrong direction?

Let me give you an interesting picture of that, 2 Corinthians 11, if you look there with me. I've oftentimes thought about this passage in dealing with what Paul is dealing with at Corinth, which in many respects is parallel to the Corinthians. It would be like you're sitting down talking to an adult, and you go, "Now, I hate to say this, but you do know you shouldn't be playing with your food." See, it would almost be embarrassing to bring up the subject. So, Paul's having to bring up this subject, and of course, many at the table, so to speak, are boasting in the flesh. They come together, and they go, "I'm better than you." And trying to prove it.

His point is, in verse 18,

"Since many boast according to the flesh, I will boast also."

Ultimately, where he goes with this, in 2 Corinthians 12, he throws down a trump card and he basically says, "Ok. You think you're better than me? Have you ever been caught up into the third heaven?" His hope is, "Ok, now they're all going to be quiet." But then, he's going to turn and he's going to say, "But to keep me from boasting, God wouldn't let me talk about this. So, He put a thorn in the flesh to keep me humble." So, his point is, "I can't believe I'm having to say this because they're only thinking childishly."

An interesting point, if you look with me,

(2 Corinthians 11:18) "Since many boast according to the flesh, I will boast also."

(2 Corinthians 11:19) For you, being so wise, tolerate the foolish gladly.

(2 Corinthians 11:20) For you tolerate it if anyone enslaves you, anyone devours you, anyone takes advantage of you, anyone exalts himself, anyone hits you in the face."

People join clubs, and in the process of them being initiated in the club, go through all kinds of strange initiations. Then, after they go through all the initiations, "Thank you." And I'm going, "Ok, I don't get that one. Why?" "Because now I'm a part of somebody. Now I'm important." That's just childishness. Anybody going through initiation, I don't care how adult the initiation seems to be, it's just childish. It's stupid. That's what it is. The point, once again, is we're not anchored in the right things. We don't know what the truth is, and we're obviously not anchored in the love of Christ.

Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 13, and to the familiar passage that you all know, but it's just a good reminder of well, what is the Spirit of Christ and what is it that motivates us? Are you motivated by what everybody else thinks? Are you trying to fit in with the crowd? Are you trying to get the accolades of the affirmation of other people around you, or are you a grown up? Do you know what's right? Do you live by convictions? Scripture says we walk by faith. Now, another translation of the word "faith," I don't know if you know this or not, is the word "conviction." We walk by what we know to be true. See, the truth will set you free. We don't walk according to what we hear, according to what people think, according to popular consensus, we know what is right and we walk in that. Well, that's a different kind of walk, isn't it? A different kind of life. There's a sense of confidence. This is why in Acts 4, everybody was thinking, "Aren't these fishermen? How come they're so bold? How come they're so confident in the things they're saying?" It says they were filled with the Spirit.

If you look in the passage, it reads this way in 1 Corinthians 13,

(1 Corinthians 13:1) "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

(1 Corinthians 13:2) If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge..."

Of course, our thought is, "Knowledge is power. So, the more I know, the more mature I am." You know, I've seen a lot of brilliant children, but they're still children, and I've seen adults that perceive themselves to be brilliant, but they're still acting like kids.

"... and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

(1 Corinthians 13:3) And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor..."

I've seen people give all their possessions and do everything they do because it makes them feel good or because somebody else notices. Well, that's still a kid. Scripture says don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Why? Because you're just giving to God. Well, that's an adult. An adult doesn't need the accolades; an adult doesn't do what he does because of; he does what he does because he is, and the Spirit of God is within us.

"If I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

(1 Corinthians 13:4) Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant,

(1 Corinthians 13:5) does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own..."

That's the spirit of God, isn't it? Did He come to Earth to aggrandize Himself, or did He come to Earth, that He might be the servant of them all? All of this is a wonderful picture of the Spirit of Christ in us, the Spirit of God's Son in us.

“does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered.”

You see people taking into account a wrong suffered, “He did this to me. He did this to me. He did this to me.” That's childish. An adult goes, “That's ok. No big deal.” “Well, do you remember what I did?” “No, I don't even remember what you did, because it's not that important to me. What's important is that you get right with God. Are you right today with God?” “Yes, I'm right with God.” “I'm good with that.”

(1 Corinthians 13:6) “does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;

(1 Corinthians 13:7) bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

(1 Corinthians 13:8) Love never fails...”

If you look at the end of this chapter,

(1 Corinthians 13:12) “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.”

Verse 11, read it with me; you might want to underline it,

“When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.”

Look in 1 Corinthians 16 with me, and we'll close with this.

(1 Corinthians 16:13) “Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.

(1 Corinthians 16:14) Let all that you do be done in love.”

That's the Spirit of Christ in us.

Christ came to set us free from the oppression of legalism. He's come to set us free from the fear of man, and He's come to set us free from the shallow conformity and the way of thinking and the perception of childishness. He's come to give us the spirit of adulthood. As Paul will say so clearly in Philippians 3, “I press on towards the mark of the high calling and as many of you who are mature have this same mind in you.” Of course, we understand that mind that was the mind of Christ is found in Philippians 2, who took on the form of a bondservant and was not thinking, “What about me,” but “How can I serve?” It's a different mindset and that's the Spirit of God. If you're operating in the realm of, “What else do I have to do?” Or “I'm worried about

what everybody else is thinking,” or if you're operating in the realm of having to do something because of any kind of pressure, you're still a child. The Spirit of Christ, that's what you want moving in you.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today and it's our desire to breathe in Your Spirit, so that when we breathe out, lives will be touched, that they would see You in us; the manifestation of God in us, the hope of glory. Father, it's our desire to no longer live as children, being told what to do, being reminded of what's important, being afraid because of the consequences of sin, but Lord, You've placed within us a willing heart that says, “Father, I'll willingly do whatever You want me to do.” Is that the spirit that's moving in your life?