

Title: New Tracks**[Slide 1]****Text: Galatians 5:13-18****Freedom Calls!****New License:****[Slide 2]**

One day after school, my daughter mentioned that one of her schoolmates had just gotten her driver's license and was bragging about how she drove 90 mph to school that morning. Ugh!

I guess this went on for a couple of days – both the fast ride to school and bragging about it once she got there. Then, what do you know: a state trooper just happened to be hanging out on Route 104 during the morning commute to BFA Fairfax. Sure enough, down the road came our newly minted road warrior doing 90 mph. For the last time.

You can no doubt figure out what happened. Somebody told their mom about the speed demon. She called the State Police. They took it from there.

New Freedom:

I'll bet most of us can remember the day when we finally got our driver's license. I certainly can. No more waiting to have parents or friends cart you around. All of a sudden, you are free to roam the open road. I remember that first summer with my license. My dad and I drove the two family cars from Lake George back home to New Jersey, and there I was in a Chevy sedan on the New York Thruway going 70 mph with my elbow out the window following dad. Free! The whole wide world seemed to open up in front of me that summer morning.

Freedom Calls:

Did you know that *Freedom* is first and foremost God's idea? God is the great Liberator! Listen to what Paul says:

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Galatians 5:13a Kingdom New Testament

When God called you, my dear family, he called you to make you free.

Freedom is not the invention of western, or any other, society. It was not created in a political science classroom. It is something that God Himself hard-wired into each and every one of us when He created us in His likeness, to be His reflection in this world.

But freedom *isn't an end in itself*. Just because you *can* drive your car 90 mph to school, doesn't mean that it is the right or safe thing to do! God wired us for freedom *so that we could live like Him in His world*. Paul goes on to say:

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Galatians 5:13b Kingdom New Testament:

But you mustn't use that freedom as an opportunity for the flesh. Rather, you must become each other's servants, through love.

Freedom always comes with a choice: what will I do with it? Will I drive to school like a NASCAR driver, or will I remember that we all share the road together.

New Torah for a New Exodus

The One Command:

Whenever you are reading the Bible and come across the word "freedom," it's a good idea to think "Exodus." The Exodus story is the story of God setting His people free from slavery in Egypt and making them His children. The Exodus Story is certainly in Paul's mind as he reminds the Galatians of their new-found freedom in Jesus.

Once free, Israel faced the same temptation that my daughter's school friend faced when she had the chance to driver herself to school. No wonder, then, that the first thing God did for His people was give them Torah: His Law. The Law summed up for them *how to live as a free people*.

As Paul takes the Galatians on their New Exodus he brings them to the New Mt. Sinai and the New Torah:

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Galatians 5:14-15 Kingdom New Testament

For the whole law is summed up in one word, namely this: "Love your neighbor as yourself." But if you bite each other and devour each other, watch out! You may end up being destroyed by each other.

There it is: Torah in a single command. Jesus Himself summed up the Torah in precisely the same way.

The One Family:

Every time you get behind the wheel, you join a community of people who have done the same thing. They may be driving the family mini-van; they may be out for a ride in a sports car. They may be driving an eighteen wheeler. Nonetheless, when we're on the road, we all count on each other to do the right thing.

The same is true of our New Exodus journey. We're part of something vastly bigger than ourselves. It's not just about us. This is a journey in which we are part of God's Family. No wonder, then, that the key word for the journey is Love.

New Torah for a New Exodus:

This one command --"Love your neighbor as yourself" -- sets our journey apart from every other human journey. In our fallen, broken world, humans too often relate to each other on the basis of suspicion and survival. We regard strangers as "foe" unless we choose to see them otherwise. Our brains strive to find us higher status and we bristle at even the perception of unfair treatment. Most of all, we have a built-in need to be in control.

The command to love our "neighbor" as ourselves runs counter to our default mentality. It is a command that Jesus lived out all the way to the Cross. It is the New Torah for a New Exodus.

New Tracks**New Exodus/New Torah/New Presence:**

We have seen how Paul connects the Christian faith journey with the Exodus Story. Exodus means Freedom. Exodus means receiving God's Law. Now

Paul makes a third connection – the one that holds the key to actually walking out this amazing journey.

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Galatians 5:16-18 Kingdom New Testament

Let me say this to you: live by the spirit, and you won't do what the flesh wants you to. For the flesh wants to go against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. They are opposed to each other, so that you can't do what you want. But if you are led by the spirit, you are not under the law.

The great, overarching Reality of the Exodus Story was the revealed Presence of God. He led His people on their journey by means of a cloud that signified His Presence:

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Exodus 13:21 NIV

By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night.

The prophet Isaiah explains that the cloud was none other than God's Spirit, leading Israel on its journey.

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Isaiah 63:11-14 NIV

Where is he who set his Holy Spirit among them...

Who led them through the depths?

...like cattle that go down to the plain, they were given rest by the Spirit of the LORD.

This is how you guided your people to make for yourself a glorious name.

Now Paul connects the dots between the original Exodus journey and our New Exodus. Like Israel, we are led by none other than God's Spirit. He is the presence of the Good Shepherd in our lives. He is the Cloud of God's glory, resident within us! He shines out of us to reveal God's glory.

The Choice:

And that means that every day we must make a choice: New Exodus Journey or wandering around on our own. Will we discover the true purpose for the freedom we have in Jesus, or will we use it as an opportunity to gratify ourselves and hurt others? Will we rely solely on the Spirit, or will we go back to being our own misguided god? You can't have it both ways.

Every day we make the choice of how we will use our freedom. On any given day we can choose to drive to work at 90 mph, regardless of how that might affect ourselves or those around us. Or, on any given day we can let God's Spirit lead us into thoughts and behaviors that make us a blessing.

New Tracks:**[Slide 9]**

Think of it this way: God put you here on Planet Earth to make *new tracks*. These new tracks will take you to a place you have never seen, much less imagined. They take you right into God's New Creation.

What is it that you most want to see God do in your life and family? It's all there – if you take the journey by following His Spirit. When you dare to put your trust in Jesus as crucified and raised from the dead, you become a *new creation*. You are equipped to, as Paul says in Romans 6:4, "*walk in newness of life.*" You are already part of that brand new world that God has promised.

But every day you will have to make the same choice: new tracks or same old same old. Keep your eye on where God's Spirit is going, and you'll never go wrong. You'll find yourselves making New Tracks.