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Galatians
Chapter 4 - Man's Way Enslaves
Embraced or Excluded Part 2 (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.

I've been thinking about this passage for quite a bit. It has a lot of practical implications, because Paul is writing a letter to the Church of Galatia that he might free them from the bondage of oppression, from the bondage of condescending attitudes. His desire is to free them from what man thinks and the burdens that man places on man. Jesus will say in Matthew 23 that the Pharisees place these heavy loads on people without being willing to lift at all. This is what religion does, it oppresses. It is of great concern specifically to Paul, that the Church of Galatia understand that this is not our gospel at all. Our gospel is a gospel of freedom from what man thinks; from the oppression of man. The church should proclaim this, and the church should live this. We have an obligation of sorts, as we've oftentimes made reference to in Proverbs 24, to not only care for those that are hurting, but for us to be involved and even step in where people are hurting. God does not want the church to be complacent or to be uninvolved in people's lives, but he calls upon us to take stands, and to care enough to get in the midst of it. Paul writes a very interesting letter because we know that this is about the gospel. He starts off, "This is a gospel, not of men; this is the good news of God." And you go,

“What does that look like?” Let me just show you a few of the passages just by way of reminder, because we're going to hit on some real application here.

In Galatians, he says, and if you don't have it marked, you ought to, that our desire is not to seek men and to seek the pleasure of men, to seek the affirmation of men, to seek the favor of men, but we've been set free from that. We come to please only One, and that is God, God and God alone.

As he goes on in this book, in Chapter 2, we realize that he begins to pull out specifics. So, he establishes the doctrine, which is not an unusual point and the way that Paul begins to proclaim this truth. He establishes the doctrine at the very beginning and then he goes into the application, or more specifically, the difficulty or the correction that he needs to deal with. In Chapter 2, we see what the problem is. The problem is that there were those that were oppressing and demanding that the Gentiles do specific things in order to be a Christian; hoops to jump through. Our faith is not of that. We believe that by receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, a transformation takes place and the heart is renewed. We become not only a new creation, but we have new “want-tos” and everything about us has caused us to literally, as the word “repentance” means, think differently. We literally think differently. So, as not to the point that that people have to be hanging over us with a whip or telling us what we need to do, but we long to obey. This is the Spirit of God. If there's not the longing, then there's really not the change. The manifestation of the change in us is that we not only change our way of thinking, but as Hebrews will say, we endure through many trials and tribulations, knowing that this is true. It becomes our conviction, and probably if I were to describe what it means to live by faith, it means to live by the convictions of your faith. So, it's internal and it begins to move you in an appropriate way. The problem is that religion is that which puts people in bondage, and it controls people. So, oppression is clearly a part of this.

(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.”

So, we know what the problem is. Many of them are being brought into bondage, and merely because there are people that perhaps they're convinced that they're superior to them. I don't know. They have found themselves falling in line, or perhaps they feel like they're inferior. So therefore, they have to do what these people say.

It says in verse 6 that they were people of high reputation and Paul says, “It makes no difference to me. God's not a respecter of persons.”

He then encouraged them in verse 10 to “remember the poor,” and he doesn't just throw that in. He's stating that there are people that are suppressed and oppressed in this society, and God loves them. They need rescuing.

What makes this whole book so unusual, and you'd be hard pressed to find anything like it anywhere else in Scripture, is that Paul goes directly to Peter, to his face, and rebukes him. He states that in the passage, in verse 11,

“But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.”

Now, what we're dealing with is authority. Peter is an apostle. So, we're dealing with authority that has abused that authority and has begun to literally push people away to actually convey a sense that they're not welcome, just simply because they're Gentiles, not because they've done anything wrong. Peter has allowed himself to be influenced by the world, again. Barnabas then falls in line with this as well, and it says in verse 13,

“The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.”

(Galatians 2:14) But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel...”

Because the gospel says that God so loved the world, and the gospel is about the power of God and freeing people. That's why it's called “good news,” “*euangelizō*”. What's the good news? You're set free.

Nowhere is explained better in the simplicity, if you look with me in Luke 4, as Jesus finds Himself in His own hometown, and as was His habit of going to the synagogue, and He is handed the scroll and lo and behold, there it is in the Book of Isaiah. As He begins to read from this book, He reads this wonderful text in Luke 4:18,

“THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME,
BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR.
HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES...”

There are a lot of people that are in captivity, not just physically, but emotionally in bondage by people that are oppressive to them.

“... HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES,
AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND,
TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED.”

What's our gospel about? It's about setting you free, not about putting people in bondage. The fact that the church would ever become a place of bondage to people would be highly inappropriate to the gospel. Christ therefore begins to attack the religious leaders in particular in Matthew 23, as He says, “Woe to you who devour widows' houses, and for pretense you give these long prayers.”

Christ was so much against it that you see this wonderful picture at the end of His ministry, in Matthew 21, in which He goes into the temple, and He begins to chase out the money changers. If you read the text, He then turns to the poor. The passage was probably taken from Jeremiah 7, and it says, "This house is to be a house of prayer for all the world." In other words, "You're exploiting people. This is to be a place that prays for people, that encourages people, that strengthens people, that gives them hope. That's what this place is supposed to be." He demonstrates that at the beginning of His ministry in John 2. He'll end His ministry in the same way in Matthew 21. In both times He will go into the temple with great fervor and begin to chase out those who were exploiting people and using them and oppressing them. You can't say that Jesus was ok with or apathetic towards those that were hurting somebody. He was very aggressive. The same thing is true in Galatians. You can't say that Paul was going, "Well, you know, it's authority." If authority is abusing somebody, you have to step in. Somebody's doing something wrong, and this is not a place where you allow this to exist. So, Paul steps in very aggressively. It's a very interesting passage in which he takes that stand.

As we come to the passage that we're looking at in Galatians 4, he begins to describe this in the sense of beckoning people to come out and be free from this oppression.

(Galatians 4:12) "I beg of you, brethren, become as I am..."

He's saying, "I'm not subject to this kind of oppression. You come out and have the same freedom as me." It is baffling to realize that people will often be drawn to oppression. People will oftentimes be drawn to those who are demanding and those who are abusive. It seems strange although David was drawn to it, in the sense that he wanted the acceptance and affirmation of Saul. Though every time Saul saw him, he was trying to kill him, David kept coming back and he just kept asking the same question, "What did I do? What did I do wrong? Why don't you like me?" And the fact that he would beckon him. In a way, he does the same thing for different reasons with his son Absalom. Joab would say, "Why do you hate those who love you and love those who hate you? Why would you go after somebody that is clearly wanting you dead?" His own son wanted him dead, but you begin to realize that oftentimes in people's minds are these prideful expectations of what they want for their children. I've seen grown adults be abused by their children because they just want that relationship to happen, or they have some investment in the sense that they want in some way to live vicariously through this child. Maybe this child gives a sense of hope or as probably an Absalom's case, if you were to look at the guy, he's probably like the perfect king. The way that he looks, he just looks kingly. He looks wonderful. He looks handsome. I mean, Scripture tells us he's handsome. I figure if Scripture tells us, he's probably a pretty good-looking guy; it's not somebody's opinion. All of this is telling us that we have a tendency, for whatever reason, to accept oppressive situations. When I look in the Book of Kings, this individual by the name of Jehoshaphat, I guess

it was out of nepotism, the sense of being concerned with what his father-in-law would think or the fact that maybe he wouldn't get those good Sunday meals. I don't know. People are afraid to stand up, oftentimes against their own family. Their own family does and says things that are just not only hurtful but destructive and they continue to stand around them. They continue to sit around them. I'm going, "Why don't you get out of there?" and they're going, "It's family." That's basically the only answer that I'm getting, and I'm going, "Ok, so Jesus redefined family, Jesus came to set you free, and He says, 'Who's My mother? Who's My brothers? Who is it? The one who does the will of My Father in heaven. This is My family.'" He gave you a door to get out." But people say that, and the strange thing with Jehoshaphat is he's thinking, "Well, I think my father-in-law really likes me." Oh yeah, he really likes you. He puts you out in battle and he wants them to kill you. So, he lets you dress like him so that they think it's him, and then you're going to take the bullet. Yeah, I think he really likes you. It is that twisted way of thinking that, I would say, holds people in. Maybe it's just that they don't want to rock the boat, or maybe that they don't want to look bad, or maybe you're the bad guy because you did the leaving or whatever. It's a very interesting passage, Paul is saying, "This is baffling to me."

He puts it another way. If you look in the passage that that we've been focusing on within this text, he goes,

(Galatians 4:12) "I beg of you, brethren, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You have done me no wrong;

(Galatians 4:13) 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 in 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? ..."

"Where's that sense of doing things and not doing things out of fear, but doing things out of love? Where is that involvement with the individual and the attachment that you have?"

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

It is strange, you go to try to help somebody, oftentimes in an abusive situation and they look at you as the problem. You're the mean person. You're going, "You're upset at me because I'm telling you something that's true? I'm trying to help you out here." You can sense the battle within the passage.

(Galatians 4:17) "They eagerly seek you, not commendably..."

We will actually put in there, probably “not honorably.” They're not trying to help you. He will go on to say it's one thing to seek somebody and to help them, but he says,

“They eagerly seek you, not commendably, but they wish to shut you out (or exclude you) ...”

Basically, that's a form of control.

“... so that you will seek them.”

Isn't it twisted? Here again, it plays on man's tendencies. I mean, if you make something harder, you make something difficult, then man wants it more. It's a bizarre thought. Think about the esoteric clubs that there are, where you have to really work hard to get in it, whether it's secret societies or fraternities or sororities; how people have to go through these hoops in order to get in, and they go, “Wow, this is great. Look at all the suffering I had to do and look at how people look down on me and how people spit on me. Wow, I'm really somewhere and getting into a wonderful place.” But it demonstrates that man has a proclivity to gravitate towards those things, and it's fundamentally what Paul was saying. We've talked about the text in 2 Corinthians 11, in which Paul goes, “Look, if he devours you, if he beats you, if he hits you in the face, you seem to be drawn to him. What is this?” There is a part of us that goes, “I don't get it.” I mean, if you're not in a situation like that and you're living a life that is free from those things, and then you see somebody that's staying in that and you're calling them out and they seem reticent about doing it, you're going, “I'm baffled about this.”

Actually, Paul will put it this way, in verse 20,

“but I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.”

“I don't get it. Why would you not do this?” What we're dealing with, of course, is clearly an oppressive situation and Paul is coming in to rescue. He's done what he needs to do in the sense of taking the stand. He's demonstrating what the gospel is. The gospel is caring for people.

Acts speaks of it as Paul begins to pull the elders together, he goes, “Look, you're shepherds and they're going to be wolves that come in. You've got to protect the sheep.” A very interesting picture within there. The church should be a place in which people are protected; people are watched over, and the church needs to give advice that protects the innocent rather than encourages those that are guilty. Because the church should be that which proclaims righteousness.

You see the aggressiveness of Christ, even to protect His own disciples. One of my favorite passages is in John 18, and the mob comes for Christ to take Him on the cross, and He goes, “So

who are you looking for?" And they tell Him, He goes, "I'm the guy." And then it says that He literally laid all of the soldiers flat, and He goes, "Leave them alone. I'm going with you." Now, what He does in that passage is He protects His own. That's what He does. He knew it was time for Him to suffer. He would gladly go because He's obeying the Father. Suffering in and of itself is not something that we do just because it's fun to suffer. Suffering is something that we do for Christ. Unfortunately, I think sometimes, the church has this mentality, or they've shown this mentality that we should allow people to be abused by virtue of saying that it's for the gospel and many times, it's not for the gospel. In fact, many times it literally is giving license for somebody to do evil.

A number of years ago, I had a woman call me up and she says, "My husband's abusing me. Can you meet together with me?" I said, "Well, you know, my wife will have to be there." She goes, "No, my husband wants to come too." I said, "Ok, so my wife doesn't have to be there." So, we met here at the church, and I could see on her body, bruises, hurts. She was limping, and the husband was a very charming and very charismatic individual. He began to talk to me about how clumsy she was and how she didn't know what she was doing. She hurts herself. He's trying to help her, you know, things like this, but I could see by her demeanor that she had been abused and I interrupted the conversation, and I spoke her name, and I said, "You know what we need to do?" She goes, "What?" I said, "We need to call the police." I said, "You need to step over here. We need to call the police on your husband. He needs to be locked up." My responsibility is to protect. I know that the tendency might be in certain situations to say something like, "Well, you were called to suffer. God has called you to suffer." And that's true. God has called us to suffer for the gospel, but not to be abused. So, you see in Scripture the differentiation between these things, and I kind of want to point that out. I feel like it's appropriate for me to point that out because we're in a passage that Paul is dealing with these things and to make it more specific, because we're hearing so many different thoughts that really, I don't feel are biblical at all. There's a lot of confusion going on. What is it that we are to do in said situation and what specifically is the role of the church?

Paul, in Acts 16, goes to Philippi and gets locked up in that particular passage. If I could just go through some of the some of the words that are being used within the text. In Acts 16, he was actually wrongly inflicted with many blows. He was messing with the "merchandise," perhaps as he heals this young girl that was being used, actually being exploited for her services. She was demon possessed, and he heals her and because of that, these men are very angry that their business is ruined. So, they go to the authorities and the authorities grab him, beat him, and they throw him in prison and Silas as well.

(Acts 16:23) "When they had struck them with many blows..."

Now, after they're thrown in prison, we then find out that something has happened. This was an illegal act. This wasn't somebody going under the authority of those that are in charge and basically, he committed a crime, but they had just committed an illegal act by beating him. In fact, he was a Roman citizen. So, as you go into the passage, they find out that he's a Roman citizen after all of this has happened. Of course, God uses it and brings about salvation to this jailer as well as his whole family. As the passage goes on, we see that Paul begins to then address the wrong that was done.

(Acts 16:35) "Now when day came, the chief magistrates sent their policemen, saying, "Release those men."

(Acts 16:36) And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The chief magistrates have sent to release you. Therefore come out now and go in peace."

(Acts 16:37) But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they sending us away secretly? No indeed! ..."

Now, what we have is a passage in which wrong was being done. You say, "Well, we're Christians, we ought to let it go." Well, I would agree with you if in fact God had called you to suffer, for this moment, for the Gospel of Christ. However, if this is just abuse, you cannot stand aside. What he's going to do within this is not as much get vindication, that's not what Paul's concern is; his concern is the jailer because the jailer had become a convert. What will keep them off his back? He'll hang this little cloud over them and say, "Remember, don't mess with this jailer. He's a Christian. He now loves the Lord. Don't mess with him."

So, the way the passage will end is,

(Acts 16:38) "The policemen reported these words to the chief magistrates. They were afraid when they heard that they were Romans,

(Acts 16:39) and they came and appealed to them, and when they had brought them out, they kept begging them to leave the city."

And Paul goes, "Ok." No, he doesn't. He then goes to Lydia's house, which is still in Philippi, which is pretty interesting. So, he doesn't leave yet, and sort of hangs in there for a little while. The point is that is that he did not let that go because it was a wrong that was done in the midst of this. You're going to see different passages that make reference to this kind of thing, that there are some cases where somebody takes a stand and there are other cases where they get thrown in prison, they get beat, they even get crucified, and they're ok with that. The difference is for the gospel.

Matthew 5 is very clear about this, "Blessed are those who suffer for righteousness for My name's sake." And if it's clear that it's for His namesake, you need to be willing to do this, but if it's wrong that's being perpetrated, you need to take a stand.

There's a passage in 1 Corinthians 7 that I've oftentimes used because of the fact that it's dealing with a sense of, "Now that we're Christians." Many were asking, "Now that I'm a Christian and my husband's an unbeliever, can I just leave him?" Paul goes, "No, don't." But he then puts it in another context and here again, it's best to understand what's being said; that there might be a husband that's an unbeliever or a wife that's an unbeliever that wants their spouse to leave or does not have a relationship where they want to be with them. Because of that, there might be abuse or whatever. The question is, "Do I stay?" And that's an interesting question. The question also is interesting because it beckons, what would the church tell that individual to do? You have to go back to some fundamentals. It is the responsibility of the gospel to set free. It is the responsibility of the gospel to protect. So, it's very clear that the gospel is a willingness to sacrifice for others. What we've done is we've turned it around and we've made the gospel a finger that points to the other person and says, "You have to be willing to suffer." That's not my job. That's the job of the Spirit. The Spirit will convict that heart. I mean, suffering is a very personal thing, and you have to know that's of the Lord. God will call you to do it, believe me, and when He does, you'll feel a great peace about it, but there's clearly times in which, if the church goes out and they start pointing the finger and they say, "It's your calling to suffer in this particular situation." How do you know? In John 7 the Pharisees were coming after Jesus and they go, "They're coming after You." He goes, "I know, I'm leaving." And you're going, "Why don't You stick around? It's time. You should be dying on the cross." It wasn't time. God would not be glorified. John 17, He goes to the cross willingly and He's crucified. It is the time. There were often many times. I mean, the Gerasenes come up to Jesus after He healed and they go, "You need to get out of here." And He goes, "Ok, I'm out of here." You go, "Why wouldn't You tell them that You're the boss, this is Your world; You're in charge?" Because if they didn't want Him around, He wasn't going to stay around. There are relationships that are like that. Is it my job to tell an individual, "You need to stay with your spouse"? No. I need to tell them that the fidelity of Christ should be in all of us, that there should be a willingness to stay, if God has so endowed us with that. Would it be wrong for the person to leave? This passage in 1 Corinthians 7 talks about the fact that you have a husband, perhaps that is unbelieving, or a wife that is unbelieving.

(1 Corinthians 7:12) "But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her."

Now, the words "consent" and "leave" are going to be used several times. It's important to understand the word "consent." "Consent" within the text is really a compound word, which

means “together with somebody that sees the relationship as favorable and something that they want to be with you.” So, “to be together,” it has a sense of favorable desire to be together. The passage says that if you're married to somebody, and they want to stay and there's this favorable relationship, stay. Don't move, don't leave.

(1 Corinthians 7:13) “And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away.”

(1 Corinthians 7:14) For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy.”

In other words, there are great benefits to staying if in fact it's an amiable relationship. That is to say, “*syneudokeō*,” which means that they want to be with you and there's a favorable relationship.

(1 Corinthians 7:15) “Yet if the unbelieving one leaves...”

Now, this is a very interesting word, “*chorizo*.” The leaving has the sense of separating yourself from the individual, putting asunder or one who has no attachment to you by virtue of the emotions, or perhaps by virtue of the physical. It doesn't necessarily refer to somebody divorcing. The word itself is actually used in Romans 8:35, “Who will separate us from the love of God?” So, it's talking about a sense of separation emotionally or in a loving way.

“Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage...”

What is Paul doing? He's setting free. Now, he'll go on to say that if you're a slave and you're in a situation, don't worry about it, but if you can get free, go ahead. Scripture doesn't say you have to. It doesn't tell you that you can't. It leaves it up to the Spirit of the individual. It is not the responsibility of the church to tell somebody to leave or to tell somebody not to leave. We can beckon and we can encourage one way or the other, but it's the decision of the person, because God is working in that heart.

There's a great text in Acts 21 in which Paul is getting ready to go to Jerusalem. He's hitting the different churches, and the church is doing its job. The Holy Spirit is moving in the church, and the church is saying to Paul, “We beg you, don't go.” Because they know that when he goes to Jerusalem, he's going to be locked up. I mean, the prophet has already shown, “You're going to be bound together and you're going to be locked in prison. Don't go.” Now, what is the church doing? It's doing what its job is. What is that? Protecting. It's their job. Paul then says and does his job. “I've got to go. What are you doing? You're breaking my heart.” He doesn't say in the text, “You're telling me the wrong thing.” Because the job of the Spirit of God is to is to beckon

to save. However, the Spirit of God is also talking in Paul's heart and saying it's worth the sacrifice. There will be times in people's lives where the church will say, "We beg, we beg you, get out of this. You need to get out of this." And the person then says to the church, "I believe the Lord wants me here." If you're familiar with the passage in Acts, the church then goes, "The Lords' will be done." The point is that it's not the church forcing the person into this and being condescending in the sense of, "Well, you don't really love God, you're not willing to suffer." It's a church wanting to rescue but believing if God places on somebody's heart to do something, it is for the gospel. It is for that which elevates. So, we want the Lord's will to be done. We know that there are going to be times that people are going to suffer even unto death. We know that, but it should never be that the church puts them in that; that it be the Spirit of God that causes them to have a sense of, "I know that this is what God wants me to do. He has directed me in this, and I have a peace that passes all understanding." So, as Jesus will go to the cross, in Chapter 18, He's laying them all low, and in chapter 19, He's going to the cross and they're beating Him to death. He knew that's what the Father wanted Him to do at that time, and He was doing what He was doing to please God. There's a lot of confusion what the church should do, but if there is confusion in this church, let me make it really clear, we as a church will always defend the innocent. We will stand behind and we will look to the resources that God has given us.

Romans 13 says all authority is ordained by God. So, if you remember, in Chapter 13, he is talking about the authority of the government. He goes on and says for this reason you pay taxes. So, he's talking specifically about the government, and he says that they bear the sword for a reason. (Romans 13:4) Don't hesitate, if you know that there's abuse going on, to call the police. They bear the sword for a reason.

I was thinking about Paul and how those 40 Jews had this conspiracy that they were going to kill him, and they weren't going to eat anything until Paul was dead. It was an interesting passage because in that particular passage God uses both family and the government to rescue. So, I think it was his nephew, overhears that somebody's going to kill him, and he goes, "Somebody's going to kill you." And Paul goes, "We've got to get the guards." So, they get the guards and a whole entourage follows Paul and protects him. Well, God is using both to protect him. Now, I guess Paul could have easily said, "Well, God will protect me." But God uses the authority that He ordains, and it's very clear that we've been called to do those things and to work according to those things. I know I've kind of gone on a rabbit trail on this one, but I just felt like I needed to deal with some of these things.

Romans 15 has often rung true in my own heart when I consider the grace of God towards me. You read in Hebrews 12 that God may discipline individuals, but the church is called to mend. So, God has His work. I'll leave that to Him. What has God called the church to do? Clearly,

we're called to correct, we're called to say what's right, but oftentimes we lay heavy loads on people and that's not our job. It is our job to call people to freedom. God has called us to freedom.

(Romans 15:1) “Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves.”

Sometimes it's going to mean that you're going to get involved in something that's not going to be easy. Oftentimes when you get involved in domestic, then you're the one hated. As Paul would say, “Why are you angry at me because I'm telling you the truth?” But faithful are the wounds of a friend. I mean, you care enough for somebody to tell them, “You need to get out of there. You shouldn't be in this.” The lady did eventually leave, and I was glad to hear about that. The police had been called multiple times before. So, that helped with him having some record. We have to be willing to get involved in people's lives. We have to be the church the way God has called the church to be. We get so high and mighty in this sense of feeling like we've got to make everybody else spiritual by causing them to suffer. I mean, if it came to us, we probably wouldn't be willing to, but we don't mind forcing it on them. I've had people come up to me in situations such as this and they go, “Why didn't you tell this person to do this?” And I said, “Because the Scripture doesn't tell them to do that. It tells them to get free and it tells them to obey God and to listen to His Spirit.” Look, like I said, there are times where people are willing to suffer for Christ, and they believe that this is the time, and I say, “Go for it, and we're behind you on that.” And there are times when they need to get out, and I say, “Go for it. We're behind you in that.” Because what we're dealing with is the innocent and we're dealing with people that are immersed in something that is oppressive and overwhelming in their lives and almost to the degree where they can't even find the back door. We should be there inviting them.

“Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves.”

(Romans 15:2) Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification.”

What a great passage this is in Galatians, in which Paul is willing to actually go face to face with Peter. I mean, who would do that? Yet, what's at stake? The poor Galatians are at stake.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we give You thanks for Your love for us. We give You thanks for the gospel of Jesus Christ that came and died for us. You took upon Yourself; You didn't throw us under the bus, You died for us. This is the gospel; this is the good news. There's somebody that loves us.

There's somebody that cares for us. There's somebody that speaks up for us. There's somebody that will run the money changers out so that they don't exploit the poor anymore. There's somebody that will stand up for those who are oppressed and those that are heavy laden. It is the gospel. Lord, we just ask that the church would always be that place in which we emulate, imitate the very character and nature of Jesus Christ.

Your heads bowed and your eyes closed. I don't know what you're going through. I don't know who you're associated with. I don't know why you stay in a place that would oppress you continually when God has called you to be free. Paul writes on in 1 Corinthians 7 and he says, "For we were not called to be slaves to men." Dearly beloved, it is a different thing to be a bond slave of Christ and to willingly submit as you believe this is what God wants you to do, than it is to be abused. Scripture makes those distinctions. You need to make them too. Your heads bowed and your eyes closed. If in fact you're staying in a place that is inappropriate, hurtful, it is not only hurting you, but also the person that is doing the abuse because it is giving license to wrong behavior. Come to Christ, be set free.