



river west church

Dumping the Substitute Saviors

Galatians 4 (part 2)

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The Book of Galatians reads like a catalogue of the key themes of the message of the Gospel. Last week we looked at the incredible theme of adoption and briefly touched on the theme of freedom. But freedom is so crucial to the message of the Gospel that we must take some more time with it. Freedom, along with its counterpart, enslavement, is a theme that keeps pushing to the surface over and over again in Galatians 4 and 5.

In 4:3, Paul talks about being enslaved to the “elementary principles of the world.” In 4:8 Paul says that they were “enslaved to those who by nature are not gods.” Then in 4:9-10 connects these ideas with the observation of “days, months, seasons, and years”, which seem to be religious observations.

At first glance, these are challenging verses for us to understand. We need to figure out what Paul means by the “elementary principles of the world” and “those who are not gods;” and how these things can enslave us. We also need to understand how these are connected to the religious observation of “days, months, seasons, and years.”

It's all a bit of a mystery, until we see the one thing that ties all the pieces of this passage together: idolatry. Idolatry is the root problem behind every kind of enslavement described in this passage. Idolatry is a matter of the heart. Idolatry can take many different forms, both religious and irreligious. Idolatry always leads to enslavement.

The radically good news is that Christ came to set us free through the power of the Gospel. But to truly walk in the freedom of Christ, we must learn to identify our idols and forsake them. This can be a challenge for us, because our idols appear to us as substitute saviors. Our hearts are easily deceived by them. When this happens, we find ourselves going down the path of enslavement all over again.

Use the space below to write down what God is saying to your heart from this passage.

Idolatry: The Lure of Substitute Saviors

Idolatry and Enslavement

Gospel Freedom in Christ