

07.21.24

Galatians
Chapter 4 - Man's Way Enslaves
Embraced or Excluded (vs.12-20)

Galatians 4:12-20: I beg of you, brethren, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You have done me no wrong; but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time; and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself. Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me. So have I become your enemy by telling you the truth? They eagerly seek you, not commendably, but they wish to shut you out so that you will seek them. But it is good always to be eagerly sought in a commendable manner, and not only when I am present with you. My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you— but I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

Well, you're looking at this passage; you're going, "How is he going to get through all those verses?" And I'm going to say, I'm not. I'm probably going to stop at verse 16, but there you have it.

We come to this passage and what is the context and what is this book about? Well, the book is about freedom. God is calling us to freedom. If you look in particular, you see that great mandate in Galatians 5:1, that Christ came to set us free. What I have found is that setting people free is pretty hard. I mean, you go to the door, you open the door, you break open the bars and you go, "Come on out." And they go, "No, I think I'm pretty comfortable here." It's just hard to imagine that somebody would be willing to stay in a place of great bondage when the doors are open and the freedoms there. Christ came to set us free, but man, what a hard job that is. As He goes into the world, and He begins to see that there are these oppressive forces that really have people in bondage. Strangely enough, the oppressive forces are largely religious groups. In fact, when you see Christ dialoguing back and forth to individuals, He is not as much attacking the government, nor is He as much attacking individuals that are deep in sin, which obviously, they're doing wrong that hurts them, but He's attacking those that are religious leaders that are oppressing people; helping them perceive that God is mean and cruel

and doesn't want their forgiveness, He just wants to control them. So, it is that which Christ came to set free. When He comes with this great mandate in Matthew 5 and you see this wonderful picture of "Ok, so, who's going to be first in the kingdom of heaven?" He goes, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." And you're going, "Ok? That doesn't fit my paradigm." And God goes, "Exactly." So, it's no wonder that He was hated.

If you look with me in Matthew 6, just to give you a couple of passages, once again, that we're probably all very familiar with, but you can see how religion comes in and it just makes it about show and makes that show kind of oppressive.

(Matthew 6:1) "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.

(Matthew 6:2) "So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men..."

They want everybody to know what they're doing so they can be superior to everybody else. I mean, if you give more money, obviously you're a nicer person or greater person or far more wonderful than anybody else, and He's saying, "No, God's not pleased with that." If you're going to give, don't let your left hand your right hand is doing. Give it as unto God. The same thing is true with the prayers. When you come to pray, pray in secret, don't pray on the stage. Don't act like you're high and mighty. All of this is, if you think about it, very oppressive. People sitting in the seats are going, "Wow. I can never pray a prayer like that." So, in Luke, God gives us that picture of the tax collector that is praying in the temple and this righteous scribe. The one righteous scribe says, "I thank God that I'm not like this guy. You know, just such a horrible person, a traitor, a tax collector." Then, the tax collector is going, "Have mercy on me, a sinner." Jesus goes, "Who do you think We heard?" So, in that simple example God is revealing to us what He's looking for, but religion sets things up to make it look like it has to be so grand and glorious, and you have to look superior, and "This is where righteousness comes from."

In Matthew 23, we won't go through that whole chapter, but it's often interested me how Christ rebukes the religious leaders, and will repeat over and over again the phrase, "Woe."

(Matthew 23:13) "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.

(Matthew 23:14) ["Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive greater condemnation.]"

So, all the way through this, of course, “Woe, woe, woe, woe.” God is declaring how horrible it is that you're doing these things to these people. What we're seeing is an interesting picture of the oppression of religion. You almost have to ask yourself, why would people go into something like that? Why would people be involved in something like that? I mean, in order to have this kind of oppression, you have to have people that join it. It just has always been kind of bizarre to think that somebody would willingly go into an abusive relationship; that they would actually do that. Psychologists actually list some of the reasons. Man wants to fit in. So, by virtue of saying that you've got to jump through these hoops, people go, “Ok, that means I can fit in?” They have something tangible in which they can do in order to fit in. Oftentimes, people don't like thinking for themselves. “Will you do the thinking for me?” “Yes, we'll do the thinking for you. We'll take care of everything.” “Good. I've got enough to worry about.” So, they go into that. The strange thing is that one guy wrote a book a number of years ago called “The Frog and the Kettle” and it's a picture of the frog sitting in the kettle, and the heats getting hotter and hotter. Before long, the frog boils to death, but the point is that when you're in a situation and somebody starts being abusive, but it's just minor to begin with, you accept it. Then, they increase, and you accept it more; you increase, and you accept it more. Before long, you're in a particular situation, and you can't get out. You don't even know how you got yourself there because it was so subtle in the way that it goes. People are oftentimes afraid that someone's going to get upset with them if they leave. “I'm the bad person.” In an abusive relationship, a person that is abusive will throw guilt on the person that has low self-esteem. So, they begin to manipulate them. Galatians, in a way, is a book about abuse. It is a book about the religious leaders that are trying to control other people and Paul's desiring to set them free. That's why he writes in Chapter 5 that it's the reason Christ came. Then, he'll give interesting examples, whether it's Isaac and Ishmael, of the free child and the slave. He goes, “Which do you want to be?” And people wouldn't naturally go, “Well, I want to be the slave.” But they found themselves in a position in which they're concerned about what everybody else is thinking, and Paul is trying to set them free from this.

Once again, to remind you of this, if you look with me in Galatians 2, he talks about the false brethren, which is an interesting statement. As Paul mentioned in the Book of Corinthians, he says, “Look, even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light; as an apostle of Christ.” So, just because somebody calls himself a Christian, it doesn't mean they're Christian; only in name, right? We call them nominative Christians.

(Galatians 2:4) “But it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage.”

Why would somebody want to bring you into bondage? Well, they say that abusive relationships stem from a desire to gain and maintain power and control over somebody. So,

why would somebody do that? They're power hungry, and they want to be in control of other people. It seems strange, once again, but verse 5, what does he say?

(Galatians 2:5) "But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you."

What's the truth of the gospel? Christ has come to set you free. He has come to set you free from what man is thinking and the oppression and the legalism of man. God doesn't want you obeying Him because you're afraid, God wants you obeying Him because you love Him. If you're not going to come with your heart, don't come.

There's one text with Peter as he writes, "It'd be better for them not to have known." The perception of, "We've got to learn all this stuff so that we don't do anything with it." And Scripture says, "No, we're looking for somebody that wants to do this." It's the heart that God has always been looking for.

You drop on down, and even Peter fell into all of this, which wow, Peter, really? He uses his name Cephas in the text.

(Galatians 2:11) "But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned."

(Galatians 2:12) For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision."

What's the point? Well, he's afraid of what everybody else is thinking. Even Peter and Barnabas fall in line with this. So, it's the reason why he states in Galatians 1, "If we or an angel from heaven preach to you another gospel, let him be accursed." What is our gospel? God so loved the world, and He loves you. He wants to have a relationship with you, and your sins are forgiven in Christ. So, you don't need somebody browbeating you about this. The gospel is powerful enough to change who you are, and this is the power of our faith. I'm not ashamed of the gospel. It is the power of God unto salvation, as Paul writes in Romans 1. So, the emphasis within this book is he's trying to set them free. Nevertheless, he finds himself dealing with the people that, well, they're starting to boil. They've been in this abuse for a while, and they're now concerned about what other people are going to be thinking and how they're going to be reacting; the fact that they're maybe going to be ostracized, and people are very concerned. Remember in the Gospel of John, the blind man, and his parents wouldn't admit that they knew him because they were afraid that they were going to be ostracized from the synagogue. People are afraid of those kinds of things, and it's part of abuse.

In fact, I was looking at the whole thing of abuse this last week, and abuse oftentimes stay normalized by frequency. That is to say, if somebody is abused and it becomes a habitual thing that before long the perception is it's just normal. You go, "Don't you need to get out of this?" "Why?" It's like they almost don't even know that they're being abused. It's almost like Paul's having to remind the Galatians, "Don't you want to get out of this?" And they're going, "Why?" Because by virtue of the frequency, it is seen as a normal way, and it becomes a way in which you interact in a relationship. "This person hates me, and I hate them, and we say bad things to each other, and this is our relationship. This is the way things go. This is normal." But God is saying it's not normal, and God wants to set you free from those kinds of things. They say that in an abusive relationship, the abused will often push loved ones and friends away. The reason why they do this is because they're suppressing their own anger, and they want to avoid closeness from other people because they only see closeness as a negative thing. You're trying to help them, but they go, "Ugh." "You want to talk about it?" And they began to clam up, and they began to hold themselves aloof. How do you break something like that? They say that in abusive relationships, many will blame themselves for the problems that come upon them. "It's my fault. My fault." Well, I mean, we all sin, no doubt about it, but the abuse isn't your fault in this. That's an abused person, but they begin to see this because they have been made to feel worthless. They therefore have worthless thoughts about themselves. They're not worthy to be treated any better. They're convinced that they can't make it on their own. They're actually worried that they're not going to get any affirmation from any other place because one of the things about an abusive relationship is they'll kind of throw in complementing and flattery. So, on the days when they're not abusing, they're saying, "You're so wonderful." So, where are they going to get that? Because they're not worthy to get it from anybody else. "Only I'm going to give that to you." And of course, Scripture warns us about people that flatter us. It says that people that flatter you really hate you because they're just trying to use you and it's a form of manipulation. Also, I think people are afraid of losing something. If they break away from this bondage, if they break away from this, "Then what will happen to all the stuff that we had together, or what will happen to the way that we're known or the lifestyle that we had?" So, they're afraid of the loss if in fact they have to give these things away. Scripture is telling us that you have a group of people in Galatia that are having a hard time breaking from the oppressive religion of Judaism. Paul now addresses them, and he goes, "Let's get free of this." Now, his point is that when he first came, he presented the gospel to them, and in the gospel, they received the truth. What is the truth? God loves you even though you're a sinner. So, you're feeling worthless? Ok, no big deal. God loves you, and He'll rescue you. He'll make you His child and you will become so valuable that He's going to give you all of His inheritance. That's the gospel. Think about it, you'll have everlasting life because you put all of your trust in Him. So, you don't have to worry anymore about what people think. You just want to please Him, and how freeing that is when you think about it. That was the message that they received to such a

degree that they were transformed in the way they related to Paul, and Paul wants to remind them of the way that they had begun, because they have fallen back into trying to fit in. I oftentimes think of this in particular with family, sometimes with groups of friends or clubs that people join, and “I’m going why do they stay in that?” Remember, Jesus redefined the family. I’m not telling you to throw off responsibility. You have a responsibility to your family, your household, clearly, but the sense is, “I have to be accepted, and they have to affirm.” And that’s not true. Only one person I have to please. So, I need to do the right thing and here again, it’s very freeing because miserable people are going to be miserable. That’s just the way that they act. You’re going to try to do a song and dance to try to make them happy, but you’re just going to find yourself getting worn out and frustrated because they’re not happy. The only one that can make them happy is the Lord, and if they receive the gospel, what a wonderful thing that is, that there’s a transformation. So, the gospel came in and changed them, but now they found themselves slipping back, and that might be true of all of us as believers. From time to time, we end up slipping back. We begin to think, “I don’t want to make them mad because of something I do.” And you’re really curtailing what you know is right because you’re afraid of what somebody else will think. It’s not only wearying if you think about it, but also disorienting. If you have maybe 10 people on your list, now, you’ve got to think 10 different ways to please 10 different people that are miserable, and it will wear you out and it will disorient you. So, Paul wants to set them free.

I want you to pick up with me in verse 12 as he begins to draw them back in. The statement is, (Galatians 4:12) “I beg of you, brethren...”

Now, I want to emphasize the fact that he’s not just throwing out a word, “brethren,” but that it literally is a root word which makes reference to “we have the same Dad.” Of course, as we receive Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we become children of God, and as Scripture says, “Do we not have one father?” And we do, through the wonderful salvation of Jesus Christ. So, beckoning we’re a part of a family, because here again, people are worried about, “Yeah, but if I break away from this, where will I go? What do I have?” And he turns and he goes, “Family. We’re family.”

And if you look in the passage,

“I beg of you, brethren, become as I am, for I also have become as you are...”

Now, what a great phrase that speaks volumes, really.

In particular, if you look with me in Acts 26, Paul begins to talk to Festus in this particular chapter as well as King Agrippa about his faith and about what happened to him; his testimony, really. The fact is that for a time, he was really persecuting the Christians. They were dying

because of Paul, as his name was Saul in the Hebrew. So, as he begins to share his testimony, he tells the king in Galatians 26:4,

“So then, all Jews know my manner of life from my youth up...”

“They knew the way I used to be.” Now, within this testimony, he shares in verse 10,

“... not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them.

(Acts 26:11) “And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities.”

In other words, he was unyielding as he begins to torture them and go after them. It shows the mindset.

His point is in verse 9,

“... I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.”

His point within the passage is, “I was thinking wrong. I was doing the wrong thing.” And let me just say this, that we believe that Paul, if we just look at the timeline was 40 years old when he begins to change. So, all you late bloomers, the way that he puts it in 1 Corinthians 15, “one born untimely.” The thought is, “Well, I’m so late.” Well, so was Paul, but God can take those years and multiply them in such a way. We believe that he ministered probably 23 or 24 years. So, here’s the guy that had to change at age 40, and had to admit that everything that he had been doing all his life was for the wrong reasons. Think about that. I’ll let you have time to read through the whole testimony, but not only will He change him, but He will cause him to do things that he would have never done. He’s going to go minister to the Gentiles. It’s one of the arguments that he conveys in Ephesians 3. He goes, “You want to hear something mysterious? I like Gentiles and I never have, ever, but you see the power of God to change.”

Now, the point of the matter, when he says, “become as I am” to the Galatians, is he’s conveying to them that you’re going to have to be willing to change. They say one of the greatest fears of a person in abusive relationship is they’re afraid of change, because the familiar is something that has a trepidation to them, but the change is more fearful than the trepidation of the treacherous tyranny that’s there. So, Scripture is telling us that you can change, and Paul is saying, “Be as me. Talk about change, I left everything.” In fact, if you continue to read the testimony in Acts 26, it reads, “And the Jews tried to kill me.” Now, he was a Jew of Jews. (Philippians 3) He had all the trophies that you could get. In other words, he was high up on the scale of Judaism, the highest. He became a Sanhedrin, which is the Supreme Court Justice, and he had all of the accolades that he needed. Nevertheless, he threw it all

away. He says, "I count it all as garbage." There comes a point where somebody has to be willing to let it go in order to receive the freedom. "Yeah, but what about this? What about this?" I've oftentimes thought about when Christ is talking about the final days and He says, "The days are coming when you're on your rooftop or you're in your house or you're out in the field. Don't put anything in your arms. Let it go. Run." And there comes a time in your life where you just need to run from the things that so easily weigh us down and bring us into a kind of prison. Really, the kind of prison that people are in is a sense of anxiety and fear of having to please all these people, and God goes, "Run. This isn't My message. The gospel is I'm freeing you from this." And what a wonderful message. So, when Paul says, "become as I," he's basically saying that you've got to let it go and be willing to not be accepted by the very people that you thought were your friends, but they weren't. Because the very people that he thought were his friends are now the people that are trying to kill him. The friends? I don't know. I don't get it.

So, you go back to Galatians 4, and he says, "Now, you need to become as I am." Then, in verse 13, he takes them back to a time in which they emotionally felt the right way that they should. That is to say that they weren't thinking in terms of pleasing men, and they weren't thinking in terms of jumping through hoops and they weren't thinking in the terms of rivalry or performance, but they were thinking in terms of love. As 1 Corinthians 16 says, "Do all that you do out of love." If you just lived in love, wouldn't you be free? You wouldn't have to sit down and go, "I wonder what I should do in this situation." I can tell you what to do. Hold others in higher esteem than yourself. Stop thinking about yourself. Stop thinking selfishly and begin to think of somebody else besides you and see what happens. It will set you free.

(Galatians 4:13) "but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time."

In other words, when I came to you, I came to you as a mess." I don't know exactly everything that happened to Paul. I know that he lists some.

If you look with me in 2 Corinthians, very interesting points as he begins to describe a synopsis of his suffering. If you look in 2 Corinthians 11, he goes, "Ok, let me tell you what's happened to me. So, are these people important?" Now, let me just say this in Chapter 11, he's once again having to deal with abusive relationship. What do you mean? Well, in Chapter 11, verses 18,19 and 20, who is he talking about? Those who take advantage of them under the name of religion. The way he puts it is, "They enslave you; they devour you. (verse 20) They take advantage of you. They exalt themselves and they hit you in the face." So, that's the way he describes it. And Paul's going, "You're good with that. I don't understand that." So, he goes, "And so you think of me lightly because I don't hit you in the face. You don't think that I'm to be exalted." It's hard for us to comprehend that there was a time when Paul was not seen as a

wonderful example. That many of the early church were looking from outward appearance and they were going, "I don't know. He doesn't look like much to me." If you were to back up in 2 Corinthians 10, since you're in Corinthians, and how fortuitous is that?

(2 Corinthians 10:10) "For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive and his speech contemptible."

So, could you imagine Paul walking in the service here and you're going, "Who's that? Some bum off the street?" And the reason why I state that is that he describes in Chapter 11 that he was in labors, prison, beaten times without number and danger of death. (verse 23)

(2 Corinthians 11:24) "Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes."

(2 Corinthians 11:25) Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned "(i.e. to death and raised up) ..." I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep."

I wonder what you look like after that.

(2 Corinthians 11:26) "I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea..."

"Danger, danger, danger, danger." I feel like an old TV show, but the point is that is that he had suffered a tremendous amount, and you could just imagine, we have no sense of all of these things he was healed from. So, take a person that's been beat, has been stoned. His speech is probably contemptible because probably some rocks hit him in the mouth, and he's coming in and trying to convey a message. One of the statements that he makes to the Corinthians is, "I came to you in weakness, knowing nothing but Christ crucified. I didn't come with persuasive words or grand speech so that your hope would not be in the messenger, but in the message." And how freeing it is when you consider that God is not looking at the outward appearance which man looks at. I've oftentimes had people ask, "Well, who am I? How could I serve God? I'm nobody." That's who God chooses. That's why he says in 1 Corinthians 1, God chooses the weak and the foolish things to confound the wise and things that are not to nullify the things that are that no man would boast. That's what God chooses to use. So, the wonderful picture of how freeing that is and Paul wants them to know that "When you first saw me, you heard the message. You didn't look at the messenger. I mean, I was a mess. I had problems." And according to the passage, he was having trouble with his eyes.

So, if you go back to Galatians 4,

"But you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time;

(Galatians 4:14) and that which was a trial to you..."

"You had to take care of me. I was a mess." Here again, I don't know what he was just coming off of or what the problem was, or had he just been beaten recently? I don't know.

"... that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself."

Why? Because they heard the message, and here this broken-down beaten-up prophet comes in, an apostle, and he begins to share the wonderful words of life, "God loves you. You know why I've been suffering? You know why I've gone through all this? To set you free." And they go, "We love this guy, and they began to minister to him." He goes, "Remember that? Remember how intensely you served me and how I wasn't a burden to you? You didn't think nothing of how I looked on the outside? Why can't you guys live that way all the time? As Scripture says, we recognize no man according to the flesh anymore. Why can't you just look at each other and go, "Brother, I love you because you love God, and we love God together and that's all that we need to know"? Why can't you live that way? "

"...my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself.

(Galatians 4:15) Where then is that sense of blessing you had? ..."

"Sense of blessing" literally means to declare yourself fortunate. "We are so fortunate to have this broken down nobody proclaim these wonderful words of life; God has set us free." What happened? Why did the gospel become secondary to now pleasing somebody else? Why are you going back in a prison? It's like you opened the door, you set somebody free, and they go, "I like the beds in there." It just doesn't make any sense why somebody would go back there.

"Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me.

(Galatians 4:16) So have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?"

I want to end with this particular passage found in John 8, and it is once again, a passage that is often quoted, but wrongly so. Because we know that just saying something true doesn't free anybody. So, people will use the phrase "the truth will set you free," but you have to understand what the passage is. In John 8, the beginning of the passage starts off with a woman that's brought by the religious leaders and has been caught in the act of adultery. They turn to Jesus, and they go, "We caught her. Now, according to the Law, You've got to kill her." And Jesus begins to write in the sand. Scripture says that as He begins writing, He stands up, and apparently there's a kind of indictment there. Then He goes back to writing again, and one-by-

one, all the accusers begin to leave. We speculate that He's writing literally the sins of those that are around Him, as He writes with His finger. Scripture tells us that the commandments of God were written by the fingers of God. So, it's an interesting picture of God writing, but as we come to the passage, we see them leave and He turns to the woman, He goes, "Where are your accusers?" She goes, "They've all left." And He goes, "I'm not accusing you." Now, Jesus' great statement in John 3 is "Don't think that I came into the world to condemn the world. I came into the world to save them." And you see this wonderful picture because it's not Jesus denying that she is a sinner because He'll tell her go and sin no more. It's not saying that sins ok, it's saying, "Your sins have been paid for by My blood. I'm going to the cross for you. It's going to be done. It's ok. All you have to do is believe." Talk about how freeing that is; all the guilt, all the fingers that have been pointing at us. You know when people say, "Boy, I remember what you were like." And you go, "Yeah, and if God can save me, He can save anybody." I'm giving you something to say back to them because that's our message. Our message isn't how wonderful we are. Our message is how wonderful He is and how He saves.

So, in John 8, it is in this setting that the Jews are coming to Jesus and they're basically accusing Him of saying that He's God. He's associated Himself with God. So, they say to Him, "You bear witness of Yourself. So, Your witness cannot be true." And He goes, "My witness is true. Not only do I bear witness of Myself, but the Father bears witness of me." Now we read over that, and we go, "Ok. Anybody could say that." But not anybody could say that, because what Jesus begins to reveal to them is that His life is so transformed before them, so different than anything they've ever seen that they have to admit there's a power. It's sort of like Nicodemus when he comes to Him, He goes, "No man can do the things that You do unless God is with them. No man can do this." So, that's the point that Jesus gives.

I want you to read with me in John 8:28,

"So Jesus said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me."

(John 8:29) "And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone..."

That's a key phrase, "He has not left me alone." Then, the next phrase is key in verse 29,

"...for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him."

Now, the point is that there's a communion with Him and the Father, and the communion is visibly seen, evidential in His life. In fact, as He will say later on, "Look, if I don't do the deeds of My Father, then don't believe." But it's the one thing that they couldn't argue with. In fact, the passage will say that many of the rulers in this particular text will actually believe. Now, they won't believe in Him, but they'll believe in, according to the text, of what He has done. In other

words, they can't deny that He had been with God, and that God was always with Him. The point being is that Jesus never didn't look like God. Never. Listen to the phrase, "always do the things that are pleasing to My Father." This is a key point because what throws us into bondage is when we go in and out of the relationship; when we go in and out of our devotion to God; when we start off in the morning, thinking, "I'm going to please God today" and then halfway in the day, "I'm worried about what they're thinking." And Jesus goes, "The only one I ever try to please, and you can bear Me witness." And they go, "It's true. It's the Father." They can't deny that.

(John 8:30) "As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him."

A saving faith? Obviously not, according to the passage.

(John 8:31) "So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine."

If you will have a relationship with God that is true, then you will have a relationship with God that is continual. Any true relationship is not spasmodic. A true relationship is a devotion and never stops ever. Love never fails. (1 Corinthians 13)

"So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine;

(John 8:32) and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

Let me say this, if you're in and out of a relationship, you don't have a true relationship, and you'll never have a deep relationship; more specifically, you'll never have a real relationship. True relationships are abiding, they're continual, and Christ is saying the only way you could know truth is to be true, to be devoted, to be conjoined. Ultimately, the only way you and I can do that is through the Spirit of God, who is the faithful One. What a wonderful picture that begins to reveal to us how we can be set free, and it is that, as Scripture says, "be being filled with the Spirit of God" that I keep myself in a place no longer bound, but realizing and understanding a knowledge that puts me with just God, and think about how freeing that is walking around all day long just you and Him, and pleasing Him. Then, it's like accidentally people like you. You're going, "Why do you like me?" And they go, "I don't know. I don't know why I like you." And I'll say, "I don't know why you like me either." If your ways are pleasing to the Lord, He can make your enemies to be at peace with you. Let God take care of all the relationships, you do the right thing, you please Him, you stay in truth, and that truth will set free.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we thank You for Your blessings. We thank You for Your desire to give us freedom. We thank You for Your love for us that just never will let us go. You would never leave us. You would never forsake us. You're the faithful one, and to find faithfulness and to walk in faithfulness, we begin to realize that we walk in not only confidence, but we walk in conviction. We're not dissuaded, and we're not moved, and we don't care what everybody else thinks. We're going to do the right thing for You. For we walk by faith, not by sight. Father, we know that You're calling us for this. You have literally called us out, "*ekklēsia*." You have called the church out. You have called the people out to follow You alone. How wonderful it would be for the church to just follow God.

Your heads bowed and your eyes closed. Make that commitment today.