

LIVING  
IT OUT



**DAILY  
BIBLE  
STUDY**



CEDARCREEKCHURCH

# Living By His Will

April 29, 2019

**Today's Scripture:** [Galatians 4](#)

Let's be honest—we all want something.

That's an accurate statement, right? And I don't think there's anything wrong with that. As Christians, we're called to be content, but not complacent. We're told not to hurry and worry, but we're still working for and running toward something. As they say, "If you're not dead, you're not done."

Maybe right now you want better health, a more satisfying job, more free time for your passions and hobbies, better relationships with your friends or family, or even a better relationship with God. None of those are bad things on their own—but problems arise when we try to achieve those things in the wrong way.

Our society has a lot to say about how to get what we want. "Run toward your dreams!" it says. "Work hard, push yourself, do whatever it takes to succeed!" And really, who hasn't bought into that before? That if you work hard, you'll eventually have everything you want? That if you want something to happen, you have to make it happen?

There is some truth in that—we'll never achieve our purpose by simply drifting through life. That being said, we'll also never achieve our purpose by trying to force something to happen through our own effort alone.

## **Galatians 4:23**

*The son of the slave wife was born in a human attempt to bring about the fulfillment of God's promise. But the son of the freeborn wife was born of God's own fulfillment of his promise.*

God promises many great things to those who accept Jesus as our Savior: salvation, redemption, eternity with him, purpose and hope—to name a few. But we can't achieve any of these by our own efforts. When we try to achieve what we want, even things God wants for us, through our own striving instead of trusting in him, the results will always fall short—and often will bring additional problems.

Sometimes we try to achieve God's approval and his promise of salvation, as well as a better relationship with him, through human effort alone. As Paul says in Galatians 4:9-10, "Why do you want to go back again and become slaves once more to the weak and useless spiritual principles of this world? You are trying to earn favor with God by observing certain days or months or seasons or years."

Other times, we try to achieve the things we want, or think God wants for us, (the right job, the right spouse, the picture-perfect Christian life) by working hard all on our own. I know, it can be hard to hear, but this will never work.

But don't worry—that doesn't mean our hopes are all out of reach, or hopeless, so to speak. We can't achieve God's promises by our own efforts, and when we try to force things to happen that aren't God's will, it never turns out how we'd hoped. It's only when we trust in God, living out of his acceptance and promises instead of striving for them, he can do amazing things through us. By living out his will, he is offering us a future with purpose and hope.

### **Questions:**

Are you trying to earn God's promises through your own efforts and "religious" behavior, or are you acting from a place of trust in his promises?

Is there anything you're working toward in your life that just isn't working out? Are you sure God wants it for your life? If you are, are you trying to achieve it by your own means, or are you trusting in God's plan and power?

### **Next Steps:**

Make a list of what you're worried about or working to achieve. Sort these into two groups: the things you know God wants for you (things like purpose and opportunities to point others toward him), and the things you think or hope he wants for you (things like a job you applied for or a relationship you're pursuing). Thank God for the things in the first category. Pray over the things in the second category, being honest with God about what you want, while acknowledging that his plan for your life *may* be different from yours but *is* better than yours. Trust that he will fulfill his promises for you—in his timing.

### **Prayer:**

*Heavenly Father, thank you for being a God I can trust. I know that everything you've promised me will be fulfilled in your perfect timing. Help me to follow*

*your guidance instead of striving for what I want. Teach me to set aside my worries and to trust your will for my life. In Jesus' name I pray! Amen.*

*This post was written by Payton Lechner, a regular contributor and editor of the LivingItOut Bible Study.*

# The Sweet Spot of Freedom

April 30, 2019

Today's Scripture: [Galatians 5](#)

The Christian walk is a journey that can take us from one extreme to another. One extreme is relying on our own rule-keeping or do-gooding to make us right with God. The other extreme is to feel that we can do whatever we want, taking advantage of the grace that Jesus so graciously offers. Neither of those extremes are what God intended for us when he sent Christ to die for us. Galatians 5:13 says that we “have been called to live in freedom.” Well, where exactly is that sweet spot of freedom?

First, let's look at what is NOT the sweet spot of freedom. Paul warns us not to “get tied up again in slavery to the law” (vs. 1). He further explains that if we're counting on our rule-keeping (law) to make us right or to find favor with God, we've got it all wrong. In fact, at the end of the chapter, he warns that that kind of mentality ends up making us conceited (thinking we're better than everyone else) and in turn can result in us “biting and devouring one another” (vs. 15), which is destructive.

The other extreme that is NOT the sweet spot of freedom in Christ is using the freedom God has provided for us to “satisfy your sinful nature” (v. 13). We exploit the precious grace that Jesus offers to us and misinterpret it as a free ticket to satisfy ourselves, doing whatever we want. Galatians 5:19-21 explicitly lists examples of our sinful nature ... and I'm sure we can all find something there we have been guilty of in the past (or present).

So what does it mean to live in the *sweet spot of freedom*? The HCSB Study Bible note for verses 5-6 says that “hope for long-term righteousness before God is through *living by faith in the power of the Holy Spirit*.” Verse 6 says that “what matters is faith working through love” (HCSB). Paul encourages us to:

- “Use your freedom to serve one another in love” (vs. 13),
- “Let the Holy Spirit guide your lives” (vs. 16),
- “Follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives” (vs. 25).

Lead Pastor Ben Snyder reminded us on Sunday that “who you are clarifies what to do.” The sweet spot of freedom is recognizing that we are God's children, saved by grace—not by the good that we do—and that we are worthy because of

what Jesus did for us on the cross. With that, we have the Holy Spirit to guide us in this life and, by God's power, we can live in this sweet spot of freedom.

**Questions:**

Are you living in one of the extremes mentioned above, with too much emphasis on rule-keeping or too much emphasis on your personal freedom? What would it look like for you to live in the *sweet spot of freedom* in Christ?

**Next Steps:**

Take some time to reflect, and if you've been living in one of those extremes, have a conversation with God about that. Call out to the Holy Spirit for his help to live in the freedom God has called us to. Ask another follower of Christ to help keep you accountable in this area.

**Prayer:**

*Father, we thank you for what Jesus did on the cross, and that through him we are worthy before you. Thank you for the grace that you have freely given. Forgive us when we try to earn righteousness on our own or when we take advantage of the grace that cost you so much. Help us to follow the Holy Spirit in our lives to have victory over our sinful nature and that we may "serve one another in love." In Jesus' name, amen!*

# Loving One Another

May 1, 2019

Today's Scripture: [Galatians 6](#)

## ***Galatians 6:1-3***

*<sup>1</sup> Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should **gently and humbly** help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. <sup>2</sup> Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup> If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. You are not that important.*

At the end of every year, I ask God to help me identify a character trait that he would have me focus on for the coming year. This year I felt like he told me two traits: humility and gentleness. So when I read these verses, I thought I was probably meant to write about those traits as they appear in Galatians 6 this week.

For those of you who know me personally, I doubt you would describe me as gentle, meaning mild, soft, quiet, demure, retiring, or unassuming. I am rather assertive and, at times, bold and opinionated. Yes, I need work here! As for humility ... well, it is tough to claim to be humble! It's like being proud of not being proud!

However, in these verses, Paul is telling us to help one another stay on the right path—the path that brings us closer to Jesus. It is easy for us to look at our brothers or sisters and play the comparison game: “Well, at least I’m not as bad as them!” But Paul warns us that we are not far from falling into a similar, if not the very same, pit! He calls us to walk in humility beside the one who is struggling, sharing their burden just as Jesus told us he would share ours. When we look down on someone who has wandered off the path, we need to remember that we are only one bad decision away from falling off that path ourselves. That thought should keep us humble!

The hope that someone would care enough about us to pursue us, gently, when we take off in the wrong direction should remind us that we are important in God's plan, not our own. So we should not think ourselves too important to stop

and help restore our brother or sister, whom God loves too, because next week they may be helping to restore us!

**Questions:**

What do you think your responsibilities are toward a brother or sister in Christ who has made a poor choice or bad decision?

Can you speak the truth to them in gentleness and humility?

**Next Steps:**

In your Group, or with some Christian friends, talk about any experience you have had in walking beside someone in restoration, or of someone walking with you. Talk about how effective that experience was, as well as ways by which it might have been better.

**Prayer:**

*My heavenly Father, I thank you that I am never out of your sight. I thank you that you put people in my life to tell me the truth, even when it's hard to hear, and that they are willing to walk beside me, to lead me back to you. I thank you for your tender mercies that are new every morning. I am in awe of your faithfulness, your gentleness, and your humility. You humbled yourself, that I could know you. Your gentleness invites me to come to you. Help me extend your gentleness and humility to others, so that they might come to know you too. Amen.*

# Introducing the Savior

May 2, 2019

**Today's Scripture:** [Matthew 1](#)

Today we start the Gospel of Matthew. As we read Matthew Chapter 1, we see that Matthew is introducing his readers to Jesus the Messiah, the son of David and Abraham.

Matthew was written with the Jewish audience in mind. This is why he starts his book off with Jesus' genealogy. It was essential to establish that Jesus is the Messiah who was promised long ago. The Jewish people had long been waiting for the arrival of their Savior, and they knew that when he came, he would be from the line of David and a descendent of Abraham, because God had made promises long ago to both men. He promised David and Abraham that he would bless them and that their line would rule forever. These promises are known as the Davidic Covenant and the Abrahamic Covenant. Both of these covenants are found in the Jewish Scriptures.

The Davidic Covenant:

## **Psalms 89:20, 29 (NIV)**

*<sup>20</sup> I have found David my servant;  
with my sacred oil I have anointed him.  
<sup>29</sup> I will establish his line forever,  
his throne as long as the heavens endure.*

## **1 Chronicles 17:11-14 (NIV)**

*<sup>11</sup> When your days are over and you go to be with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. <sup>12</sup> He is the one who will build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever. <sup>13</sup> I will be his father, and he will be my son. I will never take my love away from him, as I took it away from your predecessors. <sup>14</sup> I will set him over my house and my kingdom forever; his throne will be established forever.*

The Abrahamic Covenant:

## **Genesis 12:1-3 (NIV)**

*<sup>1</sup> The Lord had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.*

*<sup>2</sup> I will make you into a great nation,  
and I will bless you;*

*I will make your name great,  
and you will be a blessing.*

*<sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you,  
and whoever curses you I will curse;  
and all peoples on earth  
will be blessed through you.”*

### **Galatians 3:8 (NIV)**

*<sup>8</sup> Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.”*

Through writing Jesus’ genealogy, Matthew is making the case that Jesus has the credentials to be their Messiah. He continues throughout the book of Matthew to show that the time has come to fulfill what was promised long ago. The descendant of David and Abraham is here, and he is the one that saves. He is the Messiah.

Matthew was a tax collector before he answered the call of Jesus to follow him. As an accountant, he was used to making sure that every “i” was dotted and every “t” was crossed, and he took that same approach to his book. He was meticulous in making a case for Jesus. The book of Matthew quotes the Old Testament, also called the Jewish Scriptures, one hundred thirty times. That is more than any other Gospel, and when Matthew quoted someone, he always cited his source. He builds and builds on his case. He deliberately connects Jesus to Messianic prophecies in order to leave no doubt that he is the Messiah—the one who was promised, the long-awaited king of the Jews from the line of David. Today, we can have confidence the Jesus is the Messiah and that God is faithful to keep his promises.

### **Questions:**

Why was it so essential for Matthew to connect Jesus to the line of David and Abraham?

Jesus fulfilled the promises God made to Abraham and David. How do these fulfilled promises encourage you today?

**Next Steps:**

Commit to completing the book of Matthew this month by reading the LivingItOut each day. As you read, look for the ways that Matthew builds a case for Jesus being our Savior, and shows us how he fulfilled the prophecies from long ago.

**Prayer:**

*Dear God, you are worthy of our praise. You are perfect in every way and excellent in all that you do. Today, I praise you. Thank you for sending your son to be our Savior. He is the fulfillment of the things you promised long ago. He is everything that you promised and worthy of being followed. Today, I commit to following you with my actions, my words, and my thoughts. I give them all to you. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

# Trust His Plan

May 3, 2019

**Today's Scripture:** [Matthew 2](#)

Emergency rooms—they are never fun! Well, at least not unless you are watching one of your favorite medical dramas on TV. About a week ago, I found myself in the emergency room at Toledo Hospital with a bit of a health scare. My body had been telling me for the last couple of weeks that something was not quite right, but I was still waiting and hoping it might go away on its own. It simply did not fit into my plan for my life right now to have to address something like that!

When the staff at the urgent care, where I had gone first because of severe pain, instructed me to go to the emergency room as soon as possible, I felt very scared. All the worst-case scenarios went through my head as I was driving there. I prayed to God to protect me and to let it be something fixable.

I am still very new at this whole “accepting God’s plan for your life” thing—I am much more used to taking charge and following my own plan. After all, especially these last few years since my divorce, there was not really anyone I could totally rely on at that level besides myself. Apparently, this way of thinking is not easy to let go of, as I have discovered since finding my way back to God almost two years ago. And I have wrestled with it on and off ever since...

Today, we continue to follow the Christmas story in Matthew 2. It is most reassuring reading it again so shortly after Easter. It reminds us that he is always with us.

What struck me in this chapter is how everything was planned by God in advance—all he asked of those involved was to follow his plan. The Magi outwitted Herod and did not disclose the actual location of Jesus’ birthplace. Once Herod did figure things out and sent for all boys under two years old to be killed, he again was foiled, because God had already arranged for Joseph to flee with his family to Egypt until Herod’s time had passed. Even thereafter, Joseph chose a location upon his return far away from Herod’s successor, based on a message from God in a dream in a town called Nazareth.

## **Matthew 2:22-23 (NIV)**

*<sup>22</sup> But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea, in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, <sup>23</sup> and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So*

*was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.*

Trusting and following his plan sounds so easy, but is actually quite hard to do. I know I still struggle with this at times! But God promises that he has a plan for us—a plan that is good for us! We might not always know what this plan is and how things that happen to us fit in, but he invites us to learn to trust his plan.

Besides learning to listen to what my body is trying to tell me sooner next time, this health scare reminded me yet again (I am apparently a slow learner) of something else: to trust God's plan for my life in terms of the people he has surrounded me with. A special person whom God had placed in my life not long ago completely came through for me that day when I had to go to the ER. This person dropped everything they were doing to be by my side. They were there to help and support me, and to cheer me up with his funny jokes. It was incredibly reassuring for me to have finally someone by my side whom I could totally trust and lean upon. Someone selfless, loving and kind. And luckily it turns out that I should be fine and will just need some follow up treatment. I am incredibly grateful to God and his plan for me! Going forward, I will try even harder to trust his plan for me rather than trying to do things on my own!

### **Questions:**

Are you trusting God's plan for your life? If not, why not? How has God shown up in your life recently? Are you aware of the promises God has made to you? Have you thanked God for the good in your life as well as the challenges he is facing together with you?

### **Next Steps:**

Make a list of times when God has shown up in your life and when you realized that he has had a plan for you. Share your experiences with a fellow Christ follower. If you find it difficult to trust his plan, speak to fellow Christ followers about your struggles to trust him. Try to learn from their experiences.

### **Prayer:**

*Dear Father, thank you so much for helping me through difficult times and for providing me with such loving and comforting support through the wonderful people whom you have placed in my life. Please help me to provide the best possible support I can in return to those in my life whom I love. Please let me work for you and your plan. Amen.*

*This post was written by Cordula Mora, a regular contributor and editor of the LivingItOut Bible Study*