

## SETTING THE CAPTIVES FREE

It seems unbelievable that human slavery is still practiced in our world. Most of us believe that it ended with Wilberforce in England and with the civil war in America. Sadly, nothing could be farther from the truth.

Many knowledgeable estimates indicate that there are more slaves now than at any time in the history of the world. And the saddest part is that most of them are women and children.

We also tend to think, that if slavery exists, it exists in third world countries. We cannot conceive of that happening here. But that assumption is wrong.

Recently a lady in Calgary was arrested for having two slaves. The front was a beauty parlor. But reality is that two young ladies, from a foreign country were required to prostitute themselves. They were neither paid, nor free to leave.

Some estimates suggest that there are over one hundred thousand slaves in the United States and Canada is not exempt. They work, without compensation in brothels, sweat shops and other demeaning places.

George Bush in addressing the United Nations in 2003 stated that one of the greatest humanitarian crises was the almost one million people each year that are bought and sold or forced across the world's borders. He went on to say, "the trade in human beings for any purpose must not be allowed to thrive in our times." Unfortunately very little has changed.

Slavery has become the third largest money maker on the planet. Drug trafficking is number one followed by the sale of illegal arms. Some estimate that the selling of human slaves is a 32 billion dollar business.

But it's not about numbers or statistics. It's about people - people who have been made in the image of God. It's about debilitating poverty that causes parents to sell their daughters into prostitution, to secure funds to feed the rest of the family.

It's about girls, under twelve, servicing a dozen men a night. It's about physical pain, it's about excruciating loneliness, it's about hopelessness and despair.

It's about young women from Russia, the Ukraine, Asia and scores of other countries who are lured to leave home for the promise of a good job, only to be forced into prostitution.

It's about young children, working 16 hours a day in sweatshops making clothes that sometimes we unknowingly wear. It's about children laboring in rock quarries or carrying a rifle or a machete to fight in a war.

All in all, for perhaps 100,000,000 slaves life is full of pain and utter hopelessness.

But there is hope. We can make a difference. Many Christian groups are committed to purchasing their freedom and giving them a future.

I have recently stepped down from pastoring a church that I led for over thirty years. I am 75 years old and I want to make a difference in whatever time is left for me on this earth.

Much of my future involvement will be raising funds to care for the orphan, the widow and setting some slaves free. Over the years, in our church, we have bought many young girls from the brothels of Cambodia and other countries. They have been placed in safe homes, fed, educated and given a future. They will become nurses and doctors and teachers.

Often, when we are faced with such overwhelming need, we tend to think that the little we could do is like trying to empty the ocean with a teacup. But because we cannot do everything is no reason not to do something.

We have all heard the story of the young boy throwing the stranded star fish back into the ocean. A man passing by commented that he was not making much difference. But the boy replied that he was making a difference for those that reentered the water.

So, please do what you can to make a difference and set the captives free.

When the question was asked, "what does the LORD require of you?"- the answer was "to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God". ( Micah 5:8)

Rev. Denzel Fenn