

Brothers, Stop Fighting Over a Virus

Galatians 5:13-15

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, April 11, 2021

Well, good morning again, this is our second morning in the tent, it's our second time to be here. As you know, we were here last week for Easter Sunday and Good Friday. But we're back now for more, back for the second round, which is an exciting thing for us. It's very encouraging. I was telling the elders recently that after talking to people this past year, I could tell that you guys were discouraged. I could tell that you were kind of weary of doing church online over the internet, you wanted to be together, you wanted to see each other. And I understand that, I get that. And so it's such a thrill to be able to offer this ministry with you. Church is a personal thing, isn't it? It's a family affair. And you can't really do it if you don't have your family with you. You can put that off for a season, put that off for a time. But eventually, you've got to meet, you've got to be together. And so we are here happy to do that today, even though it's cold, amen? It's worth it. It's worth the sacrifice.

And since it's cold, I just want to dive right into the sermon this morning. I don't want to take too much time with the introduction. So why don't you open your Bibles with me to the book of Galatians. That's the book we're in today, book we're looking at this morning. If you would open your Bibles to Galatians, chapter 5. And as you're doing that, usually at this time, I would invite you to turn to another book of the Bible, I would invite you to turn to the book of Ephesians. We've been going through that on Sunday mornings. But today, I want to do something different. I want to turn your attention elsewhere, because there's a topic I think that needs to be addressed. And this passage does very well. So if you would read Galatians 5, starting in verse 1 with me, it says:

“It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.”

And then if you look down in verse 13, he says,

“For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "YOU

SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."

But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another."

We'll stop the reading there. Just to say a few words about this, the book of Galatians has been called 'Paul's fighting epistle'. It's the book that Paul fought over. Because in this book, he fights for a certain issue, he fights for a certain doctrine, that is the doctrine of justification by faith. He defends the fact that we're saved by faith and not by works. And I might add that he just jumps right into it. He just dives right into his subject. Usually Paul gives a personal greetings and some commendation and prayer and that sort of thing to begin the letter. But in this one he doesn't do any of that, just jumps right into confronting them. In fact, chapter 5, which we just read starts off this way. When it says "it was for freedom that Christ set us free. Therefore, keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery." See the word freedom use multiple times there, to remind you that this is why Jesus saved you. This is why He died for you, to free you from the yoke of slavery. To free you from the yoke of the law that says you have to work, work, work your way into heaven. You have to try, try, try hard enough to be saved. He came to free you from that, take you off the wheel. Because Jesus paid it all. He did all the work for you. So you don't have to go back to that now. That's why Paul says in verse 3, that if you don't do that, you'll be under obligation to keep the whole law, you'll be enslaved to all of it. Then he says in verse 4 that it will sever you from Christ if you forget this, it'll cut you off from Him. Verse 11 says such a thing would abolish the cross or abolish the stumbling block of it. And then the next time he uses the word 'freedom' is down in verse 13, or actually in verse 15, he says this, he says, "if you don't do this, you will bite and devour one another." I'm going to walk you through this passage in a moment, I'll tell you what it says. But the word bite and devour, it means you'll cut and destroy each other, you'll scratch and claw each other to death like animals do. Which is what some people do when they get caught up in this stuff, don't they? It's what some people do when they get caught up in legalism. Because they like to say, 'I'm better than you.' 'No, I'm better than you.' 'I'm up here, you're down here,' and they go at it.

You guys have seen animals fight before, right? It's ugly. It's not very clean and neat. It's just a mess. And churches can be this way. Christians can act like this when they're legalistic. Our men in our Iron Man's Bible study went through the book of Galatians yesterday, and I said, it's kind of like King of the hill, you guys ever played King of the hill, where you're trying to climb to the top of the hill? And in order to get up there, you got to knock everybody else down. Some people look at religion like that. In order for me to get to heaven, I gotta knock everybody else down on the way. Paul says God sets you free from that. In fact, if you notice this phrase, 'bite and devour', it's a very aggressive term here. It's very hostile. Because this is what legalism does, it makes you hostile, puts a chip on your shoulder. And it's also a very intense and a strong term. Because you can't get any worse than biting someone. You can't get any worse than devouring them and eating them whole. It's one thing to disagree with someone. It's one thing to have a different opinion. But it's another thing to do this.

One commentator said it this way. He said some Christian people today, who would never curse steel or get drunk would not think twice about responding to someone in anger. Because that's what sin does. He

makes you feel perfectly justified in sending hate mail or spreading venom all over the internet, while at the same time going to church. We've all seen this, haven't we? We've all seen people hate someone, spread venom while at the same time going to church. And here's why I want to talk about this today. Here's why I want to bring it up. Because I think this is something that's happening in the church in Canada right now. I think this is something that's happening in the church in British Columbia. People are biting and devouring each other here. They're attacking each other over the issue of how to respond to the government. Because we're starting to form into camps over this. We're starting to form into factions, with one group saying 'I'm better than you' and the other one saying 'no, I'm better than you'. 'I'm greater than you, I do more for the Lord.' We're playing King of the hill. We're trying to climb our way up and knocking everybody down. You know, to show you what I mean, if you just talk to the average person right now, the average Christian in British Columbia, you'll hear some of them say that the Bible commands us to resist the government, it orders us to do that. We don't have a choice in that, we don't have an option. It's a command because we have to protect our rights. Which is a strange thing to say when, to my knowledge, God never told anyone that you have to do that in the Bible. It's a choice. There are times when people did that. Other times when the apostle Paul or someone like that defended his rights. But it's not a command. And on the other hand, if you talk to the average personality, average Christian in British Columbia, you'll hear other ones saying, the Bible commands us to do the opposite of that. It commands us to obey the governing authorities. In fact, some take it so far to say that you can't go to church because that would be wrong, because it would be unloving, because it might get someone sick. You guys heard this before? We've all heard this. And that's a strange thing to say. Because in the Bible, there's nothing more loving than going to church. There's nothing more compassionate than that. But my point is that people are forming into factions over this. We're planting our flags. we're digging our heels in the ground. We're throwing up barricades and shooting cannons off the balustrade. You see it in conversations. I mean, I've heard of pastors getting into shouting matches over this. You guys have never heard of such a thing, have you? Pastor shouting over this to the point that they're not speaking to each other anymore. You see it in the way people write on Facebook and over the internet, it's gotten really nasty there. I've heard some people say, I'm not going to go on Facebook anymore because of this. And in response to that, I just want you to read again what Paul says in verse 13. If you look in verse 13, here's what the Apostle Paul says about this. He says, "For you are called to freedom, brethren, only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love, serve one another." In other words, you need to remember that you were not called to do that, you weren't called to fight each other, you were called to love each other. You weren't called to form into camps and to say, 'I'm better than you', 'No, I'm better than you', and give an opportunity for the flesh. You were called to do something else. I think this is a rebuke for all of us today. It's a warning because if we need to be doing anything right now, we need to be loving each other, amen? I mean, if the church needs to do anything right now, it needs to help and support each other. The world is making it hard enough right now. You guys are out here freezing. The government's making it hard enough. We don't need to turn on each other and make it harder.

I was talking with someone the other day about this. And he asked me where I stood in all this. They said, "Where do you stand on the church in the government? Which side are you on?", they said. And I said, I'm not taking a side because I don't think God's doing that. I'm not standing against anyone in this because this is His church, all of it. These are His people, all of them, and they're suffering right now. They're hurting. The church in British Columbia is hurting right now. I think these are some of the worst restrictions in North America. They're opening Disneyland next week in California, did you guys know that? We've had 4 months where the government said, 'don't go to church'. So I'm not going to make it worse by pitting one person against another in that. I know churches that are defying right now, because that's the best way they can shepherd their people. It's the best way they know how. And I know other churches that are not for the same reason. I've talked to pastors who said if I defied right now my church would split and it would all be over. And I'm not going to condemn them for that. Because I don't think God would. You know, it's interesting when you look at it, this is so new to us. This whole experience of the government, in a sense, being against meeting in church, that's a new thing for us in North America. But when you look at the Bible, that was a pretty common issue. When you read the Book of Acts, the government was almost always against the meeting, the whole Book of Acts is like that. And what you see when you read it is that you see different responses. It wasn't always the same. And what I mean is that there were times when the Christians ran away from the government, there were times when they headed for the hills. And there were other times when they didn't. But it wasn't the same. For example, in Acts 7, Stephens stood up to the government. He stood his ground and preached the longest sermon in the book of Acts. The guy was as bold as a lion and they killed him for it, you remember that? They put him to death. Then the next chapter, persecution broke out and the whole church scattered. They fled. It was a totally different response. And when you read the passage, it's not like God condemned one. He approved of both. In Acts chapter 9, Paul allowed himself to be lowered in a basket outside the wall of Damascus in order to flee, in order to run away. And later on in Acts 14, he stood his ground and they stoned him for that. See the same thing happening with Peter. See the same thing happening with other apostles, you see it happening with our Lord. There were times when Jesus walked away from a stoning. There were times when Jesus backed down. He didn't fight every time. But the point is that it wasn't consistent. They were in a tough spot. They were in a difficult situation. So they just did the best they could. And I think it's the same way now in the church, they didn't have a lot of good options. You know, some people have asked us, you know, why are we meeting this way right now? And they've asked us as elders, why are you choosing to meet in a tent? And we've said, because we don't have a lot of good options right now. Don't have a lot of good choices. We're just doing the best we can, making the best decision that we can find. And I think it's the same way for the church at large right now. And we need to remember that and show grace to each other. We need to remember that and show as much love as we can.

And to talk about that this morning, what I want to do is I want us to look at two reasons to stop fighting over a virus. That's our outline for today, that's our outline for this morning, Galatians 5, verses 13-15. We're going to look at two reasons to stop fighting over a virus. And I'm using that title tongue in cheek, using it a little sarcastically because I know this is not about a virus. It's about more than that. But that's

where the problems started, right? That's where a lot of the battle began. We've been fighting over other things before this. That's kind of interesting. There's never been a time when the church hasn't fought about something. It's been said, you can put 10 Christians in a room, you'll get 50 different opinions. We've always had this issue but right now it's started with this. And so let's talk about that, two reasons why the church needs to stop fighting over a virus.

The first one is this is: it's because if you don't, then you'll bite each other. First reason why you need to stop fighting over a virus is because if you don't, then you'll bite each other, which means you'll peck each other to death. You'll nip and snap and gnaw each other until you drive each other crazy. The reason a lot of Christians are going crazy right now is because people keep nipping at them. You guys know those little dogs? You know, they don't, they don't bite you in your face on but when you turn around, they nip your heel. Drives you crazy. That's what this is talking about. If you read in verse 13, it says, "For you were called to freedom brethren, only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word in the statement, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' But if you bite one another." As you read the passage there you can tell Paul is building an argument here, he's making a case for why your works can't save you and here he says, they can't save you for this reason, because they bring out the worst in you. If you try to be saved by the law and try to be a legalist, it will bring the worst out in your flesh because it will cause you to fight. It will cause you to bite and devour each other. Some of you have told me you come from legalistic churches, where it just brought out the worst in people. Not a pleasant environment. And just to explain this, so you know the word 'bite' here, it's the Greek word 'daknó', which means to wound or puncture someone, or to pierce beneath the skin. And the way it's used here, this is a metaphor for your behavior. Now Paul's not talking about literal biting here. It's not a literal idea. It's the attitude. This is, 'I'm better than you', 'No, I'm better than you.' That's the biting that he's talking about. Because you guys know that that has a certain sting in it, it gets under your skin. They say, 'Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.' That's a crock of baloney. I would rather people throw sticks at me than say some of the things they've said to me in my lifetime. Amen? Words hurt.

And this is why Paul contrasts it with the word 'love' earlier in the passage. He contrasts it with loving your neighbor up in verse 14. Because I think we all know you can't do both of these at the same time. You can't love someone while at the same time biting them to death. And saying 'I'm better than you.' It's very unloving thing to say, it's very selfish thing to have that kind of mindset. So Paul says cut it out. If you notice this phrase, "You shall love your neighbor." It's in quotation marks here because it's a quotation from Jesus, comes straight from Him. Because in Matthew 20:2, it says, "But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together and one of them a lawyer, said, "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?" And Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, that's the first and greatest commandment. And the second one is like it, You shall love your neighbour as yourself." That's a very straightforward passage when you hear it there, but it was actually a really difficult question because, according to most scholars, there were 600 and 13 laws in the Old Testament, over 600 of them, and a

lawyer as someone who's trained in that comes to Jesus to trick Him. And he says, 'which one is the greatest?' And He says, 'this one, you should love your neighbor.' Nothing else matters if you forget that. Nothing else matters if you get that wrong. And the reason Paul mentions it here is because, if you remember that Galatians are trying to be saved by the law. They're trying to be saved by their works. And Paul says, 'You can't do that if you don't do this. You can't keep the law if you don't love your neighbor.' Doesn't matter what you wear to church if you hate the person sitting next to you. Doesn't matter what you eat or don't eat or drink or don't drink if you are spreading venom about everybody. The Law's about loving people. Pharisees were very unloving, weren't they? Remember the time, they dragged the woman to Jesus who had been caught in adultery, and they wanted to stone her and they just treated her like she was a dog. You have to love each other in order to fulfill the law.

You know, when Paul uses the word 'love' here, he means you need to be gracious toward each other in order to do this. You need to be kind in the way you treat people and talk to them and interact with them. It also means you have to be humble as well, you have to put your pride down. Because there are times when you have to realize that your opinion is just your opinion. There are times when you have to realize that your preference is just your preference. And that's it. That's all it is. And everybody does need to hear it. It's been said you can build a fence around your house and that's okay, that's fine. But you can't build a fence around someone else's house. It's the same way with this. You guys know what this is like. But there are so many opinions floating around about this right now, right? So many ideas going back and forth about the government and how to handle it. And that's okay, that's fine. Because we live in a free country, we're entitled to have our opinion. But some people are so mad about it. They're so angry about it. Because they want to force it on everybody. You know, I see this a lot in my circles. I see it happen with pastors, when we get on a conference call, we have a zoom meeting and one guy says to the other, he says, "You know, my church is doing this right now. We're handling things this way." And another one chimes in and says, "Why are you doing that? Why are you such a coward." And they fight. Even though nobody asked his opinion, even though nobody wanted to know what he thought. But he did it because he was mad. He did it because he was angry. I'm telling you guys all kinds of stuff about pastors, you didn't know that we do all that stuff, did you? And you see the same thing happening with other people as well, you see it happening with other Christians, because there are some people who want to criticize everything right now. They want to complain about everything the church is doing. Because they're mad. They're angry. And Paul says you can't let that dominate your life. You can't let it take over because it's selfish. It's unloving to your neighbor. When you're angry, angry, angry at your neighbor, it's not loving them, not caring for them. It's not thinking about their good. There needs to be room in your life, for the opinions of others and for the preferences of others. Listen, I know that there are things we would all like to see from the government right now. I know there are changes that we would all like to see happen. And that's for all of us. But that doesn't give you the right to railroad other people who disagree with you. Or to take your frustration out on them and bite them and devour them. We have to be loving about this.

You know, just to show you the danger of this. I did some research on it this week. And in the 16th century, the Puritan Richard Hooker wrote a book entitled 'The laws of ecclesiastical polity', in which he said there are seven tactics of separatism. There are seven tactics of a man that wants to split the church. And I won't go into all of them here for the sake of time, but just to name a couple of them. One is that he loudly proclaims the faults of others. He loudly complains about them, and then he sways the hearts of people to his cause, you can see where that's going there. He gets people to join a side. And then he finds a few Bible verses to go along with it. He finds some passages to justify his position. And then he says that everyone who doesn't follow me is wrong. Everyone who doesn't follow me is in sin. Richard Hooker wrote that in the 16th century, he wrote that 400 years ago, but he could have written it yesterday. You see the same thing happening now. And it all goes back to this, it all goes back to a lack of love for others. Man who splits the church, he's not thinking about anything but himself. We need to make sure that we don't repeat that mistake. And it leads to another point to consider this morning. Another reason why we need to stop fighting over a virus. The first one is because if you don't, then you'll bite each other. You'll nip and peck and gnaw each other to death. I think this is the reason why Christians are struggling so much right now, one of the reasons is because a lot of them are in churches where they're just getting bitten alive, right? People just peck, peck, peck at them over this.

But it brings us to another point to consider, another reason why you need to stop fighting over a virus. And that is because if you don't, then **you'll devour each other**. Second reason why you have to stop fighting over a virus is because if you don't, then you'll devour each other, which means that you'll swallow each other whole. You'll eat each other alive. John MacArthur once said that there's nothing as cannibalistic as Christians. Because we just eat each other alive. Paul kicks it up a notch here, he takes it to another level because we're in the first one. He says if you don't watch out, you're going to snap at each other. Now he says, if you don't watch out, you're gonna destroy the entire thing. You're gonna keep eating each other until nobody's left. There are churches that you can visit or church buildings, I'll say it that way, that you can visit in this town, that the church collapsed because the people inside were cannibals. We have to always watch that in the church. And if you look in verse 13 again, Paul writes in he says, "For you were called to freedom brethren, only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word in this statement, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' But if you bite and devour one another."

You know, as you read that, you can tell there's a progression in this passage there, there's a development to what Paul is saying. Because he starts off reminding you of your freedom. He reminds you of your duty to love one another. Then he says if you forget that, it'll lead to this, you'll bite and devour one another. You're really only doing one of the two things. You're either loving one another or you're biting and devouring. And the word 'devour' here is the Greek word 'katesthió'. It means to swallow whole or to swallow completely. Its compound word from 'kata'- down, and 'esthio'- to eat, it means to eat down. To keep eating until there's nothing left. You're not at the stage of nibbling anymore. You're not at the stage of pecking. Now you're consuming the entire thing. Paul says this is what happens when you stop loving people. You fight until there's nothing left, which is what the rest of the

passage says. Because it says but if you bite and devour one another, take care that you're not consumed by one another. And that's an ironic verse there, if you notice in your Bibles, it's a little sarcastic because, you know, you think about it, it's one thing to be consumed by the world. It's one thing to be consumed by those outside the church, but it's another thing to be consumed by those inside it. It's another thing to be eaten alive by the people of God. And that's what this is talking about. This is like getting eaten by your own family. This is like getting eaten by the ones you love the most. Paul paints a very ugly picture here. It's a very painful one. But the idea is you're turning on each other. The phrase 'one another' at the end of the verse is very helpful because it shows you where this is coming from. It shows you the source of this aggression. Doesn't come from the world, doesn't come from the government, doesn't come from the nation of Canada. Take care that you're not consumed by other Christians. That means the people in this tent.

Paul says, listen up Galatians, you need to pay attention, because if you don't cut this out, this is what will happen. It will destroy you, and it will be all your fault. This will ruin you, and you will be the only ones to blame. You can't blame someone outside when you're eating each other alive. And I would say this is what's happening in the church in Canada right now. I think we're seeing this play out right before our eyes. Because, let's face it, friends, our greatest enemy is not the government right now. Our greatest enemy is not the politicians or the restrictions or the provincial health department, our greatest enemy is ourselves. Our greatest enemy is other Christians, because they're the ones we fight with the most. If you think about the people you argue with the most, you would have to say the vast majority of them are what? They're Christians. And if you would, there are other believers. And you think about the people you go back and forth with, maybe you shout at, most of them are not pagans. And Paul says this is what happens as a result, you'll devour each other, there won't be anything left. You know, we're studying this passage this week. And I have to say, you know, this is a personal thing for me, this hits home. Because I've seen this happen a lot. Most places I've ministered, it's been religious communities. It's been Bible belt-type places, Chilliwack- a lot of churches here, where I grew up in Tennessee, a lot of churches. So this is kind of a personal thing. I remember when James Coates was arrested several months ago, like everybody else, it really surprised me. I mean, I was shocked by that, because we went to the same school, we went to the same seminary. But what surprised me the most was the response of the church, not just our church, I mean churches everywhere. What surprised me was the response of other Christians, because they acted as if they'd never seen anything like that before.

Now, I understand we've never seen a pastor be arrested. And I get that, I get the surprise of that. But it shocked me because while I've never been arrested, and I've never gone to jail, I've had to go to the lawyer because someone was threatening to sue me. I've had to go to an attorney, pay lots of money because someone was threatening to take me to court. And I've had to kick someone out of my house for the same reason. I've had to throw them out of my office because they were making threats. They were making demands. Been shouted out over the phone, been attacked over email, I have 27 pages of single spaced notes over conflict with one single person. And all of that happened in the church. All of that happened in the body of Christ. In other words, the government didn't do that. It wasn't the state that was

acting that way, the church did. And I'm not the only one who could tell you that story. There's hundreds of pastors that could say that, hundreds of leaders. We don't put it on Facebook. We don't brag about it on social media, but it's a very common thing, because this is what Christians do to each other. And if you notice, Paul goes on to say more about this in the passage. He doesn't stop there. Because he says then in verse 19, he says, "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing." You know, as you look at that list there and want you to notice, Paul uses seven words to describe the same sin here, he uses seven words to describe the sin of anger and division in the church. And he does it to say that this is just as evil in the eyes of God as idolatry is. It is just as evil as drunkenness. We don't like to think of it that way. We like to think of it as if it's a much better thing, but Paul says it's not. It's all part of the flesh. And then he says down in verse 22, on the flip side of this, he says, This is what you should do instead. Instead of all that, he says in verse 22, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." Now he gives you nine more words here to say, this is what you should be doing instead of getting angry and fighting, you need to be gentle with people. You need to have self-control. And then he sums it up in verse 25 this way, he says, "If we live by the Spirit, let us walk by the Spirit, let us not become boastful, challenging one another and envying one another." Paul says you need to take the whole 'king of the hill' idea out of the church and stop challenging each other. Stop being so abrasive because it doesn't please God. But you see the connection here. This is in Paul's mind in the entire chapter, this whole issue of fighting in the church. In fact, if you read the rest of the Bible, if you go through the New Testament, one thing that jumps out at you is that a lot of it was written to handle conflict, wasn't it? A lot of it was written to handle problems in the church. It wasn't written to just handle doctrine and theology, and these high and lofty things, a lot of it was written to address people that were fighting. Because the church was fighting. It's nothing new in history, it's nothing new to us. And the entire time you read that, the Lord says, "I want you to stop it. I want you to cut it out." Listen, friends, your Christianity is not seen in how will you argue with each other. And your godliness is not seen in how well you debate. It's seen in how well you make peace. You know, we all like to see those debates right on the news, and those things. It's always interesting to hear people go back and forth. But the point is that the news can do that. Lost people can do that. Christians are called to love each other and make peace.

I've been reading 'Pilgrim's Progress' to my sons at night before they go to bed. And we've been going through the book together. And if you remember, John Bunyan wrote the book from prison. He wrote 'Pilgrim's Progress' after the government had thrown him in jail. So it was a political issue, because he was not a licensed minister. He wasn't ordained through the state. But what you may not know is at the same time that happened, there was another famous preacher named John Owen, who was free. Some of you, if you've read Puritan stuff, you know the name John Owen. But John Owen was on good terms with the government, he was allowed to preach, he was licensed through the state, he was ordained. And yet the interesting thing is that the two of them got along. They remained friends, the entire time Bunyan was in prison. One was complying with the government, one was essentially a political prisoner. And

they didn't fight. They didn't argue. They didn't say, "I'm better than you," "no, I'm better than you." It was a total opposite of that. In fact, some even say that the reason John Bunyan got out of jail was because of John Owen. The reason he got out so soon was because John Owen pulled some strings for him and helped him. But my friends, I think we all need to learn a lesson from that today. I think we all need to go back and take a cue from that spirit. There are plenty of things to fight over in the Christian life, there are plenty of things to battle. But we don't need to battle each other. We don't need to fight and divide over this. This is a hard time for the church in Canada right now. It's a hard time because we've never been through this before. This is new territory for everybody. And the longer it goes, the harder it gets. But we can get through it. If we stick together and love each other. Will you do that today? Let me pray for you that that you would.

Heavenly Father, as we've studied this passage this morning, it's a sobering reminder. Because these are sobering times. These are times when we really have to wrestle with things. And we have to think, and we have to have discernment. Lord, I pray that in all of this, the most important thing for our church and for the church here in Canada would be the spirit of love, and unity. Doctrine is important, truth is important, teaching the word is important. It's absolutely essential for all that we do. But the Word tells us to love each other. Our doctrine tells us to be unified. So Father, we pray for the grace to do that. I pray for my brothers and sisters here at Grace Fellowship that we would grow in these things. We would continue to excel still more we do have a church where the people love each other. Father, we do have a church where people are so gracious and we just pray that that spirit would continue. Pray for the other churches around us. I pray for the other pastors and elders. Pray for the people. They love you, they want to walk with you, or to help them not to fight. Help them to have a spirit of grace. And in all these things we pray that Christ would be glorified. Lord, I pray that out of this mess, and out of the coal and the blackness of all this, a diamond would come forth in the churches. I pray you would bring beauty out of the ashes. We trust you for that, Lord. We know you're a good God and you can do good things. And we pray this all in Jesus name. Amen.