

Galatians: Live Free | I No Longer Live (North)

Petie Kinder | Galatians 4

If this is your first time, we're thrilled to have you. My name's Petie. I'm a campus pastor at our Downtown location that just opened earlier this year. I'm going to continue the love train that David Cupp started and just appreciate some people.

First off, ya'll need to know there are very few Sundays that pass at the Downtown campus where I don't have at least one person from the North campus who has come down to visit and to say hey and to encourage and to pray for us. That is just who you guys are. It's a natural out-flowing. You all are the most encouraging campus. You all paved the way for us in so many ways, like David was saying. I believe that that spirit of encouragement that comes from you guys is a reflection of leadership.

You remember the great classic movie that should have won an Oscar, *Remember the Titans*. If you've never seen that movie, ABC every other week plays it, I think. It's like on loop. It seems like every time I turn the TV on that movie's on.

There's that classic line in there, "Attitude reflects Leadership, Cap'n." Your encouragement is an over-flow of the leader that you've had for the past couple years, Greg Anderson. Yeah, you can give him a hand right now. I'm going to love on him a little more than that.

I know you all know what a great leader you've had who has gotten this thing started and helped you all get to where we are now, but you need to know on a personal level, just as a friend, he has been the best friend that I could've asked for over the past year.

He calls me religiously after Sunday services are over to just check on me and to see how things went Downtown and just to encourage me. He's been there to give me courage when I needed it, to give me love and support when I needed it. He's made me a better friend, a better pastor, a better husband, a better father. I just can't tell you how much his friendship has meant to me.

So you need to know that the leader you guys have had has not just been blessing you guys; he's been blessing us Downtown, and now, as he transitions into this new role as XP for our whole church, man he's going to bless the whole church. I'm so excited about this next season for us here at Trader's Point.

I'm going to take another second and talk about the man that you have at the helm stepping into the campus pastor role now, Aaron Hoover. You all better clap for him because I'm going to tell you the same thing about Aaron Hoover that I say to everybody. Anytime someone asks me about Aaron Hoover, I say the exact same thing every time. He's a good looking man. No, I'm saying:

He *is* a good-looking man.

I say the same thing about Aaron Hoover every time that someone asks me about him, and it's this. There are certain people that when you sit down across the table from them and you have a conversation, you can just tell by the way they carry themselves, by the way they talk, by the way they walk, by the way they pray, by everything about them, you can just tell that they have spent a significant amount of time with Jesus. Aaron Hoover is that man.

Aaron Hoover is one of those guys that every time I talk to him, he somehow, somehow leads me closer to Jesus. That's the kind of leader you have at the helm. He's humble. He's hungry. He's got gifts that he doesn't even fully understand how much God has blessed him, but you all are about to be blessed by it. I have no doubts about your future. I'm going to say that kind of as the last thing and I'll finally get to preaching.

You all have had some great days behind you. You all are what I call the OG campus, the original gangsta campus. You're like the ones that went before everybody. Everybody was like, "Multi-site's not a thing. It's not going to work." Boom. North campus proving them wrong, just blocking out the haters, doing your thing.

You all have had great days behind you: baptisms, thousands of people come. It's unbelievable what's happening here. It's because you've been humble and hungry and you follow Him. You've trusted Him, and it's incredible.

But I'm telling you, there are still thousands of people in this community that do not know Jesus and who need to know what you guys know, who need to experience what you guys have experienced. I say that to say, "Yeah, you've had some good days in the past, but your glory days are way ahead of you." There is still so much work to be done in this community, and I'm thrilled to see God using Hoover and you guys to keep going.

Grab your Bible.

We have to stop the love train, man. Love train's gotta come to a halt.

Galatians, chapter 4—if you've got a Bible, get there. If you don't, no worries; they'll have the verses right behind me on the screen for you.

We are in a series going through the book of Galatians right now. If you missed it, you have to check it out online. I've loved all of the messages in this series so far, tpcc.org is where you can find all of them.

Also, by the way, just so you know, if this is your first time, our lead pastor, Aaron Brockett, is actually the one who you would normally hear preaching about this time. Right now, he's on a study break. Our elders give him a study break every year just to kind of get away and refuel

and recharge before he jumps into the fall semester, and so that's why you're stuck with me today. But he'll be back in here in just a few weeks.

This series on Galatians, we've given it a subtitle, and the subtitle is *Live Free*. Now I love that subtitle so much. If you're here and you're not like a churchgoer, you know exactly what I'm about to say.

When you think of going to church and you think of Christianity, one of the last things you would ever think of is *live free*. When most people think of going to church and think about Christianity, they think of like *live restricted*. The illustration I always use with our Downtown crowd is that when most people think of Christianity, they think of *Tommy Boy*, Chris Farley, "fat guy in a little coat." It's like Christianity is the thing that holds your arms down. It's like "fat guy in a little coat," and then rips the whole thing.

For real, when people think of Christianity, they think of like the rules and you're telling me what not to do and that I have to watch what I think, I have to watch what I say, I have to watch what I do, and I have to give more money. It's just a thing you want to get off, so you shake it off a little bit.

That's the reason I love this subtitle so much. Because what I've come to experience—what many people in this room have come to experience—is that the greatest and truest expression of freedom that we've found in this world is found in the midst of a relationship with Jesus. I hope and I pray, if you're here today and you've not experienced that, that maybe today is the start of you experiencing that.

What we're going to do today is we're going to talk through something that I believe has the power to set you free even further. Now here's my kind of disclaimer. I believe, in my experience, that most people don't live free whether you're Christian or not. Some of you have been in church for a long time and been following Jesus for a long time and you would not say that you live free. You would not say that freedom is a word to describe your life. I don't think most people live free. I think most people live in fear.

And fear is oftentimes kind of the antithesis of freedom.

You think back to events like September 11. September 11 was a prime example of fear kind of infringing upon our freedom. When that happened, we had to be a lot more careful about what we did, and airport security changed. We're all kind of walking around with a little bit of a looming fear after that.

But then you get down on a personal level. Some of you in this room right now are dealing with some situations at work that are causing you to fear. It may be a conflict with somebody that you know you've got to resolve. It may seem small, but you're so nervous about having that conversation. It's like fear is just running around in your head.

Or maybe you're seeing a bunch of people get laid off and you're wondering, "Am I in the next group? Am I going to make the cut? And if so, what do our finances look like?" and your mind just starts racing, "Fear, fear, fear, fear, fear."

If any of you are parents in the room, I don't know that there's a greater fear-inducing venture in life than having kids. It doesn't matter if your kids are in diapers or if they're going to go to college, there's a constant looming anxiety. Are they going to make it? Are they going to be okay? What's going to happen to them? Did I do a good enough job? Did I set them up? Did I prepare them? It's just constant.

I think most of us live in fear, not freedom.

What we're going to talk about today is four simple verses from Galatians chapter 4 that I believe have the power to set you free from that fear and help you live free, like a 24/7, 365, all-day freedom because of this illustration.

Now, I'm building that illustration up as a very powerful, very beautiful, very inspiring illustration, but I'm going to give you a little disclaimer, a little warning. And the warning is this: Along with the beauty and the power of this illustration we're going to talk about it is also, at the same time, wildly offensive. Some people are going to hear this illustration, you're going to think through it, and you are going to be offended. Guaranteed. But if you can work through the offensiveness of it, I believe there's a lot of freedom to be found in it.

Let's jump in, Galatians chapter 4, starting in verse 4. You all ready? Five people. That was three more than first service, so we're growing. Galatians 4:4. Let's start.

It says, "But when the right time came, God sent His Son, born of woman, subject to the law. God sent Him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law," now pause for just a second. This is kind of a little one-line summary of where we've been for the past three weeks. We've been talking about the law and about how Jesus died to set us free from the need to please God, but that because of Jesus' death on the cross, we can now be free from that.

God loves us for who we are. He accepts us as we are right now. We don't have to worry about earning His love. That has kind of been the past three weeks, but now He's going to take it a step further.

He says this, "...so that He could adopt us as His very own children. And because we are His children, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, 'Abba, Father.' Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child."

The word we're going to center around for a little bit is that word *adopt* and the analogy, or the illustration, of adoption. Again, at first glance, when you read it, you're going to do what most of us do when you read the Bible. It's like, "Ah, that's sweet; that's cute. It sounds like a good

spiritual Hallmark card. It probably is on a Hallmark card,” and then just move on to the next verse.

But we have to sit on this for a little bit because what that verse means is that from God’s perspective, you and I, we **needed** to be adopted.

Just let that sit for a second.

You **needed**, and some of you still **need**, to be adopted from God’s perspective.

If you’re a logical person and you’re thinking through this, you are already probably a little bit offended and may be grabbing your bags and getting ready to head for the door because you know that if you need to be adopted, there are some things that you also have to say are true about yourself. For instance, if you need to be adopted, if we need to be adopted, then we have to admit that from God’s perspective, what He’s saying about us is that we are hopeless.

We are hopeless.

We don’t have a future in front of us without God. We’ve got nobody looking out for us. Here’s the thing with adoption situations: Most of them are hopeless. Most people who are in situations where they need to be adopted are in a hopeless situation. Let me give you some context for that statement.

The year prior to us launching the Downtown campus—we launched Downtown January 1. So the year before that I spent the whole year really working on preparing the team and living in the community, trying to get to know downtown better and just really learning how God’s already working downtown and how could we go ahead and join in. God’s doing so many incredible things in little pockets of the city. It’s very cool to see.

But one of the meetings I had during that year was a meeting with a lady who works for the Children’s Bureau. The Children’s Bureau works primarily with kids who are in the foster care system within our city. When we think of adoption, we normally think of like a baby, adopt a young child, but what she did is she came to this meeting and she brought me a catalog. She sat it on the desk. She said, “Hey, just take a look at this.”

I opened it up, and it was hundreds of profiles, pictures, and descriptions of teenagers who are currently living in group foster homes in our city. I’m not saying they’re like with a foster family; they’re in a group foster home with a bunch of other foster kids and a few oversights. They are 13 to 17. She said they need to be adopted. It was crazy because it wasn’t this far-off distant thing. It was like right here in our city, within a few miles of us.

My mind started racing. I asked her a question. I said, “Alright, I’ve got all these thoughts, all these ideas right now. Tell me what’s the goal?” I’m looking at these kids on some of these pages who are 17 years old. They’ve got less than a year left until they’re legal adults. Then

they can go off and do whatever they want to do. So I said, “What’s the goal in adopting a 17-year-old? What good can we possibly do for a 17-year-old when we have them in the house for a few months? What’s the goal?”

She said, “Well, it’s actually really simple. The truth is that everybody needs somebody.”

Everybody needs somebody. Everybody needs someone they can call when life hits the fan and they know they’re going to be there for them. Really, what these kids need is they just need a place that they can call home on Thanksgiving and Christmas. If they had a place they could go on Thanksgiving and Christmas and a family they knew they could call when they’re really struggling, it would actually change a lot in their life.

Then I asked the opposite of the question. I said, “Walk me through what happens if nobody adopts them. A 17-year-old, nobody adopts them. What’s going to happen to them?”

She said, “Well, I can’t say 100% all the time, but a vast majority of the time, what happens is that they decline to participate in any of our post-system programs for young adults. They decline that, they hit the streets, they get into drugs, and they end up in jail.”

If you look at our prisons right now, there’s a big chunk of them that are just kids that aged out of the foster care system.

They’re hopeless. They have no future.

I don’t say that to you just to get your heart stirring for the youth of our city—that’s part of my ploy because I believe in ministries like *Live 1:17*. A lot of you guys are a part of *Live 1:17* here at this campus. It’s a ministry that helps support safe families, foster families, and adoptive families, and is just an incredible ministry. I believe in that so much, but that’s actually not the reason I’m telling you about this. I’m not trying to give you a plug for that; that’s a byproduct.

What I’m really trying to get you to do is to understand that the way that you thought just then about that 17-year-old that’s going to hit the streets and has no hope and no future in front of him, that’s the way that God views you and me without Him. That’s the humble pill that you have to swallow.

The offense of it is that, for a room of people in the middle of Carmel where most of us are holding our own (we’re paying the bills; we got the mortgage; we got the kids; we’re thinking about retirement), for all of us who have a future in mind that we’re working toward, God would say, “You’re actually hopeless.”

Paul would say it like this in Ephesians. Chapter 2 says, “In those days you were living apart from Christ... You lived in this world without God and without hope.”

You got no hope, according to God.

The offense doesn't stop there. We keep going with it. Take this analogy further. Not only is God saying that we're hopeless without Him (that if we need to be adopted we're hopeless), He's also saying that we're helpless.

So many people actually believe that the Bible says God only helps those who help themselves—factually incorrect, not in the Bible.

If there's anything that is anti-American, it's "helpless." We're used to pulling up our bootstraps and getting to work and fixing the problem, the choose-your-own-destiny books. We get to choose. We make decisions. We are not helpless. But God would actually say quite the opposite.

I don't know if you've ever felt helpless, but it's an awful feeling. There is possibly no worse feeling on this earth than being helpless.

I have three kids. My kids are everything to me. I love them to death. I've got a 5-year-old son named Emmett, a 2-year-old Son named Solomon, and a little 8-month-old baby girl named Tatum. If you want to know who runs the world, it's girls. Girls run the world. My boys, they'll be fine. They can survive. She's getting everything I have.

Emmett, my first-born—love him to death, awesome kid. If you put the picture up there, this is my two-year-old son named Solomon. Don't let that sweet photo fool you. He's a monster. He is one of the coolest kids I think God has ever created. He's got such spunk, such character. He is just rough and tumble. He's all boy. Dude is tough as nails. He gets hurt all the time. The rare thing about this photo is that there are no bruises or cuts on the face. That is a rare thing in Solomon's world. He is so rough. He's always getting hurt.

Just on Friday night, we were down at Circle Center mall eating dinner together as a family, and we're sitting there eating. I look over, and Solomon has climbed this massive arcade game somehow. It's like an 8 foot tall deal, and he's on top of it just like king of the world. I said, "Solomon, get down off of the arcade game," and he started to climb down.

I looked at Brittany, and I said, "Brittany, you know that our kid has gotten hurt a lot in two years and when I just told him to get off of that thing I actually did not care about his well-being whatsoever. I just didn't have time to go to the ER. I got a life to live. I got things I want to do with my life. I ain't trying to get inconvenienced by a trip to the hospital."

That's just who he is. He gets hurt all the time. Not only does he get hurt, when he gets sick, he gets real sick. He has no chill. If he gets sick, it is zero to 100. In his two years of life, we've already had two ambulance rides to the hospital because we were actually worried that he might not make it.

One of them was a time when he got this virus and he got really dehydrated quicker than anyone had expected. They tried to get a needle in him to give him fluids and they couldn't. He was so dehydrated, and his organs were starting to shut down. We were like, "Man, what is happening?"

The second time was when he got this really bad cough. It was like a case of croup, and so he was coughing, coughing, coughing. We took him to an urgent care center, and low and behold, his oxygen levels stooped so low so quickly that they were worried about him not being able to breathe and continue to get enough oxygen, and so they said, "Hey, we gotta rush him to Riley right now."

If you've ever been there as a parent, there's a new level of panic that you get to when you start to see the medical professionals panic. There's a different level of "what is happening? The doctors and nurses are losing their mind. What's happening?" Then there's a new level it reaches when the EMT looks at you in the ambulance and says, "Hey, if he stops breathing, I'll breathe for him."

Helpless. I was totally helpless. My wife and I were totally helpless. There was nothing I could do to help my son. I didn't have the skills, the abilities, the intelligence, the knowledge, the resources. I had nothing to offer him that would help him. I was totally helpless.

That's actually the way that God views you and me. That's so offensive to us, but God says that we are in such a bad state, our heart is in such a wicked place, we are so dark on the inside, that there's nothing we can do to improve our standing with God. There's nothing we can do to effectually, positively change our trajectory in life. We are helpless in God's eyes.

Paul would actually write it like this in Romans 3:9. He's actually quoting the Old Testament here. He says, "...all people, whether Jews or Gentiles, are under the power of sin. As the Scriptures say, 'No one is righteous—not even one. No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God. All have turned away; all have become useless. No one does good, not a single one.'"

This is God looking down at humanity right now. "Their talk is foul, like the stench from an open grave. Their tongues are filled with lies. Snake venom drips from their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. They rush to commit murder. Destruction and misery always follow them. They don't know where to find peace. They have no fear of God at all."

Welcome to church.

This is how God views us. This is what God actually says reality is. Whether you think you can help yourself or not, whether you think you have a future or not, according to God's word, this is us. This is us in its truest, realest form. This is you and me. We are hopeless and we are helpless, and we need to be adopted—every single one of us.

As if that wasn't offensive enough—I'm going to keep going with it. I'm going to keep stepping on it for just a second. I'm going to keep driving it down. We're going to get so uncomfortable with it—I want you to think about just the concept of adoption for a second.

That's again part of the reason I love North campus, because you all have a lot of people at this campus who have actually adopted kids and are in the process of adoption right now and are safe families and are foster families. You all have gone all in on it, which is incredible, and so a lot of you in the room will be able to attest to this and say amen to it, which is adoption costs a lot.

Adoptions cost a lot in a lot of ways. Adoption is time consuming, exhausting, and expensive.

It's time consuming. Some of you guys are the golden children of adoption and you got three months and you had a baby. Others of you know what it's like to wait years. It's time consuming.

It's exhausting. You want to talk about exhausting—preparing your heart and preparing your home to receive another person in and welcome them into the family. I've walked alongside some couples who thought that they were going to get a child and then last-minute circumstances change and the rug got pulled out from under them. They go back home and they don't have that new addition to the family that they thought they would. It's exhausting.

You want to talk about expensive. Back just two years ago, 2015, the average adoption done through an agency here in the States cost over \$40,000.

It's time consuming, it's exhausting, and it's expensive.

I say all that to say that it is no different in the eyes of God. In order for you and I to be adopted, oh it's time consuming. We're actually still in the middle of God's rescue plan; His adoption process. He waited thousands of years to bring Jesus to start the rescue plan, and now, guess what? For all of human history God is sitting back and enacting this adoption plan. It's time consuming. It's going to take him all of human history to finish it.

And exhausting? You want to talk about exhausting? Parents in the room, you know that when your kid acts up, when your kid disobeys, when your kid acts a fool you know how exhausting that is. You know how exhausting it is to parent. Can you imagine how exhausted God is? Can you imagine how exhausted He is with me right now? He's like, "Petie, oh my gosh. How many times do I have to tell you?"

I just imagine it just has to be the most exhausting thing. I just know it has to be exhausting for Him, because over 40 times in the Bible, it says that His love endures forever. His love wouldn't have to endure so dang much if we didn't exhaust Him so dang much. "Why do You have to keep telling us Your love endures forever?"

“Because I’m exhausted.”

It’s exhausting, and it’s expensive. You want to talk about expensive? Forty grand doesn’t touch it. In order to adopt you, it cost God putting on flesh and bone and coming down here and stretching out His arms and dying one of the most gruesome, humiliating deaths that you could ever imagine. That’s what it cost. It cost Him everything.

And that should be very offensive to you and me because we can’t receive a gift or a compliment, much less someone giving us all their time, all their energy, and all their money, all of their resources, everything they have. You and I can’t even receive a compliment. We are so prideful that we can’t receive someone giving us a gift.

We can give gifts all day long, but someone giving us all their time, and then that causing us to question like, “Man, am I that bad? Am I so bad that it would require God to give all this time and all this energy and all of these resources just to save me? Am I really that bad?”

Yes.

It sounds so offensive. I’m just telling you that this is at the core of Christian teaching, the core of the Gospel, that if you want to embrace freedom, if you want to be adopted as a son or a daughter of God, if you want to follow Jesus, you have to come to a place where you are willing to swallow the humble pills of: I am hopeless, I am helpless, and it cost God everything to rescue me. If you can, get there. I know it’s hard.

It’s so funny from the preaching perspective. I can see how everyone’s responding to it in the moment. It’s so funny, too, because some people think that preaching is just like, “He’s not watching us; we’re watching him.”

No, I see you.

When I preached my first sermon at the Northwest campus four years ago, I remember there was a guy like second row sleeping. He was gone, and I wanted so bad to just stop the sermon and be like, “Sir! Excuse me. I worked all week on this.”

I know at this moment when I say this that for some of you, this message hits you and it is offensive and you think we’re crazy; you think it’s crazy; you think this whole thing’s crazy. Then there are others of you and it hits you and it’s melting your heart right now. That’s not because of me; that’s just God working in your life. That’s actually how this thing works.

Paul would actually say it like this in 1 Corinthians, “The message of the cross is foolish to those who are headed for destruction!” To those who don’t believe. “But we who are being saved know it is the very power of God.”

For some it’s foolish and for others it just melts your heart.

If you can come to the place where you can humbly admit that you're hopeless, you're helpless, and that God would give everything to rescue you, oh my goodness, you are right there. You are on the cusp of freedom. You are ready to experience life to the full like never before. You know why? Because if you can embrace adoption and God is now your Father in heaven, you have nothing to fear. You have nothing to fear ever again.

In fact, we can maybe say it like this. You don't have to fear *anyone* or *anything* because your Father owns the place. He owns it all. Why would you ever be afraid anymore? Why would you ever fear anything? You are now untouchable. Nothing in this world can touch you because your heavenly Father owns the world. He owns everything in it. He is a good Father. He knows exactly what you need. You have nothing to fear.

Let's run back through some of those situations we said earlier.

If you're in the middle of a job circumstance right now and you don't know if you're going to get laid off, you don't know what the future looks like, you're not even sure if you're supposed to be in that job much longer and you're just scared to death at the future unknown, you don't have to be afraid anymore. You can walk in confidence because you know that God has you.

That doesn't mean that God's going to keep you in that job, but that does mean that God's either going to keep you in that job and He's going to bless you through it, or, if you happen to get laid off, He's going to walk with you through it and He's going to care for you through it, and He's going to grow you closer to Him through it, and then He's probably going to lead you to something on the other side that you'll look back and go, "Man, thank goodness I got fired because God's got me in a better place now."

You have a good Father. You don't have to fear anymore. You have nothing to fear.

Think about your marriage. Right now, some of you are thinking, "I don't know if we're going to make it this year." You're scared to death of what life might look like if you have to go through divorce. Well, guess what? When your heavenly Father owns the place and you belong to Him, you don't have a thing to fear anymore because either God is going to redeem your marriage and restore it and rebuild it and it's going to be an incredible testimony of His faith.

Or, God is going to lovingly walk you through that season and you're going to depend on Him like never before, and you're going to share in Christ's sufferings, and you're going to get to know what it means to go through heartbreak, and you're going to come so close to God that on the other side of it you will be so thankful that God has been there for you. You will grow so close to Him. You'll be sharing that testimony with everybody.

Your Father owns the place. You have nothing to fear.

I know (I get emails about it and I get prayer requests about it) some of you guys got a diagnosis recently, or a loved one got a diagnosis recently that is scaring you to death. I want you to understand that no matter how severe that diagnosis is, if you are an adopted child of God, you have nothing to fear because you will either have that diagnosis healed, or God will walk you through it and He will actually use your pain and your misery for ministry. He will use it to lead other people closer to Him, even in death. I know it's so crazy to think, but even in death,

Paul would say: To live is Christ and to die is gain. If I live, I get to be here with you guys. I get to share Jesus. If I die, I get to go be with Jesus. Either way, I'm good.

Guess what. Even in death, I've seen it. I've done too many funerals to count. I've seen God use death to lead other people closer to Him, to lead other people into salvation. You win either way. You got nothing to fear anymore. You're untouchable. You're heavenly Father owns the place. That is where freedom is found.

What I love about the verse we read in Galatians is, those situations I just described to you are big situations (job loss, divorce, death), but for most of us, the stuff that scares us is way smaller. For most of us, it's like that difficult conversation I have to have at work. "Oh my gosh, what are they going to think of me? Oh my gosh." Or, "My neighbor gave me a weird look. I wonder what they think of me?"

They're not thinking anything. They're wondering what you're thinking of them.

It's these little tiny things in your head that just sit there and you're like, "Oh my gosh. What are we going to do? I don't know what we're going to do," and you're afraid and you get anxious and you get worried.

You're acting like it isn't true. I've been around for a long time. I was born at a very young age and I have a lot of experience with people. First service didn't get that joke. They just sat there, and I was like, "Ya'll will get it on the way home. Have another cup of coffee."

What I love about this is that the verse that we read actually tells us that there is nothing too small to take to God in this. There's nothing too small for you to surrender over to Him and say, "I want You to conquer this fear for me. I want to trust You. I want to walk in freedom because You're my Father and You own the place."

Go back with me for just a second. It says this in Galatians chapter 4. It says, "And because we are His children, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, 'Abba, Father.'"

Now if you've been in church for awhile, you probably know what that means. If you haven't been in church, that's all right. *Abba* is basically kind of like child babble. It's like dada, daddy." Again, as a daddy who has small children, approximately 37 million times a week I hear daddy, dada, daddy, daddy.

But do you know what? It doesn't matter how small a request it is, when my kids say, "Daddy," they know they're going to hear dad's footsteps walking up the stairs coming to check on them, calming them down, and going back down. They know. It doesn't matter how big or how small, they never say daddy for something big. It's always something small, and I'm always right there for them.

The reason we get this passage and we say that God's Spirit in you prompts you to cry out, *Daddy*, is because there is nothing too small for Him to take care of. There's nothing too small for you to bring to Him and to say, "God, I'm struggling with this. I'm afraid of this. I need you to carry me through it. I know it's crazy. If I said it out loud, I would probably process through it on my own. I know how stupid it is, but I'm just coming to You and I need You to help me with it," and He's right there.

I love the way Tim Keller puts it. He says this. "The only person who dares wake up a king at 3:00 AM for a glass of water is a child. We have that kind of access."

You have nothing to fear because your Father owns the place.

I know that for some of you in the room right now, you've never made that decision to give your life to Christ and become a follower of Jesus, but I also know that for some of you in the room, you've been following Jesus for awhile. This isn't like a new thing for you in terms of you're not just now becoming an adopted child of God. You've been an adopted child of God for awhile, but you're like me. You just forget it.

That's actually what Paul was dealing with in Galatians: A group of people who knew Jesus, they just forgot who they were; they forgot their standing with God. That's actually why I gave you this card when you walked in today that's got the verse that we're reading written right on it. I just wanted to give you something tangible that you could take home and just put it somewhere so that you're going to read it often. I'm a simple guy. I don't know how to get stuff stuck down into my heart and my head unless I read it a lot.

Put it somewhere. Put it on your mirror. Put it on your car dash, somewhere you're going to see it often, somewhere when you're afraid and you've got those thoughts that are swirling in your head and you're starting to not live free anymore, you're starting to live in fear, that you can read this and go, "Okay, phew. My Father owns the place. I'm good. I can trust Him. I can walk in confidence. I'm good."

We need that.

I also know that a sheet of paper isn't going to fix all your problems. It's not going to fix all your fears. It's not like you're going to have this sheet of paper and never fear again. That's why I actually think there's one last thing I want to share with you before we wrap up, and it's really

what I think is one of the keys to understanding this adoption deal. It's really to understand God's attitude and God's demeanor when it comes to your adoption.

Maybe you're like me. When I think of God's love for me, I'm like, "God loves me? Yeah. God loves everybody, so He has to love me," but truthfully, when I think of *daddy*, like I can always yell at Daddy. I can take Him anything I want. I probably would pose my own fatherhood on Him a little bit and go, "Man, when I yell *Daddy*, He's probably like arms crossed, like, 'Oh my gosh. If that kid gets out of bed one more time, I'm going to end up in jail.'"

Seriously, sometimes my kids ask daddy and I don't have that like, "I'm always here for you as a great father and hear my footsteps coming and I love you." No. I'm like, "Would you shut up and go back to bed?" I don't say that to them, but I want to.

Sometimes I think we have that view of God, that, "Yeah, He loves us because He has to, but probably doesn't like us. When it came to adopting me, He's probably pretty much just bothered by it. I was probably more of an annoyance to Him. Yeah, I was hopeless, I was helpless, and He gave everything for me, but He didn't do it with much joy because I'm such a screw-up."

I just think it's really important to understand God's perspective in your adoption.

This past week, I was trying to get my heart ready and get my mind ready for this message. I went on YouTube and I just typed in adoption stories. If you ever want to cry, which I don't know why you'd want to cry, but if you ever want to cry, go to YouTube and just type in adoption stories, and it's just a tear-fest. You're just swimming in tears by the end.

But what I didn't anticipate was, as I expected to see, like I said, a bunch of videos of new parents bringing home their babies. I saw some of those, but more so were videos of older kids, sometimes even teenagers, who were asking their stepmom or stepdad or caretaker to officially adopt them. I didn't anticipate seeing that. The response of the parents in this, the response of the dads in this to me was like, "Ah man."

I want you to watch this video I'm going to show you in just a second. I want you to think through God's attitude as a Father thinking of adopting you. Now this video is a little rough on the audio. You're going to have to kind of like lean in a little bit because there's a lot of background noise. It's not like a professionally produced video; it's a YouTube video. Just lean in, I want you to really think about God's perspective on your adoption.

You can go ahead and play it.

Video

"Dad, I know today is supposed to be all about me, but today is really about us. Brandon, I met you seven years ago...but it has changed today. I've learned so much from you. I asked mom

what's the difference between a stepdad and a real dad because I don't get it sometimes. I know I met you when I was just a little kid, but you have been here for everything: all my school programs and parent conferences, all my sports, every time I'm sick, when I act up. You take me everywhere, like San Diego. So that makes you my real dad, right? So today I have some questions to ask you. Do you love me?"

"I love you."

"Do you love mom?"

"You know that."

"Can you live without us?"

"No."

"So let's stop playing and make it official. Brandon Frank Williamson, will you do me the biggest favor in the world? Will you adopt me?"

Petie

That's the heart of God for you and for me. You want to know His demeanor and His attitude when it came to your adoption? Nothing gave Him greater joy. Nothing makes Him happier. Nothing makes His heart beat more than for the chance to get to adopt you.

Yeah, you were hopeless. He wants to give you hope. Yeah, you were helpless. He wants to help you. And yeah, it cost Him everything. He gladly gave it all. His word says that for the joy set before Him he endured the cross. You know what that joy is? It's you and me. He loves you that much. He loves me that much.

Zephaniah 3:17 says it like this. It says, "For the Lord your God is living among you. He is a mighty Savior. He will take delight in you with gladness. With His love, He will calm all your fears. He will rejoice over you with joyful songs."

He loves you more than you could ever imagine. Jesus would tell it in a similar story by saying that God is like a father who waits on his front porch for his wayward son to come home. Night after night after night he sits there and waits for the possible sight of his son off in the distance coming back. When his son, who's squandered away everything and ruined his life and gave his father every reason to be frustrated with him, when that son finally comes back, the father didn't meet him with judgment or shame or punishment or consequence, he met him with an embrace and a kiss and a mandatory celebration because his lost son was found.

That's God's heart for you. God wants so much more than to just save you from your sins. God isn't just offering freedom. God wants to make you family. God wants to make you a son or a

daughter. You see, when you come into a relationship with Jesus, your freedom papers that you get from Him are attached to your adoption papers. They're one in the same.

I just think for some of you today, that's going to set you free, free of the fear that's crippling your life. For some of you in the room, it's going to be the very first time that you give your life to Christ. You would not consider yourself a follower of Jesus, and today might be the day that you step up and you say, "God, I'm ready to be adopted. I'm ready to admit that I'm hopeless, that I'm helpless, and I'm ready to accept this truth that You sacrificed it all for me. I'm in."

If that's you, we'd love to pray with you after service is over. I'll be down front. Our prayer teams will be down front.

For some of you, though, it's going to be that time when you've wandered away (you already belong to Him; you're already His son or His daughter), but today's the day that you come back to Him and say, "I'm going to start living free like You created me to live."

Regardless of what decision it is that you're making today, before you come and talk to one of us about it, you need to talk to your Father about it, so we're going to give you some time to do that as we take communion. We take a little piece of bread and a cup of juice that symbolizes His body and His blood sacrificed for us on the cross. This is a chance for you to talk to your Father and to thank Him for adopting you into His family.

Let me pray that for you guys.

Jesus, thank You for Your love, for Your grace. We are forever changed by it. God, I can't believe that this morning I woke up and my sins were removed as far as the east is from the west, that my slate was wiped clean. God, we as a people right now express our gratitude to You in that.

We would be nowhere without You. We're hopeless without You. We're helpless without You. But God, You filled us up with hope, and You've helped us beyond belief. We just love You for that, God.

I pray for anyone in the room right now who's struggling to make that decision to give their life to You, that You'd give them the courage and the confidence to get off the fence and to start following You, to come home, to accept those freedom papers and those adoption papers and be welcomed into Your family.

God, I pray for those in here who are struggling, who still have that looming fear hanging over their heads and over their hearts, that in these next moments with You, God, as they talk to You and as they cry out to You as their Daddy, that You would calm their fear, that You would help them to walk in freedom.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.