

Four Steps to Fight Systemic Oppression

This Cultural Moment, Pt. 7

Genesis 12:10-20

Genesis 38

Luke 13:10-17

Allan McCullough

Grace Hill Church

June 7, 2020



I. PRAYER

II. THIS CULTURAL MOMENT SERIES

a. **Several years ago, we began a sermon series called “This Cultural Moment.”**

- i. It’s a perpetual series where we pause whatever we’re doing to talk about something going on around our world.
 - We believe that if the world is talking about something, and the Word of God addresses it, then we need to be clear about what the Word of God says.
- ii. **Now, I don’t need to give an introduction to the conversation that is happening in our world right now.**
 - Recent tragic events including the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Brianna Taylor, and George Floyd have appropriately erupted, on a global scale, anger and frustration at systemic racial oppression.
 - And I use that phrase intentionally.
 - Systemic Racial Oppression.
 - Because as I talk to people about how they are processing and grieving what is going on, I’ve been hearing two different kinds of emotions...
 1. Exhaustion
 2. Cynicism
- iii. **And both of these emotions are rooted in a demoralizing realization that there seems to be a SYSTEM of oppression in place...**



- And although there is a lot of talk, a lot of protest, social media campaigns, and a lot of political rhetoric...
- There doesn't seem to be any sort of indication that that SYSTEM of oppression is being dismantled and challenged.
 1. And it's exhausting.
- And even though all the rhetoric is high now...it'll probably calm down after a few weeks...we'll go back to normal life...and that SYSTEM will still be installed into our society...
- And that system impacts and oppresses people EVERY SINGLE DAY.
- But there will be a point where someone will film it again for us all to see...and we'll do this all over again.
- The system is resilient. And many of us could be protecting that system without even knowing it.

b. And so, this morning, I want to talk about how Christians and the Church should identify and fight SYSTEMIC OPPRESSION.

- i. Now if you are interested in learning more about systemic racial oppression in America and how the church is culpable in the construction of those systems...
 - I want to point you to another sermon...
 - **This Cultural Moment, Pt. 2 - Race in America.**
 1. On our website and podcast.



- In that sermon, we went through the history of the church and systemic racial oppression in America and I encourage you to listen to that if you're even skeptical that racial oppression exists in our country.
- ii. But I am going to continue this morning under the premise that racial oppression does exist and that it is systemic...
- Meaning it's embedded into our way of life and our society...
 - And that the church has a part to play in confronting these evil systems.

c. And so, this morning, we are going to read three different stories in Scripture where evil systems of oppression were confronted.

- i. And from these stories, we are going to discover Four Steps to Fight Systemic Oppression.
- Now, let me warn you, I got a lot to say this morning.
 1. This might be longer than normal.
 2. I always post my sermon notes online if you want to go back and get those.

III. STORIES OF SYSTEMIC OPPRESSION

a. Let's begin in Genesis 12:10-20.

- i. Here's the context - Abram and his wife, Sarai, were in the middle of traveling from Ur, where God called Him, to the land of Canaan - the land that God promised to the offspring of Abram, which would be the nation of Israel.
- **Read Genesis 12:10-20.**



- ii. Now, when most people read this story (and this includes most commentaries) they tend to zoom in on Abram's sin.
- They talk about how this story is an example of Abram's lack of faith in God.
 1. They talk about how he didn't trust God in a famine and detoured to Egypt to get food...even though God told Him to go to the land of Canaan (speculative).
 2. They talk about how Abram deceived Pharaoh by telling him that Sarai was his sister and not his wife (which was half true because Sarai was Abram's half-sister to be exact). But it was deceitful, nonetheless.
 - So, we look at this text and the application we pull from it is Abram sinned and should have trusted God.
 1. But here's the question that that exegesis does not answer.
 2. Why does God, then, punish Pharaoh?
 3. Why is God's judgement directed toward Pharaoh and not Abram.
 - And the answer (credit to Dr. Carl Ellis Jr.) is because, Psalm 9:9...
 1. *"The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble."*
 - God punished Pharaoh and not Abram because Pharaoh was perpetuating a system of oppression that forced Abram's hand.
- iii. Dr. Carl Ellis Jr. defines oppression this way: *Oppression is being forced into having nothing but bad options...*Let's get ourselves back in the story.



- Abram, in a desire to protect his family, takes them to Egypt in the midst of a famine for food.
 1. And Abram knew that as a foreigner, if he just caravanned in Egypt, he was going to get pulled over by Egyptian officials.
 2. And He knew that they would take Sarai away into Pharaoh's house.
- And so, here are Abram's options...
 1. We say she's my wife...and I get killed.
 2. We say she's my sister...and I get paid.
 3. Either way, Sarai is going to be abducted by Pharaoh.
- So, Abram, desperate to feed his family, has to travel to an oppressive place, where he's going to have to figure out what he's going to do when he gets pulled over.
 1. Pharaoh presided over a system that gave people starved for food like Abram nothing but bad options.
 2. Oppression.
- iv. Did Abram sin? Did he have a lack of faith?
 - Maybe
 - Could Abram be critiqued here? Maybe
- v. But God's attention and God's judgement was directed upon the system of oppression that forced Abram's hand.

b. One more story - Genesis 38 - the story of Judah and Tamar.

- (Parental Warning)
- i. And let me paraphrase apart of this story as we don't have time to read the whole chapter.



- Judah is one of the sons of Jacob (a direct descendant of Abraham) and represents one of the tribes of Israel...the tribe that Jesus would be born into.
- Now Judah married a Canaanite woman and had three sons – Er, Onan, and Shelah.
 1. Now, Judah arranges a marriage between his oldest son, Er, and a woman named Tamar.
 2. But the text tells us that Er was a wicked person and God killed him.
 3. So, Tamar is now a widow.
 4. And you have to understand that in this culture and during this time, being a widow was a very scary thing...
 5. If you had no one to take care of you, you were almost guaranteed a life of abuse, poverty, and oppression.
- Now, God hates oppression. This is why, in the law of the Old Testament, God commanded his people to practice something called Levirate Marriage.
 1. You can read about this in Deuteronomy 25.
 2. In Levirate Marriage, if a woman's husband dies, the brother of the man who died must marry the widow.
 3. The purpose of this is to protect the widow and to carry on the name and legacy of the man who died.
- So, it would be expected that Judah's next son, Onan, would marry Tamar.
 1. He did marry Tamar, but he was wicked as well.
 2. He refused to have a child with Tamar to carry on the legacy of his older brother and to ensure Tamar's continued safety.



3. So, God killed him.
 - So, it would be expected then for Judah's next son, Shelah, to marry Tamar.
 1. But Judah did not allow this to happen.
 2. And thus puts Tamar in a very difficult position.
 3. She has nothing but bad options before her in order to take care of herself.
- ii. **Let's pick up the story from here -**
Read Genesis 38:12-26.
- Now, this is obviously not a story that provides a good example of the sexual ethics in the Bible.
 1. We could examine this story and we could obviously criticize Judah for his sexual ethics and for his hypocrisy.
 2. We could criticize Tamar. That she didn't trust God. She took matters into her own hands. She prostituted herself! She deceived Judah! How could this be commendable?
 - But what we see in the text, is that God is more concerned in dismantling the system of oppression that Tamar got caught in, in Judah's household.
 1. And the story ends with the shame of Judah and the righteousness of Tamar.
 2. Tamar had nothing but bad options.
 3. And God's attention and judgement was directed upon the system of oppression that forced Tamar's hand.



IV. STEP #1 – AVOID BINARY THINKING

a. When we look at both of these stories, in order to understand God's actions and his heart in these stories, we have to allow for some nuance.

- i. It's very easy to approach these stories using BINARY THINKING.
- BINARY THINKING is defined as putting things in terms of two options that are usually mutually exclusive.
 - And we love to use BINARY THINKING when we're talking about moral issues.
 1. So, an example of Binary Thinking that I often fall into would be...if you root for the Philadelphia Eagles...then you're a terrible person.
 2. What I've done is I've taken two categories...great person and terrible person...and I've used BINARY THINKING to move someone into one of those categories through a simple test.
 3. No nuance allowed.
 4. This one is a struggle for me...
 - How about a serious example.
 1. If you do not vote for Donald Trump than you are not pro-life.
 2. We have two categories - pro-life or not pro-life.
 3. We've applied a simple test.
 4. And we've moved somebody completely into a category.
 5. No nuance allowed.
 6. Just binary thinking.



ii. Now, if we were to apply BINARY THINKING to these stories that we just read in the Bible...it would go something like this...

- Did Abram sin or did Abram not sin?
 1. Abram did not trust God and he lied.
 2. Therefore, Abram sinned.
 3. Point of the passage: we must trust God even when it's hard.
 4. That's not a bad application of the text but our binary thinking has caused us to completely miss other layers of the text, specifically, God's judgement against oppression.
- Did Tamar sin or did Tamar not sin?
 1. Even though Tamar exposed the hypocrisy of Judah, she still sinned sexually and she lied too.
 2. Point of the passage: we must trust God even when it's hard.
 3. That, too, may not be a bad application of the text but again our binary thinking has caused us to miss God's judgement against oppression in the text.
- See, Binary Thinking, silences the oppressed.

iii. And so, this morning, I said I wanted to give all of us FOUR STEPS TO FIGHTING SYSTEMIC OPPRESSION.

- And this is the first step...

b. **Step #1 -Reject Binary Thinking**

- *CAVEAT: I'm not saying we must reject ALL Binary Thinking. I'm not saying truth is relative. But when it comes to most anthropological and political issues, we need to mostly reject binary thinking...*



i. **And here's why...**

- Because Binary Thinking is designed to take complex issues, oversimplify them by creating two distinct sides, and polarize the supporters of each side into two groups that have nothing in common.
- And this is SO IMPORTANT....
 1. When we allow ourselves to get caught up in binary thinking...we actually enable oppressive systems to exist unnoticed.
 2. Oppression thrives in the nuance of issues that binary thinking keeps in the dark.
 3. Oppression thrives because binary thinking shuts down the conversation.

ii. **Let me give you some examples...**

- The phrase BLACK LIVES MATTER.
 1. (now I am talking about the phrase and not the organization).
 2. The phrase is a cry for justice towards the systemic oppression that blacks have experienced in this country.
 3. The phrase is not "black lives matter more."
 4. But many people respond to this cry with the comeback of "ALL LIVES MATTER."
 5. Now, that's a true statement. No one disagrees with that.
 6. But the statement is designed to be a comeback utilizing binary thinking.
 7. Your creating two categories now...
 8. Those who say black lives matter are the racist ones because they only care about black lives and the ones who say "all lives matter" are not the racist ones.



9. That's what that comeback is designed to communicate.
 10. Let's be honest.
 11. And it oversimplifies the issue to the point where the cries and stories of injustice and oppression are kept in the dark.
- What about church ministry philosophy...
 1. There are many evangelicals who would say that churches should not concern themselves with things like social justice, racial reconciliation, and fighting oppression...because those things distract from the Gospel.
 2. That churches should only concern themselves with preaching the gospel...and not doing the work of doing justice.
 3. This is binary thinking.
 4. The faithful churches are the ones who only preach the gospel and if you're a church that does anything else in addition to that, you are an unfaithful church that has been influenced by godless ideologies...
 5. And they'll try and sound informed by tossing out phrases like critical race theory and intersectionality.
 6. But all that's happening is they're distracting from the real issue where they now have an excuse not do the introspective work of seeing where oppression might exist even within its own walls.
 7. See, binary thinking is designed to soothe our conscience from the possibility that we might be perpetuating oppressive systems.



- Capitalism.
 1. In our country, and amongst most conservative Christians, to critique capitalism and point out where capitalism enables oppression...will get you labeled a Marxist and a Communist.
 2. Binary Thinking.
 3. You're either a full-blown capitalist blind to its problems or you're a full-blown Marxist.
 4. It doesn't work that way.
 5. And the oversimplification allows the oppression that capitalism enables to go unnoticed and unchallenged.
 6. I'm all for capitalism. But there is no economic system without its problems and our capitalist system needs to be scrutinized for the ways it allows oppression.
- I could go on and on...
 1. Christians must vote republican.
 2. Conservatives are racists.
 3. White privilege is a myth.
 4. All undocumented immigrants are criminals.
 5. Trump is to blame for COVID.
 6. Black people hate the police.
 7. The police hate black people.
 8. America is a Christian nation.
 9. America is a secular nation.
 10. What about the judges Trump puts on the bench.
 11. If you have a biblical sexual ethic than you hate the LGBTQ community.
 12. Talking about race only divides people.



- All binary thinking. All destructive. It exists on both sides of the political divide. And it all allows oppressive systems to flourish.
- iii. **And so, the first thing that we must do as the church and as people who love the truth, is we must reject this kind of thinking.**
- We must have real conversation with people.
 - Truly understand the issues.
 - Not get caught up in all the hype.
- iv. **And let me tell you, if you begin to reject Binary Thinking on these kinds of issues, you will be labeled and criticized.**
- People in the church will criticize you. Your friends. Your neighbors. Your family. You'll get labeled all kinds of things.
 - Because our society is drunk on Binary Thinking.
 - We don't know how to think any differently.
 - We don't know how NOT to label people.
- v. **And I do believe that binary thinking has not allowed our nation to have a true conversation about the black experience in America.**
- Because, we're shoved to our sides and yelling at each other, accusing each other of who's wrong.
 - And just like these two stories we read in Scripture, what God cares about is the oppressed.
- vi. **Now, step one is to reject binary thinking.**
- If we do that, we are ready to move on to step 2...



V. **STEP #2 - SCRUTINIZE OUR NORMAL**

a. Is it possible - that once we free ourselves of the over-simplification of binary thinking, and we begin to discover the nuance of all these issues - that we'll discover how our normal way of thinking and our normal way of life actually perpetuate oppressive systems?

- i. When we think about the two stories that we have read so far...obviously Pharaoh's normal way of life and Judah's normal way of life directly fueled an oppressive systems.
 - Especially toward women.
- ii. But allow me to read our third story this morning that might provide an example of how oppressive systems could even exist within the walls of the church.

b. **Read Luke 13:10-17**

- i. Looking at this text, can we see how Binary Thinking allowed a system of oppression to go unnoticed?
 - We have a woman who has been suffering for eighteen years.
 - And yet, the laws of the Jews had expanded so much, gotten so strict, and so removed from their original purpose and intent...that people were literally appalled, not amazed, when Jesus healed her.
 1. You either follow the law or you don't follow the law.
 2. It doesn't matter if a woman is suffering.



- Do you see how the Binary Thinking even made it so that the woman was completely unnoticed?
 1. It was Jesus who saw her and acted on her behalf.
 2. Because God is always seeking to dismantle oppressive systems.
 3. And the law had become an oppressive system...it's a major theme of the life and ministry of Jesus.

c. Now, if these people in this synagogue would have freed their minds from the slavery of binary thinking...they would have been able to Scrutinize their Normal.

- i. They would have the permission in their own minds to ask if the way they've been applying the law is the way God intended or not.
 - Their eyes would be opened to Scriptures like Micah 6:6-8...
 1. *6 "With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?
7 Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"
8 He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"*



- If that synagogue would have had the humility to scrutinize if their interpretation of the law was in line with God's heart...their eyes would have been opened to how their version of religion was actually perpetuating oppression of people like this woman.
1. And Jesus was there to rebuke it.

d. And we need to have the humility to scrutinize our normal as well...our normal way of thinking and living...

- i. We should scrutinize our passionately held political views...on both sides of the aisle...
 - And realize that binary thinking has protected me from admitting and truly seeing the underbelly of those views...
- ii. We should scrutinize our view of church and what we hope we get out of church...
 - And realize that consumer-driven, entertainment-driven church actually forces the church to segregate based on preferences instead of unify based on our Savior.
 - And when the church is segregated, we don't have the relationship to understand each other, love each other, confront and challenge each other...
 - And that enables oppression...
- iii. We should scrutinize our view of the black experience in America...
 - And listen instead of talk.
 - Validate instead of explain.
 - Allow our perspective to be scrutinized.



iv. We should scrutinize our theology...

- Knowing that theology is always seen through a cultural lens.
 1. God's Word is trans-cultural but theology – the interpretation of God's Word – always goes through a cultural filter first.
 2. And that makes many white theologians nervous...because they believe that their theological writings are free from cultural influence.
 3. Why is it that many white, reformed theologians' critique most black church theology and practice as heretical liberation theology and overly emotional?
 4. They are reading God's Word from a different life experience.
 5. Think about it...many of the Puritans that we quote and praise today from early in our country's history were slave owners!
 6. Believe me...oppressors and the oppressed will read the Bible differently!
- And this skepticism of black theology, black scholars, and black ecclesiology, I think, has perpetuated a subtle system of racial oppression in the church.
 1. I never saw God's heart for the oppressed in Genesis 12 until my black seminary professor (Dr. Carl Ellis Jr.) helped me to see it.

e. We need to scrutinize our deep assumptions about people of color as well...and not allow our binary thinking to stop us...



- i. A few years ago, I took my two kids out to playground here in Herndon.
- It was a playground that we had to drive to.
 - We parked the van, walked down to the playground, and played for about an hour...
 - It was time for us to leave.
 - So, I got Leland and Christy and began to walk back up to the parking lot and I noticed that there were about 6, abnormally muscular, men standing next to my van.
 1. (I knew they were muscular because a few of them had no shirts on.)
 - And they were standing in a circle, talking, and laughing.
 - Now, I immediately got nervous.
 1. These men weren't acting threatening at all.
 2. Strangers generally don't make me nervous.
 3. Why was I nervous?
 4. I get if you were a woman, a group of men with their shirts off standing next to your van, would make you nervous...
 - But I remember realizing in that moment... I think I'm nervous because these men are black.
 1. I have never, in my life, had an uncomfortable encounter with a black man.
 2. Why would this make me nervous?
 3. Something was learned inside of me that needed to be scrutinized.
 - So, I walked up to the van, said hi to all the guys, put my kids in the van...



1. And I noticed one of the guys pulling football pads out of their trunk...
 2. So, I asked what they were doing and learned they were a semi-pro football team based in the area about to have a practice on the field.
 3. (No wonder they were huge!)
- And I sat out there with those guys for about 15 extra minutes talking football, laughing, cracking jokes...
 1. I'm really glad in that moment, I scrutinized my normal...because those were some great guys...
 2. And there was something inside of me that I could have decided to give into...
 3. And that would have perpetuated, I believe, the system of oppression that says it's normal to be skeptical of blacks.
 - That wasn't just a moment of scrutiny for me...it was a moment of repentance.
- ii. **Let's avoid Binary Thinking...let's Scrutinize our normal..**
 - And when we are willing to take these first two steps...we're in a perfect spot for step #3.

VI. STEP #3 - BE A STUDENT

a. This is the moment to start educating yourself!

- i. Because, now, we have eliminated the barriers in our hearts and in our heads that prevent education!
 - Education will do no good if we're caught in binary thinking and we refuse to scrutinize our normal way of life!



- We can read books, listen to podcasts, and even talk to our neighbors...but if we're not willing to take the first two steps...then all that education will go in one ear and out the other.
- ii. **It's after we've taken the first two steps that I encourage you to go read the post that my brother, Justin Winthers, posted on Facebook last week.**
- Where he recounted his experience of watching his dad get arrested because he was a black man driving too nice of a car...or being told by investors that he would never get investment in his multi-million dollar company because he's black...or having his daughter call him in tears asking him to stay home because she's scared for his safety as a black man.
 1. That post is an education.
 2. But are we willing to hear it? To validate it.
 3. To not brush it off as an unfortunate and isolated experience.
 4. The best education you can get is simply through listening to your black brothers and sisters.
- iii. **This is the moment now to grab some books and begin to read...**
- I've compiled just a small list of books to begin to read...gracehillchurch.com/read.
 - Books like:
 1. "The Warmth of Other Suns" by Isabella Wilkerson.
 2. "The Myth of Equality" by Ken Wytsma
 3. "Divided by Faith" by by Michael Emerson and Christian Smith.



4. The Color of Compromise by Jemar Tisby
 5. Be the Bridge by Latasha Morrison
 6. Amongst many others...
- iv. We must educate ourselves and we must listen to the stories of our minority brothers and sisters so we can no longer be ignorant of the systems of oppression around us.
- b. And now that we have taken these first three steps...**
- Reflecting Binary Thinking
 - Scrutinizing our Normal
 - Educating Ourselves
- i. We are now in a place where we can clearly and humbly see the systems of oppression that exist around us.
- And now we're ready for step #4.

VII. STEP #4 - FIGHT THE BATTLE KNOWING THE WAR IS WON.

- a. In all three stories that we read this morning, not only do we see a theme of oppression, but we also see a theme of God bringing about restoration.**
- In Genesis 12 – with Abram and Sarai – God promised to them that from their offspring would come a Messiah who would bring about peace and redemption to all nations....and kept his promise through delivering them from oppression.



- In Genesis 38, Judah was one of those offspring of Abram and the son that he had with Tamar would be in the direct line of that Messiah who would make all things new....God continued to keep his promise through delivering Tamar from oppression.
 - In Luke 13, the Messiah Himself, Jesus, takes notice of a woman who had been suffering for eighteen years and he gives all of us a taste of what he is going to do on a cosmic scale as he delivers this woman from oppression.
 - All three of these utilize the deliverance of the oppressed from their oppressors to remind us that God will keep his promise to make all things new.
- i. **And that day at the Synagogue, everyone was amazed when Jesus healed this woman...**
- But they hadn't quite realized, yet, that it wasn't just this woman who needed to be set free...
 1. But they were the ones who needed deliverance. They were the ones who needed healing. They were the ones who needed to be rescued.
 - And that Jesus would leave that synagogue and make his way down to Jerusalem, down the road of Calvary, with joy set before Him, to willingly hand his body over to those who would oppress him, beat him, spit upon him, strip Him naked, mock him, and lynch him in front of the crowds...
 1. And as Jesus was having his breath snuffed out of him for a crime that he did not commit...



2. God was accepting the suffering and death of Jesus as a just payment for the sins of all the people who would trust in Him.
- ii. **Jesus went to the cross to deliver you and me from the oppression of sin against God.**
 - Fundamental to the mission of Jesus is the war against oppression.
 - And at the cross, Jesus won the war.
 1. And when Christ returns, he will set free all of his people from the sin and oppression of this world.
 2. And he will send to judgement all who continue to perpetuate it without repentance.
 - iii. **And fundamental to Gospel ministry is the proclamation of what Christ did on the cross and the application of the Gospel through the active work of fighting oppression.**
 - That's what God did in the Old Testament. That's what Jesus did in the Gospels!
 - The church looks most like Jesus when the Gospel is boldly proclaimed from its lips while it actively fights for the oppressed.
 - And so, to fight the battle against systemic oppression is part of the mission of the church.
 - If we proclaim the Gospel, but do not fight for the oppressed...THIS IS IMPORTANT...then we do not represent the God of the Bible.



- iv. **And we need to fight that battle knowing that the war has been won.**
 - That in the end, Jesus will end all oppression and establish his Kingdom.
 1. I mean, if you're one of those people who feel tired, cynical...
 2. Your expectation is that this will out fizzle out in a few weeks until the next video comes out.
 3. And it's hard to take all the hype seriously...
 4. Know this morning, that the war is won.
 5. You will taste life without the bitterness of systemic oppression all around.
 6. But even though the war is one, we're still engaged in the battle.
 - And the Gospel ought to embolden us to get into the battle.

b. So, how? How do we fight the battle against oppression after we've taken the first three steps?

- This is a question that has A LOT of answers to it and I will not be able to give an exhaustive answer...but let me encourage us to engage the battle in three ways beyond the first three steps I've already outlined...
- i. **First, know that as a follower of Christ, if oppression exists in your community, then it is your problem.**
 - Our God moves towards the oppressed and those called by his name move towards them as well.



- So, if you have been feeling like this whole topic of racial oppression doesn't involve you.
 1. If you belong to God, if your united to Jesus, if you belong in God's family.
 2. It involves you.
 3. Because God's family fights for the oppressed.
 4. God's family see's the suffering woman walk into the Synagogue when everyone else is doesn't even noticed and moves towards her.
 - So, work through the first three steps and get involved for the long run.
 1. The church should be the leader in this battle.
- ii. **Second, we should refuse to vote for politicians - at every level from the Town Council here in Herndon all the way up to the President of the United States - who utilize Binary Thinking to generate support and attack their opponents.**
- Christians are people who value truth and we should be the last people to be swept up into political rhetoric designed to distract from the real issues and generate hype.
 1. We should demand leaders in our country who are willing to engage in the nuance of all the issues.
 2. Because remember, binary thinking enables oppression by allowing it to continue unnoticed.
 - And I know such politicians may not exist right now.



1. But if the entire church said 'enough is enough' with that garbage, we might actually see some change in that area.
 2. Don't vote for a candidate that will perpetuate oppression through binary thinking.
 3. And it exists on both sides.
- iii. **Lastly, and most importantly, we need to all grow some gospel thick skin.**
- If you trust in Jesus, he has redeemed you.
 1. And we're not perfect yet.
 2. But he promises to complete the work that he is doing in us.
 - If you trust in Jesus, you are a part of the family of God.
 1. And nothing that ANYONE says can take that away from you.
 - And so, Gospel Thick Skin allows to do two things, that can be difficult...
 - It allows us to confess our sin, admit where we're wrong, and seek help.
 1. If you begin to take the steps that I've outlined today, you might discover areas of needed repentance.
 2. That's okay! Repent. Trust in the cross. There is forgiveness for you and joy unspeakable when you begin to do the work that God has called you to fight for the oppressed.
 - The other thing Gospel Thick Skin allows you to do is to confront someone else who might be perpetuating systemic oppression.
 1. In blatant ways, subtle ways or ignorant ways.



2. But if we're going to engage in the battle, we cannot witness people perpetuating oppression without acting upon it.
 3. And you might get labeled a lot of things for sticking out neck for the oppressed.
 4. And you might get hurt.
- But the Gospel reminds us, that we belong to God and even though we might suffer for the advancement of the gospel and fighting for the oppressed, He has won the war.
 1. To echo what Paul said in Philippians 1:21 - **"²¹ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."**
 - The Gospel enables us to get into this battle.

VIII. PRAY

- And right now, what I want to do is end our time praying that God would use our church to fight this battle with the gospel confidence that He has won the war.

