

Jesus speaks to His Church - Hold on so that no one will take your crown.

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[0 : 00] So, we're looking at the letters to the churches in Revelation, the seven churches in Revelation, and we're on to the sixth letter, which is the letter to the church in Philadelphia, in Revelation chapter 3, verses 7 to 14.

We've entitled this series, The Jesus Speaks to His Church, because it's not just a letter written long ago to a particular church, but it is a letter written to all of the churches at all time, in all circumstances.

There are particular lessons that we can draw from these churches that are relevant for us today. Okay. To the church in Philadelphia, chapter 3 and verse 7.

To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, these are the words of Him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What He opens, no one can shut, and what He shuts, no one can open. I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

[1 : 23] I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews, though they are not, but are liars, I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you.

Since you've kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is coming, that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.

I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have so that no one will take your crown. Him who overcomes, I will make a pillar in the temple of my God.

Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God.

And I will also write on him my new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. William Wilberforce was discouraged one night in 1791 after another defeat in the Houses of Parliament in his battle to abolish the slave trade.

[2 : 42] In 1789, Wilberforce gave a three-hour speech against slavery, but he didn't sway the honorable members. I used the word honorable in a kind of ironic way.

In 1791, Wilberforce presented the House of Commons with another bill to abolish the slave trade. This time he had the support of the Prime Minister, William Pitt the Younger. But still the bill was not passed.

They lost 163 votes to 88. He was tired and he was frustrated and he returned home.

And so the story goes, he opened his Bible. And as he began to leave through it, he was reminded of a letter that was in the Bible that was written to him in February of 1791 by John Wesley.

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism in Great Britain, if you don't know who he is. Wesley died in February 1791.

[3 : 48] And just six days before he died, he wrote to Wilberforce. Sorry, he must have died in early March. I think it was 60 days. But there's six days. But there you go.

Wilberforce, he wrote this letter to Wilberforce. And this is what he said. Dear Sir, unless the divine power has raised you up to be as Athanasius against the world, I see not how you can go through your glorious enterprise in opposing the execrable villainy.

What a phrase. The execrable villainy, which is the scandal of religion of England and of human nature. Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils.

But if God be for you, who can be against you? Are all of them stronger than God? Or be not weary of well-doing.

Go on in the name of God and in the power of his might, till even American slavery, the vilest that ever saw the sun, shall vanish away before it, that he who has guided you from youth up may continue to strengthen you in this and in all things.

[5 : 10] A wonderful letter. A wonderful letter to read when you've just been defeated again in the Houses of Parliament. In every year between 1789 and 1806, Wilberforce presented a bill for the abolition of the slave trade.

Every year. In 1804, the House of Commons voted in favor of abolition. But his bill was rejected in the House of Lords.

In 1806, Wilberforce's friend James Stephen proposed a bill banning British ships from carrying enslaved peoples to the French colonies. The pro-slavery MPs didn't think that was going to stop them, and so they allowed that to pass, but it effectively ended the slave trade from Europe because it made it unprofitable.

See, they're not persuaded on moral grounds. If it's going to hit their pockets, well, there you go. And that led Parliament then to abolish slavery in the colonies.

But in fact, it allowed people to continue to hold slaves right up until the Slavery Abolition Act, July 26, 1833.

[6 : 23] Three days after that act was passed, and slaves were effectively emancipated in the colonies, William Wilberforce died.

And he went to be with his Maker, his Redeemer, and his Savior, Jesus Christ. For he was motivated by his love for God and his love for his neighbor.

He persevered under great trial. He was a man of little strength. He was from Hull, born in Hull, actually not far from here. He garnered lots of support, but he was always on the side of the opposition, the side of the least influence, until eventually, through trial and perseverance, through going through an open door that Christ had presented for him, he of little strength gained victory, and no one will take away his crown.

And that is essentially the message that Jesus gives to the church at Philadelphia. They were weak. They were of little strength.

They had very limited social influence. They were opposed locally by a very influential, powerful Jewish lobby that sought to prevent them from preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[7 : 57] They were persecuted, and they were in danger of further persecution. But Jesus says, I know you have little strength. You must persevere through opposition.

And if you do, I will make you a pillar in the house of my God, and no one will take away your crown. Next slide, please.

In this sermon, we want to see that Jesus is always here for us, always commending his church for their faithfulness and perseverance.

I love the fact that our early songs were talking about things like God being the potter, and we being the clay, and way maker, and all of that. And all of them were suggesting to me that actually it's easy to sing these songs, and they're very encouraging and strengthening and so on.

But actually, they're really about how do you endure in a battle? Because our potter molds us like a potter molds the clay, and he has to knead away those knots and those unsightly things that mar a clay pot.

[9 : 07] It's not so easy to be so molded, is it? And the fact that he makes a way sometimes through difficulties and oppositions does not make it easy to follow him, even though there may be joy in our hearts when we sing such songs.

They are testimonies of real struggles, as well as times of real blessing. And there's something very real about that, isn't there? As we live for Christ, as we walk with Christ in this spiritual journey that we're on, he does not promise that it will be easy.

There will be trials. There will be great opposition. But you will come through. He will make a way. And though you have little strength, you will stand firm.

And the second thing we want to see, and it's very difficult for me to see that, in that green, sorry, that Jesus wants to remind us of his unwavering presence and protection during times of struggle. He will be with us. He's always with us. Sometimes it doesn't feel like he's working, as the song says. Sometimes we don't see him or hear his voice.

[10:25] But as we look back, as that wonderful poem footprint shows us again and again, when we're going through our greatest trial, we discover that it is he who has carried us.

He promises that he will always be with us in our struggles and trials. And then he will always provide open doors of opportunity. Again, sometimes the difficulty when we're looking forward is that we're not sure how this is all going to work out, how we're ever going to get through all of this. But again, he promises us, he will open doors that no one can shut, and he will shut doors that no one can open. So I want us to be encouraged to reflect on the fact that Christ is always with us as we learn how these Philadelphians coped with the demands that were before them.

Now, what about Philadelphia? Well, a little about Philadelphia. Next slide, please. Philadelphia was located in central Turkey, an area that was prone to earthquakes.

Now, that's important. Just park that. It was prone to earthquakes. And it was a kind of economic hub. It was a place which kind of provided a road junction to other parts of the east, a kind of three-way road junction to different regions in the east.

[12:01] It was a very influential Greek city at the time, but the Romans came to rule there. And because of that, it had a number of names.

It was always known as Philadelphia from the time of its founding, because of King Attalos II of Philadelphos. You met him, you might remember, he was the king of Pergamon.

But if you can't remember that, well, it's a little detail that you could easily miss. He gave it its name, Attalos Philadelphos.

Philadelphia, Philadelphos means to love your brothers. To love your brothers. So if you ever visit Philadelphia in the States, you're visiting the city of brotherly love.

Philadelphia, Philadelphos, it was a fertile agricultural area. They made wine there. It became known as the gateway to the east. Now, in 17 AD, there was an earthquake, a massive earthquake, the Tacitus, the Roman historian tells us about, and that destroyed 12 cities, including Philadelphia and Sardis, two of the seven here.

[13:09] Philadelphia was rebuilt with the help of the patronage of the Romans. The Romans allowed them a five-year tax exemption. That would be nice, wouldn't it? Don't think Rachel Reeves will do that anytime soon.

But a five-year tax exemption. And because they were so pleased with that, they renamed the city Neo-Caesarea, New Caesar, in honor of Caesar.

It kept its name, however, Philadelphia, and Philadelphia Neo-Caesarea, until Emperor Vespasian came to power, and then it became known as Philadelphia Flavia, in honor of him.

It was colloquially known as Little Athens because it was a city with many temples. Again, that's important. Earthquakes, temples. Temples have pillars.

That's why it's important. But if you had temples in Philadelphia with very large pillars in a city that was prone to earthquakes, guess where you didn't want to be if there was an earthquake?

[14:16] In a temple. Yeah? If the earth shook and those big stone pillars fell, you were going to die, or at least be severely injured. So to be a pillar in a temple was not a good thing.

But to be a pillar in the temple of my God, well, that's magnificent. So that's why it's important. Little Athens, because it had lots of temples to idolatrous gods, Dionysius being the main god of Philadelphia, but various other sects and religions were practiced there.

And because of that, the church faced persecution. But as the letter also indicates, there was a very large and influential Jewish body that Jesus again refers to for the second time as the synagogue of Satan.

Now, he didn't generally say this against all synagogues. It was because these particular synagogues, these particular communities, were the prime movers in the persecution of the Christian church.

And therefore, they came under his condemnation. There was very little love of brothers in Philadelphia for the Christian church. So there's an irony there as well.

[15:35] The Christians who lived in this city of love experienced anything but love. So what can we learn from this passage? Well, first of all, next slide.

We learn of Christ's authority over all our circumstances in life. Notice, Christ's authority over all our circumstances in life. Verses 7 to 9.

To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens, no one can shut, and what he shuts, no one can open.

I know your deeds.

See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you've kept my word and have not denied my name. I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews, though they are not, but are liars, I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you.

A great word to a church of little strength. You may think, Jesus is saying, you may think that the Jews are controlling your happiness.

[16 : 45] You may think that the Jews are responsible for keeping you from enjoying all that God has for you. But you need to remember that your destiny is not in their hands.

Your destiny is in my control, and I can open doors that no one can shut, and I can shut doors that no one can open.

You see, if you were persecuted in the city by the Jewish fraternity, that would almost certainly mean that any kind of economic advantage was gone. You wouldn't get the jobs that you were going for.

Any social or political advantage was also gone because they just had to speak a word, and any advantage you were seeking would be gone because they held sway over political decisions and social decisions in the city.

Doors were closed to you because you were a Christian. Doors were closed to you, but they didn't need to be closed for you because Jesus was in control.

[17 : 53] So this is a really encouraging word. Jesus and not people are in control of our destiny. Jesus and not people.

Jesus and not the doctors. Jesus and not the specialists. Jesus and not the politicians. Jesus and not your employer.

Jesus and not your husband or wife. Jesus and not your children. Jesus is in control of your destiny. Now, that should be comforting unless you're afraid of Jesus.

It should be comforting. Back in 1981, when I was becoming a Christian, this was the hardest bit of the journey for me, I guess, in reflection.

He made me aware of my sin, and I felt the condemnation of that sin, and I knew that my sin was a problem, but then the gospel tells me that he can deal with my sin.

[18 : 54] The really hard bit was surrendering to Jesus. How could I surrender to Jesus? How could I give my life to him under these circumstances?

And what would it mean if I give my life to him? What would he take from me? I was 18 years old. He would steal my life from joy, perhaps.

He would turn me into a monk and make sure I had to dress in sackcloth and ashes. I would no longer be able to listen to decent music, but I'd have to listen to this Christian stuff, which always seemed a bit secondhand compared to the good stuff on the radio.

I'd have to read good books. I didn't like to read. I didn't read anything much. I'd have to be good. Stop playing football on a Sunday. Ensure Jesus was going to kill all my joy and make me a right old misery guts.

That was what I thought. Until I surrendered. Until I realized that Jesus had not come to rid my life of joy, but to give me abundance of joy.

[20 : 09] I have come that they may have life and life in all its fullness. See, the reality of the world in which we live is that it robs our soul of life.

Life. It substitutes life for stuff. It tells us that real enjoyment in life is the acquisition of stuff.

So we get all the stuff we want, and what happens? Does it give us life? Does it give us joy? Does it give us fullness? No. It just gives us dissatisfaction because the more stuff we have, the more we realize the stuff is not satisfying the deepest and inmost needs that I have.

For companionship and for love and for intimacy and for joy, it's not giving me that. Where does true purpose, where does true meaning, where does true fullness comes from?

It comes from your soul being satisfied in God. Because as Augustine put it, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in you.

[21 : 24] And the people in Philadelphia had to discover that. True rest, true happiness, true joy came not from the open doors of political opportunity or economic freedom.

True life, true joy, true happiness comes from opening, going through the door that leads to eternal life. Finding that Jesus is the door, that he is the way of salvation, and once we find that way of

salvation in him, we experience true freedom, true life, true stability in this world.

So let's notice some of the language that is used here. Next slide, please. Sorry, carry on. Yeah. You have little strength.

Sorry, go back. You have little strength. You've kept my word, and you've not denied my name. All right, so that's the reality they were facing. These were not kind of, you know, the kind of Christians that stand out as superhuman.

The kind of pioneers. They were just ordinary people like you and I. But they discovered enough in Jesus to know that though they were of little strength and little influence, they had remained faithful.

[22 : 46] And that's a word to us because you might be in that position now where you feel, well, I'm of little strength. You know, I'm struggling. Things are difficult for me.

I'm not coping very well. Where do I get my strength from? To remain faithful. You get it from Jesus. Jesus calls us not to be the, you know, the best possible Christians we can be, not to have great faith.

He understands that we might struggle. He understands that it might be difficult for us, but all he requires of us is faithfulness. Remain true to me even if you're hanging on by your fingernails.

Remain true. And hasn't that been the reality for most of us in our Christian life? No matter how long we've lived it, we have had moments of great strength perhaps.

We have had experiences that were quite wonderful, but for most of us, it's the steady slug of hanging on day by day when things are going wrong, isn't it?

[23 : 48] When things are going badly, when we don't have any answers, when we don't have any solutions, when we don't have any certainty, when we don't have any clarity, we hold on.

Jesus, to whom else shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. And next slide, please. Next slide, please.

Or is it not moving now? All right. Those of you, those who are of the synagogue of Satan who say they are Jews, though they are not, this language is quite interesting.

I've already explained why it's referred to in this way. It seems very harsh, and it shouldn't be seen as anti-Semitic, okay? So get that out of the way. It was a particular synagogue who were doing the work of Satan.

Jesus could equally say that to the church. the church of Satan who say they are Christians but are not. He could equally say that.

[24 : 52] Because anyone who becomes an agent of the devil, whether intentionally or unintentionally, in the persecution of God's work, in the persecution of Jesus and his people, becomes a place where Satan dwells.

We've seen that again and again. Okay? A place where Satan dwells. And so there is something really important here for us to grasp. We are always involved in a spiritual battle in which there is a deadly enemy who is the enemy of our souls, the adversary of the devil, who fights against us.

And we must be careful to be agents of God in such circumstances and not agents of Satan. But if we're caught up in a spiritual battle where such a thing takes place, we should not expect it to be easy.

You're going to be in the midst of something really devilish and awful. And yet Jesus says, I know. I know where you are. I know what you're going through.

But here, really challengingly, I've not taken you out of it. And we'd love to be taken out of such trials, wouldn't we? We'd love to have a life which is free entirely from challenges and struggles, free entirely from the devil's assaults and schemes.

[26 : 16] But it's not like that in the kingdom of heaven. And some of us think, when we become Christians, all our problems are going to be over. And then when we face problems, we think, why has God let me down?

Why has God let you down? Here's the reason. You had unrealistic expectations. Because the reality is that God has not let you down and Jesus has not abandoned you.

It's just that spiritual warfare is part of our journey. And here in the midst of the synagogue of Satan, Jesus says, look, I know what you're going through.

I know it's hard. Stay faithful. Next slide, please. Jesus introduces himself in this way as the one who holds the keys of David.

And then he says, I am faithful and true. In other words, he says, think of my character. Everything is going to turn round. You're in the midst of a battle.

[27 : 23] Now, the Jews are against you. Satan is against you. But one day, you're going to win. And those who are against you are going to come and fall at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you.

Now, there is an allusion here to something way back in Genesis. Do you remember when Joseph's brothers turned against him? And they sold him out off into slavery?

And they thought, well, that's it. We're done with him. He's gone. Remember what happened? They came to him and they fell at his feet and acknowledged that God was with him.

It was a complete reversal of fortunes. And Jesus is effectively saying the same thing. Look, at the moment in this world, it's really hard, but there's going to come a day when people realize that actually you were my people and you will be honored because you honored me.

And that's a reminder to us, isn't it, in Scripture. God says, those who honor me, I will honor. Now, how can he make such a promise? Because he has the key of David.

[28 : 33] Because he holds the power of death and Hades. Because he is the resurrection and the life. Because he's going to win the ultimate victory. And because he is going to set up a kingdom that man cannot prevail against it.

And he's going to make people who are now feeling very vulnerable and very weak to be pillars in the kingdom of heaven. Immovable objects in an eternal city.

The whole of their fortunes are going to be reversed. Now, next slide, please. before I get to that, just one word, I should have said this, on the key of David.

It's from Isaiah 22. And it tells us about Eliakim, who was a servant, a steward, in the royal palace. He replaced a man called Shebna.

Shebna was also a servant in the royal palace, but he was a traitor and a spy. And he was about to betray the Jews to their enemies.

[29 : 37] And God knew that and God replaced him with Eliakim. And when you become a steward in a royal palace, you're given a key. And that key can open a door that no man can close and close a door that no man can open.

You get the point? So to be given the keys to the kingdom is to be given freedom. Freedom to move and to admit or to prohibit anyone who enters into the palace.

Now Jesus takes up this theme in the Gospels. And he says to Peter, remember, you are Peter.

And upon this rock I will build my church and I will give to you, Peter, to the apostles, the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

The ones you admit will be admitted. the ones you refuse to admit will not be admitted. There was a transference of power from the Jews to the church.

People come into the kingdom of God through the door which is Jesus. But the church have a part in ensuring through the preaching of the gospel that people are admitted or if they refuse to believe are prohibited from entering that kingdom.

[31 : 06] So to have the keys of the kingdom is to have authority to enter in, to let in, or to close the doors on those you refuse to let in.

So when Jesus says, look, I can open doors that no one can close, I can close doors that no one opens, he's saying, I am giving you an opportunity to enter and the opportunity will always be there to enter but equally there will come a point when I will close that door and there will be no further opportunity to enter.

And because this is connected to the heavenly city and the eternal future, it is effectively saying to us, look, the way into the kingdom of heaven is through Jesus, the opportunity is now open but you must take it for there may come a time when the door will be closed.

Now, that's the only time in the Gospels or in the New Testament that it is used in that way, this imagery. The imagery is generally used by Paul in a different way, it's used to describe opportunities for preaching the gospel.

A great and effective door has been opened to me, he says in Acts. And in Corinthians, it's always about an open door for preaching the gospel on his missionary journeys. So the imagery is used more widely than that but in Revelation, it's all about, are you going to be in the heavenly kingdom?

[32 : 39] If so, he opens a door through Jesus, Jesus opens the door and welcomes in, but if you are not going to enter, the door will eventually be closed. And when it's closed, no one can open it.

Now is the accepted time. Now is the day of salvation. So secondly, Christ assured protection of his people that they will endure in life.

Let us notice verses 10 and 11. 10 and 11. Since you kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.

I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have so that no one will take your crown. All right, Jesus is saying you're going to a trial. It's a great trial at the moment. It's very difficult for you, but it is localized to Philadelphia.

There is a great trial that is going to come upon the whole earth. Some people will refer to this as the great tribulation. Now, you just need to know this and then park it.

[33 : 48] you might read books that say this is referring to a future trial, to a great tribulation that is going to come to the earth just before Christ returns.

And that that tribulation is going to last for a long, long time, but before that tribulation the church is going to be taken away and it's going to be raptured and go to be with Jesus and then all that's left on earth are the Jews and the unbelievers.

And then in that period there's going to be this great tribulation and then eventually the Jews will all be converted and then Jesus will return for a second point B time and the world will end.

Hal, Lindsay, the eighth great planet earth, etc. That's where that comes from. What I want you to notice is that's not what this text says. This text says there's going to be a great tribulation that comes upon the whole earth.

It doesn't then define what that great tribulation is. It doesn't tell us when it's going to happen. It just says it's going to happen. And the language says, literally in the Greek, keep you from, but it doesn't necessarily mean keep you from it occurring.

[35 : 02] It means keep you from, it could mean simply keep you from suffering during it. It. So he may keep them through it or he may keep them from it.

I think the biggest problem with the interpretation that I gave that the church was going to be spared the great tribulation is that nowhere else in the New Testament is that suggested. It's suggested rather that we must go through many tribulations to enter the kingdom of heaven.

And there doesn't seem to be a gap between the church being raptured away from earth and the second coming of Christ. All right.

Now if you take a different view I respect that view but that's not how I read scripture. But certainly Jesus is promising to keep them from the tribulation.

The tribulation that is coming which is going to affect the whole world. And incidentally the whole world doesn't necessarily mean every part of the world. It can mean the whole Roman world as it does in Luke chapter 2.

[36 : 09] But what the promise is here is that Jesus will keep us from that time of trial. And again think of the language of the open door and the closed door.

Some events in our life that happen Jesus says I'm going to take you through this door and it's not going to be easy. You may suffer but I will keep you during that time of suffering.

Sometimes Jesus will close a door so that we're kept from stuff. We don't know what we're kept from necessarily. Maybe in heaven we'll see what we've been kept from and thank God we didn't suffer in the way that we could have suffered because he closed the door and he couldn't open it. The point is he's in control of our destiny. And so if we go through a door of opportunity but that door of opportunity is a time of suffering and trial, well sometimes that happens.

But sometimes he will keep us from it as well. The point is he will always keep us from it. He will always strengthen and help us in the time of those trials. Okay, next slide please.

[37 : 18] So then there is Christ's promise to honor those who overcome in life. Notice verses 12 and 13. Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it.

I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem which is coming down out of heaven from my God and I will also write on him my new name. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Now I've already anticipated this. This is a city of earthquakes. If an earthquake happens, the pillars collapse, people are killed. But for those who stand firm in Jesus, they will find security.

They may suffer in this life, but eventually they're going to be made pillars in the house of my God. And never again will they leave it. You see, if there's an earthquake in Philadelphia and the pillars began to shake, guess what you're going to do?

You're going to leave the city. But there will never be anything in the heavenly Jerusalem that will make us want to leave it. Our place and our position in the heavenly Jerusalem is permanent and established forever.

[38 : 31] You will never be moved. And your name will be written on those pillars. Now again, it reflects a practice in the ancient world where honorable people in society had their names placed on the pillars as a permanent, semi-permanent memorial of their faithfulness or love to their city.

It's a bit like when you walk around Whitby and you see these plaques, William Scoresby lived here and stuff. Jesus is saying, your name is going to be written on these pillars and it will never be erased.

The other language of revelation is your name will be written in the Lamb's book of life and it will never be erased. You are a permanent member or citizen in the kingdom of heaven and none shall pluck you from his hand.

You are eternally secure like a pillar in a temple. God what a wonderful promise this is. Because you have kept my commands and you have not denied my name.

See, there is something here about persevering in our faith. No promise that the way will be easy, no promise that it will be trouble-free, no promise that Jesus will always open a door that leads to paradise or the spiritual equivalent of Disneyland.

[39 : 49] sometimes it will be trial, sometimes it will be hard, but he says, I'm always with you, I'll never leave you, and no one will be able to separate you from me.

You'll be okay. Or in the immortal words of our good friend Andy Lloyd, it'll be reet. It'll be reet.

So, three lessons for us as we close. Slide, please. We need to stand firm in our faith, no matter what the challenge is.

And I want you to tell your soul that. Stand firm in your faith, no matter what the challenge is.

William Wilberforce could have easily given up. He could have easily been discouraged.

He could have easily said, these politicians are a miserable lot. We're just going to have to kind of, you know, just kind of give it all up and let it continue.

[40 : 58] Think of the countless, hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of people, millions of African people, who are grateful today say, that William Wilberforce was so brave.

A world that is rid of slavery, and it isn't still, but a world that was rid of slavery, and still needs to be rid of slavery, is a world that we constantly need to challenge.

And it needs brave Christians to do so. We might have just recently lost a bill in parliament. I say we because I'm assuming a lot here, but I think we care about the sanctity of life.

We care about a society that puts to death its older people and can potentially put to death its babies up till birth.

We may have lost a battle, but Jesus has not lost a war. Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do.

[42 : 09] It's very easy to sit in judgment of politicians. Many of them are acting, they believe, for humane reasons, but it's blindness nonetheless.

But the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. We don't call people names. We don't get involved in culture wars. We pray.

We get on our knees and we pray. when William Wilberforce started his work, when he was converted and he started his work in parliament, he did two things.

He had two goals in his life. One was the abolition of slavery and the other was the change, I can't remember the exact language, the refinement, I think it was, of manners.

Odd thing to say. what he meant was Christian values. You only get Christian values from converted hearts.

[43 : 12] And so our great prayer, our great challenge is to pray for a revival church here in Britain, the conversion of God's people.

We must also secure our identity in Christ. Christ. You see, this world offers us lots. It can offer us silver and gold and all of that, but it cannot eternally secure our souls in glory.

But if we trust in Jesus, we shall never be erased from the Lamb's book of life. So there is no greater treasure than belonging to the kingdom of God.

There is no greater honor than being a pillar in God's temple. And then lastly, focus on your eternal promises.

William Wilberforce died three days after hearing that his life's work had been successful. But William Wilberforce never really put his trust in princes.

[44 : 19] He knew that in this world it would always be imperfect and there would always be disappointments. if we put our trust in this world and what it has to offer we will be disappointed in the end.

But if we trust in our Lord Jesus Christ who is faithful and true who is entirely reliable and would never lie to us then we have absolute joy and happiness in him.

He says I give them eternal life and they shall never perish. no one shall ever pluck them from my hands. That makes us eternally secure in the eternal promises of almighty God.

Let us pray. Amen.