

The Bible and Slavery

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[0 : 0 0] Father, sometimes your word frightens us, and just as sometimes you frighten us, we worry, Father, that if we get really close to you, if we get really close to Jesus, that we will have to believe terrible things, or that you will make us do terrible things, or that you will just diminish our life in some way.

And, Father, we confess that often it's even uncomfortable for us just to bring this to you in prayer. But, Father, we thank you so much that you know our hearts, that you know what really goes on inside of us. You see our fears, our hesitations, our doubts. You see our glories and our strengths. You see everything there is to see about us, and still you love us, and still you desire to make your home within us and fit us for heaven.

Father, we ask that you make the gospel very precious to us, more and more precious to our hearts, and bring your word home deeply into our hearts, that we might live lives that bring you glory. And this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[3 : 0 5] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. slavery. But in fact, it's rarely at its best. That when it does talk about slavery, what it does is it legitimizes slavery, it empowers slavery, in fact, weaponizes slavery for the masters.

And we now know that slavery is a terrible, terrible evil. So how on earth could you possibly take seriously a book that empowers and energizes slavery? And we all know that if it is empowering and energizing slavery, it's also empowering and energizing racism.

So how on earth could any reasonable person in 2020 believe a book like this that does such a horrible thing? And that would just be what everybody knows. Everybody knows it. Like they wouldn't even have to argue it. They wouldn't even know it. And then in fact, if one of your friends heard the text that we're looking at today, and we're going to start reading at Colossians chapter 3, verse 22, and you read, so you just heard that. That's what's going on in people's minds, that slavery is encouraged. It's weaponized, in fact, in the Bible. And you say, no, no, no, no, it's not weaponized.

And then they say, whoa, whoa, whoa, let's read Colossians chapter 3, verses 22 and following. And here's what it says. And I'm not going to use the word bond servants. I'm going to use the word slaves, which is a valid translation. Slaves, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye sees a service as people pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, work hardly as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ, for the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality. Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a master in heaven. And after this, your non-Christian or you're just your secular or your spiritual friend would just go, there you go, like the mic drop.

Take that. What are you going to say? And we would probably go, um, we'd probably go, um. So that's one of the reasons that we need to look at this text. For many people, it is a defeater of the Christian faith. And for some of us, maybe many of us who are Christians, it's an inconvenient thing that we don't really like thinking about. Uh, you know, it might be one of those things that, uh, in church, if you just follow the lectionary readings, it never comes up. Uh, but if you are a Christian, a new Christian, or maybe a longtime Christian, you finally decide to read the Bible from cover to cover and you will come across texts like this. So what do we do? Well, let's look, uh, Andrew, if you could, let's look at verse, uh, 22 first. And it actually, uh, it sounds like a weird place to begin, but there's something at the end of verse 22 that begins to help us to understand what's going on. Cause in fact, I'd like to say, and I think the Bible teaches that only the biblical gospel makes

slavery morally unthinkable. That's the big idea for today. Only the biblical gospel makes slavery morally unthinkable. And I actually think this text is part of that message of making slavery morally unthinkable. You go, what, what? How do you get that? Well, let's look.

[6 : 43] Let's look at the, at verse 22. Just look at the last little bit of it. You know, not by way of eye service as people pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Other translations will have in the fear of the Lord. Now this begins to be in a very important clue to what's going on here.

Some of you have heard the story that I've shared before over the years of, uh, you know, between the age I became, I came to faith in, uh, when I was 16 and probably between the ages of 16 and 26, 27, 28, I had quite a few times where I had crises of faith and I almost gave up on the Christian faith for a variety of reasons. Uh, and one of the very hard times in my Christian faith was, I think it was in my third year of university. Um, and in my third year of university for the first time in my life, I've shared this. Some of you have heard it before. I came into contact with a person who seemed to really know what they were talking about, who basically, who maintained very clearly that Jesus never taught that he was God. The word Trinity is never in the Bible. And the, the, the idea of the Trinity is not taught at all. There's only one God. It's not Jesus. He's just a prophet. And I, of course, started to respond that she was wrong and she challenged me. She gave me all these Bible verses. And now, you know, maybe one of the things that's going to happen to us in heaven is that in heaven, God will replay our lives so we can actually remember what went on. And some of it will be things we laugh about. Some of the things will be things that we are really glad Jesus died for us because of the terrible things we did or thought. But it might very well be if that happened, I'd go back in time and there's like 50 times I heard that the word Trinity was never in the Bible, but I can't remember it. I only memory is that the first time I ever heard it was from this woman. I didn't believe her. I thought, well, she's not a Christian. What does she know about it? And I was shocked to discover that she was right, that the word Trinity wasn't in the Bible. And when I went to try to show her from the Bible, that the Bible, in fact, does treat the divinity of Jesus, that Jesus did claim to be God and that, you know, that there's three persons, one God. And when I started going for looking for verses, I didn't find what I wanted. In fact, I was massively disappointed in the text that I saw. And I had a very hard time for four weeks, six weeks, eight weeks as I struggled through it. And I now know that the problem that I had was that I was looking for the wrong thing, that I was expecting something like the Athanasian Creed to be in the Bible, that I could just turn in the Bible and I'd find something like the Athanasian Creed or the Nicene Creed or the Apostles Creed. And I could show her here, you know, here it is. Here's the Trinity and here's the divinity of Jesus. And I was expecting something very obvious and dramatic like that. And it wasn't there. It isn't there. If you go looking for something like that, it's not in the Bible. But what I began to understand and it's become more and more clear over time is that the doctrine of the Trinity and the deity of Jesus is part of the deep structure of the Bible. It's so present everywhere in the Bible. It's the way the whole Bible is structured and organized. It's so present that you, in a sense, don't see it. An analogy would be this. You come from a place you don't know what forests are, and you go into this place and all you see is tree after tree after tree. And after you've been in for an hour, now there's a tree, there's lots of trees, there's trees all around us. And then you turn to the person and say, where's the forest? You go, well, we're in the forest. Well, they say, no, no, all I see is trees. I don't see the forest. No, no, no, you're in the forest. You're surrounded by trees. You're in the forest. And then you go, oh, like the forest. Oh, and it's the same thing. Why am I saying all of this? If you are familiar with the Old Testament, what our Jewish friends call the Tanakh and what we Christians call the Old Testament, if you're familiar with it, you will see constantly in the Old Testament, the fear of the Lord. It's one of the main big teachings of the entire Old Testament. And every time it mentions the fear of the Lord, it's talking about God. You are to fear Yahweh. You are to fear the Lord. And now here in verse 22, you see the fear of the Lord, but it's connected to Jesus. This constant Old Testament theme of describing people's response to Yahweh is applied to Jesus. In fact, I could almost every single Sunday, if I wanted, I would bore you to tears, but almost every Sunday, I could probably show you how the text talks about the Trinity or about the divinity of Jesus. It's so present. It is like going into a forest and saying, where's the forest when all you see is trees? And I want to suggest that the exact same thing happens with slavery. What do we want? We want there to go and to be something like a group of woke political people, progressive Christians, some type of manifesto. And we expect there should be something like a manifesto. And we just turn in the Bible and we say, well, here's the anti-slavery manifesto.

And you can just point at it and you can see very clearly that the Bible has this nice anti-slavery manifesto. You have nothing to fear and, you know, raise up and throw off the shackles. That's what we expect to see when we see it. But I want to suggest that, in fact, the fundamental teaching of human beings being made in the image of God and having an integrity and a nobility based on the fact that they are human and created by God, sustained by God, and that God has created human beings for freedom is part of the deep structure of the entire Bible.

[12 : 32] It is part of the deep. Every week you could look and see how the Bible is upholding the notion of human dignity and human freedom, that we have been made for freedom and that we have done things to undermine freedom. And it's part of the deep structure of the Bible. And it's so much a part of the Bible that when you go looking for it, it is like going in and only seeing trees and not realizing that you're in a forest because we're looking for the wrong thing. So, I mean, just in Genesis chapter one, it's taught at the very, very beginning of the Bible that every human being is made in the image of God, that a human being has a dignity and a nobility and an integrity that is not bestowed by the state.

One of the deep problems in this country is that, in fact, the Bible is countercultural and offensive to our culture because we believe in Canada, all of the knowledge elites of our country and cultural elites believe that the dignity of being a person is a right bestowed by the state, completely opposed to the Bible. It is the same mindset that legitimizes slavery, is part of the basic cultural discourse of Canada. And the Bible teaches that human beings have a dignity and integrity given by God because we are image bearers of God that can only be recognized by the state, but is not granted by the state or bestowed by the state. And it is part of Genesis one, it is part of Genesis two, and it is all the way through the Bible. So how does it show itself here in this particular text? So over the last,

I didn't do it last week because we talked about husbands and wives. I'm going to read that text again in a moment. If you're curious about what I had to say, you can look at last week's sermon. I'm not going to repeat myself. But from Colossians chapter 2 verse 16 to chapter 3 verse 17, I spent five weeks sharing how the gospel causes you to grow. And I gave the first bit in chapter 2 about how you have to make that decision about whether or not God grows you or you're going to grow yourself.

And some of you remember that I almost every single week I use the analogy about how we are cut roses. And God doesn't just sort of give a rose life. His project is to make us into something like a giant sequoia, which is the biggest tree that exists on the planet. And one of the reasons, one of the ways I tried to show that is in Colossians chapter 3 verse 4. You won't be able to see it on the screen. The verses after this, you'll be able to see. But in chapter 3 verse 4, it says, when Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. So there's this wonderful truth that, you know, on this side of it, when you die or when Jesus comes back, you might be severely disabled. You might be very, very, very elderly and very, very frail and point to death.

You might be very, very sick, riddled with cancer. But the moment that Jesus returns, or the moment that you are in Christ and you die and you pass, in a sense, through death, the veil of death, you see Jesus. And when you see Jesus, you will be like him. And he isn't just made you into a rose, he's made you into something like a giant sequoia. You will be like Jesus. You will be a creature of glory. And that's the end of the story if you are in Christ. Now, why is this very significant as we get to the part about slavery? Well, it is because, you see, Colossians proves that slaves could become Christians and, in fact, needed to become Christians.

[16 : 21] If you go back and you look at the beginning and the end, Epaphroditus. Epaphroditus was a slave. How do we know it was a slave name? In fact, it's a very interesting thing. He's a person who obviously wasn't raised in a good Jewish home or a Christian home because his name means he was dedicated to the goddess Aphrodite. And yet, even though somewhere along the lines, not told, he became a Christian. And he had a slave name. He's a Christian. He's a slave. Onesimus, who's going to be mentioned in the next chapter, is a slave. In fact, the book of Philemon, which probably accompanied this book, is a letter by Paul where he urges Philemon, the slave owner of Onesimus. And now both Onesimus and Philemon have become Christians. And Paul urges Philemon to free Onesimus. But we know that slaves were Christians. So what does that mean? In the Roman world, to be a slave is not to be a person. You have lost your dignity as a person, as a slave. And yet, this says to Onesimus in Epaphroditus, if Philemon had sinned and refused to free Onesimus,

Onesimus knows that one day he will be like Jesus. Outside the walls of the church, outside of the walls of the place where they would gather and were inside, he is not a slave. He is a brother. And if they were women slaves, they were sisters. Inside the walls of the church, they are brothers and sisters. In the world, they are slaves. They are non-persons. But they know that the world does not define who they are or what their destiny is, what the end of the story is for them. For them, the end of the story is they will be like Jesus, creatures of glory. That is the end of their story. And if you're in favor of slavery, it gets worse. If you understand what the Bible's teaching, it only gets better. Go down to chapter 3, verse 17. And you know, when I was talking about about chapter 17 properly, and when we were talking about husbands and wives, verse 17 is one of these Janus texts. It both summarizes the stuff that's come before, and it also, in a sense, introducing what follows. So when you read chapter 3, verse 17, and Paul is now going to go into his household code, he's going to talk to husband, wives, husbands, children, parents, slaves, slave owners. What you have to understand is that verse 17 is Jesus giving his people their marching orders. Jesus giving his people their marching orders. And so what does it say in verse 17? And whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. [19:19] The wife, that is her marching orders. The husband, that is his marching orders. The child, that is the child's marching orders. The parents, that are their marching orders. The slave, that is the slave's marching orders.

The slave has a way to do everything in the name of Jesus to illuminate the gospel and bring glory to God. Look what happens next. Note in verse 18, wives, submit to your husbands. But, and we, I'm not going to, we talked about that last week, so I'm not going to go into it again. But note, note thing which I didn't bring out very much last week because I was going to bring it out this week. It says, wives, submit to your husbands. And what does it say? As is fitting in the Lord. As is fitting. It fits. Okay? A broad word means in a second. Don't jump down to verse 20. Children, obey your parents in everything. Here's the phrase, for this pleases the Lord. We're going to go now, when we start reading in a moment, the passage is about slaves. You don't see anything about it being fitting or pleasing the Lord. Why is that? Because it is part of the order of creation. Before the fall, God created human beings as male and female, and he created them with the possibility and the intention that those who are called to marriage would enter into marriage. That it's actually part of the order of creation from a Christian point of view. And we all know that there is, of course, a great problem that people can be married and desire to have children and not be able to have children. And for many, many people, that's a great sadness to them that they are married and cannot physically have children. But we understand that parents having children is natural. It's part of the order of creation. We understand that there's something sad that we are to weep over if that's not able to happen. But when it comes to the slaves, it doesn't say that it's part of the order of creation. It doesn't say it's fitting. It doesn't say it's right. It doesn't say it's pleasing the Lord. You see how the entire institution of slavery has been decoupled, decommissioned. It's not part of the order of the gods, as it is in the pagan religions, as it is in many of the religions of the East, where to be a Dalit in Hinduism, the lowest order is something that you deserve. It's something that you've brought about by karma. It's not that slavery is not part of the natural order. It's not right, but it is something that has to deal with, be dealt with. In the Roman world, one third of the population of the Roman Empire were slaves. And in fact, at the time of the writing of this, it was unimaginable to have an economy, a world without slaves. It would be unimaginable. And yet in a world where slavery was unimaginable, the Bible doesn't connect it to creation. It doesn't say that it's pleasing and it doesn't say it's fitting. Well, what does it say? And George, you might say, George, but it still seems as if it's weaponizing what slave masters can do. That you look at it, George, and I mean, that's, you've said some interesting stuff, but it looks as if it's weaponizing the power of the masters. It is doing the exact opposite to the masters. And I'm going to show it to you. Look at verse 22. Slaves, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye service as people pleasers, but with sincerity of heart would be single-mindedness is basically a more literal way to put it. But what is the single-mindedness is the fear of the Lord. Now, here's the thing. [23:20] They're earthly masters. And in fact, literally, they're masters of the flesh, fleshly masters. Now, this is definitely to knock slave masters down, not just one or two levels, but in a very profound ways. In fact, the Greek word is sarx, which we know of as the word flesh. And it tends to

have two primary meanings in the New Testament. It either means that human nature and the human part of us that is in complete and utter rebellion against God. And the other part is that as a result of the fall, the frailty and the fragility and the temporiness of earthly life. So how in a world where the powerful determine everything, which is still the world that we are in today, largely, not perfectly because there's a Christian memory still operating within our culture, but where the powerful can be the powerful and they get their way. In a world like that, the slave masters are called flesh masters, masters of the flesh, which definitely carries an odor of sin and rebellion against God and the order, the idea of fragility and weakness. It comes because you're in a world separate from God.

And those are how the slaves are to understand their masters, but they are still to obey them. I'll get to that in a moment. But can you see how in a very, very powerful way, it doesn't connect it. Not only does it not connect it to creation, it connects it to the fall with the word earthly or fleshly. And then it continues on in verse 23. Now, remember, the emphasis is on fearing the Lord, the fear of the Lord, the singleness of mind is for the Lord. Why? Because in verse 17, you're to do everything in word or deed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God, the Father through him. Is a slave to give thanks to be a slave? No. Is he or she to give thanks and praise because he is oppressed and powerless? No. Why is he to give thanks and praise? He is to give thanks and praise because he has his mind set on Christ. Because the end of the story is that he will be like Jesus. It is because he can go through his day not alone, but with Jesus. It is because he understands the key of the entire story of the world is seen not in power, but in the one who set aside his power and glory and divine prerogatives to take all that and put it aside and remaining fully

God to enter into our created order, humble and lowly and to die upon a cross willingly out of love for you and me. And that story can begin to shape the slave's life. That is what he can be and she can be thankful for. That is the end of the story of the powerless. Is it the father, the creator of all things, has chosen and called that slave to be his child forever? And not just a child, but to have the status of a son, the one who will inherit all things. And that's what continues on right here in verse 23. Whatever you do, work hardly that single-mindedly. Once again, all whole, all of you from the soul for the Lord and not for men. Knowing that from the Lord, you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. In a world where the slave master is to be called Lord, the slave master is called the flesh master. Is the Lord mentioned here time and time and time again?

But who is the slave reminded? Is the Lord? It's Jesus, not the slave master. Jesus is Lord. Jesus is Lord.

[27 : 17] Jesus is Lord. And you will receive an inheritance. And it's very, very unfortunate in our English translations that there is a paragraph drop between verse 25 and chapter 4, verse 1. You shouldn't see that there's a paragraph difference there because, in fact, chapter 4, verse 25 doesn't just give advice to slaves. It says something to the masters. It says, for the wrongdoer will be paid back, for the wrong is done. There is no partiality. That's what the slave owner is told. You do wrong, there's no partiality. And then there's this bombshell in the original language.

It's not as grammatic, and that's why usually it's translated in English in a way to make it more grammatic and easier to read. But in the original language, it says, masters, treat your bond servants.

In my version here, it says justly and fairly. Literally, it says, masters, treat your bond servants with justice and equity. That's what it says. Treat the slave with justice and equity.

In a world that could not imagine any economy or political structure without slaves, the Bible says you treat them with justice, you treat them with equity.

And with time, even though everything within their mind and their culture shapes them to think a particular way, they go, one moment, how can you treat a slave with equity if a slave is a slave?

[29 : 03] And how can there even possibly be justice if you're treating the slave as a slave? But doesn't it empower it? Not at all. Listen and think about what's happening.

I think most of you are familiar with Star Trek. If you're not, you know, it's a harmless diversion. I just watched the Picard first season on DVD just a little while ago. But just imagine it's a Star Trek episode, okay? And in a Star Trek episode, you folks who really know Star Trek, just give me a little bit of grace, a time out. Sometimes I get things wrong because I'm not a Trekkie.

But imagine a science fiction scenario, something like Star Trek. And Picard, because he was the greatest of the captains, not Kirk. But Picard, he comes with the Star... Oh, I just caused some... Now I've lost part of the congregation. So, you know, if you're watching this and you're not part of Church of Myra, we let anybody come in. You can be a Leafs fan, a Sens fan, you can be a basketball fan and not like hockey. You can like Kirk. You can like Picard. You can think, who are they and who cares? You're welcome at Church of the Messiah. We're very open-minded and truly inclusive in the senses like that. So, anyway, so just imagine whether it's Kirk or whether it's Picard, they come to a world which is very, very primitive and where there's something like slave owners. And, you know, part of the first directive, which they always sort of manage, they manage to interfere with the world without interfering with the world. You know, that's part of the thing. But you're there and they maybe bring their ship down so people can see their ship.

[30 : 38] They can see all these powerful things they can do. And Picard and the crew have done something to intervene in a person who's being abused. And so maybe let's say that Joe's the slave and Daniel over here is the slave owner. And Picard and the crew have come in. They use all their power, all their might. They've stopped Daniel from doing something terrible to a slave Joe. And at the end of the episode, Joe wants to come with Picard. And Picard says, I really like you, Joe. You're a really good guy. Listen, I can't bring you right now. We're going to come back for you. Okay? But I am going to come back for you, Joe. And you're going to join the Starship Enterprise. And I'm saying, Joe, you're really important. You know, I can't interfere right now. You have to sort of live here right now. But I want you to know, you see all my power, all my might. We're keeping it. I'm going to have a sensor here. I'm keeping an eye on what's happening. And while I'm talking to Joe,

Daniel, the slave owner is right here. And I say, I'm keeping my eye on you. I'm going to come back. I'm going to make things right. There's going to be judgment. And at the end, you're going to go on Star Trek Enterprise. Now, I say that to Joe while Daniel's hearing this. Now, does Daniel now feel empowered? Does Daniel feel weaponized with his slavery? No.

And if you're in this church and you own a slave and you hear Paul saying, there's no partiality, wrongdoers will be punished. The slave, Joe, you have an inheritance. Who is the Lord? Jesus is the Lord.

Does the slave owner feel empowered? No. No. They do not feel empowered. They have been undermined.

Only the biblical gospel makes slavery morally unthinkable. And the only reason that for large parts of the world, but sadly, maybe not the majority of the world, the only reason there are significant parts of the world that understands that morally is slavery is morally unthinkable is either directly through Christian teaching or indirectly through the spillage or the echoes of Christian teaching. Which is why in countries like North Korea and China, you have functional slavery.

[33 : 32] And this, in fact, actually is very important for the next thing. Andrew, if you could put up, I think, hopefully, yeah, you got that. If you could put up the next thing, and this is just very briefly, the biblical gospel empowers and gives hope to the powerless. The biblical gospel empowers and gives hope to the powerless. Imagine, so here's, you see what we want in our culture is we want virtue signaling.

We want virtue signaling. And we expect Paul to do virtue signaling, to say to the slaves, slaves, start a revolution, try to overcome slavery, stand up for your rights, tell them who's boss.

And that's what we want them to do. You go look at the ancient writings and see what happens to slaves who are mouthy and disobey and try to revolt. Their life was short and brutal because it was put down brutally. Imagine for a second that you had an opportunity, somehow or another, God gives you the gift of tongues and you can all of a sudden speak Korean. And at the same time that you can all of a sudden speak Korean, God gives you an internet connection with some people in North Korea, whether it is just in a working class place or in one of their many prison camps, but the whole nation is one prison camp.

And you get to now share the gospel with Koreans in North Korea and some of them become Christians. Now, what are you going to tell them to do? Are you going to say, well, I want to feel good about myself.

I'm going to tell those North Koreans that they should rise up. They should argue for democracy. They should argue for their rights. Well, that's really helpful for North Koreans.

[35 : 32] You might go away from that internet call feeling very virtuous. They're not going to do it. You know what they'd say?

Boy, is that person ever stupid. Is that person ever stupid? And our progressive and woke friends want Paul to say something stupid.

So we can feel virtuous about ourselves. The fact of the matter is, is because we, by our flesh, are so addicted to understanding everything in terms of power and rights, it actually makes it very hard for us to know how to deal with the powerless.

Like the truly, from the eyes of the world, powerless. I've shared before how in my first three years of ordained ministry, I was in a larger suburban church.

And one of the things I had to do was go to do hospital visiting. And I also had to go to some nursing homes and other places. And I had to go to a place. And there was a woman named Diane. Diane of blessed memory.

[36 : 43] And she was completely and utterly bedridden. I can't remember the disease she had. But it was one of those things that, by the time I saw her, she needed help to breathe. And she had a little mic.

And she could barely speak any types of words. And I had to get really close to her to try to hear her. And she had lost her husband. And her kids had nothing to do with her. And I hated visiting Diane.

I hated visiting Diane. I can't get her healed. I can't tell her her husband's going to love her. I can't tell her her kids are going to get there, see her.

I can't do anything to empower her. I can truly say that the only person who got ministered to in that room was me, by Diane.

Because Diane loved Jesus. And she knew the end of the story for her. And the end of the story for her was not a shrunken woman in a room.

[37 : 49] Abandoned and alone. And she just wanted to be treated like a person and to be reminded about Jesus. You know, in the world, if you're addicted to power, what do you do for people that can't have power?

What do you do when you have to minister to people with Alzheimer's? People at the end of their life. People who are severely handicapped.

I can tell you what the smart people in Canada want to do. They want to extend the right of doctors to kill them. And I am not being extreme. That's the bill.

The bill before Parliament right now. And all the smart people in the country support it. Because powerlessness is embarrassing and makes us cringe.

And the Bible says that, you know what? What Diane needed to hear week by week was that Jesus loved her, that he died on the cross for her, that one day she would be like Jesus.

[38 : 59] And that even though she was in her very lowest state with next to no power and almost no prestige, she could make a difference for Jesus in that room.

And you know what? It was true because she made a difference for me. She made a difference for many of the nurses and caregivers who came into the room.

The gospel ennobles and empowers and gives hope to the powerless. Only the biblical gospel does this.

Jesus died for her. He took her as his own. And she could be in that room alone, but not alone, but with Jesus.

And surely in a country like ours, there's an alternative to urging people who were powerless and weak to be dead.

[40 : 00] Just final and closing, the final point. Both the powerful and the powerless need to receive the biblical gospel. Both the powerful and the powerless need to receive the biblical gospel.

So much of what happens in our culture, and so much of what happens in Twitter, is based on doctrines of cultural Marxism and Marxism and intersectionality.

There would be a large number of people who would say that as a white male, I shouldn't even talk about this text. And that in the wisdom of this world, by intersectionality, I am condemned to everlasting shame.

I am male. I am white. I am heterosexual. I am a Christian. And in the wisdom of the world, there is nothing I can do about any of that.

Nothing. There's no hope. There's neither hope for the truly powerless, nor is there hope for those who have some power.

[41 : 14] And the biblical gospel addresses masters and slaves, and says, there is one Lord. There is one who has died for you.

There is one who longs you to know him as Savior and Lord. You can't amend your life. You can change.

The end of the story is not fixed. Come to Jesus. Know him as your Savior. Know him as your Lord. If you're a master, you need him.

If you're a slave, you need him. If you're powerful, you need him. If you're powerless, you need him. I need him. So do you. please stand. I invite you to stand.

Let us bow our heads in prayer. Father, we ask, first of all, that you would turn the heart of our nation away from promoting, expanding the power of the state to have people put to death.

[42 : 21] Father, it seems impossible that that would ever change. But, Father, we know that it does not, it is not your will. It does not please you. And we ask that you would turn the hearts and the minds of politicians and of the cultural elites away from death.

Father, we believe. Help our unbelief. Help us to be faithful in prayer. And, Father, we confess before you that even though we read the gospel, that we still are deeply addicted to thinking terms of power.

And we ask, Father, that you grip us with the gospel, that it might become more and more real to our hearts, that it would be the story by which we understand our own identity, our own destiny, would be the way by which we understand others.

Forgive us, Father, for thinking that those who are most powerless do not need the gospel, grant us a courage and a winsomeness to proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord, to both the most powerful and to the powerless, and make the gospel real to our hearts.

And all God's people said, Amen.