

## *Picturing Freedom in Christ*

For in Christ, neither our most conscientious religion nor disregard of religion amounts to anything. What matters is something far more interior: faith expressed in love.

**Galatians 5:6**, *The Message*

In Galatians 4 and 5, Paul continues with his earlier discussion of what it means to be free in Christ. Contrasting the children of a free woman (Sarah) to those of a slave woman (Hagar), he explains that we, through Christ, are no longer bound by the law. But, lest we overcorrect, he admonishes us to refrain from becoming so indifferent that we fall away from God and His love.

I'm a visual learner. As I read these chapters, I pictured slaves and lost wanderers. And, as I thought and composed, I sketched a diagram in the margin of my Bible: a continuum with two choices, each at opposing ends. On one side, a religion beholden to the law, as a slave is bound by the master. On the other side, a disregard of religion such that we are completely separated from God. Religious rigidity on one end, disregard for God on the other.

But, as worshippers of the Christ Child this Advent season, what should our Christianity look like? Thankfully, Paul sums it up a bit farther on in **Galatians (5:16)** in Eugene Peterson's *The Message*: "...Live freely, animated and motivated by God's Spirit." What a beautiful way of describing what a Christian looks like! God's gift of Jesus was the embodiment of His love. And if we allow that love to live in us and through us, we will neither be slaves, nor lost wanderers, but vibrant and inspired followers of Christ.

**Prayer:** Gracious God, thank you for giving us the freedom to love you instead of forcing us to. Although we fall short, may we continually seek to live animated and motivated by your Spirit. Amen

*Diane Kroeger*

### **Additional Scripture Readings:**

I Samuel 2:1-10

Genesis 21:1-21

Galatians 4:21-5:1