

TRINITY LECTURE 2 - Work and Slavery

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Preacher: Gordon Preece

[0 : 00] Well, it's my pleasure to introduce to you the Reverend Dr. Gordon Preece. He's recently moved back to Melbourne, which is a great thrill for us. He's now Executive Director of Urban Seed in Melbourne.

He continues to be editor of Zadok Perspectives, and he's an ethical consultant to Christian Super. He's the former director of Ridley College Centre for Applied Christian Ethics and the Macquarie Christian Studies Institute.

He is the author and editor of 10 books on ethical issues and many, many articles, a very prolific author. So it's a great pleasure for us to have Gordon with us tonight.

Please welcome him. Thanks, Megan, for that warm welcome, and it's great to follow up such a good and well-related Bible study.

To what I'm going to be talking about. It's always nice, too, to be welcomed by someone who knows me because they get my name right. And instead of thinking it's priest, as I've had jokes about for years and years, ever since being an Anglican priest, which is about 27 years or something like that, the jokes are funny for about the first 27 seconds.

[1 : 23] It's actually Priest, P-R-E-E-C-E. But it was much worse for my sister because her name is Gay Priest. So she got a much harder time than I did, which is not to have a go at anyone who struggles with that issue.

But the real point of the story is that she ended up marrying a guy called Chris Bishop. So at the wedding, I said it wasn't a wedding, it was a consecration.

So she ended up being Gay Bishop. So preceding some in the Anglican Communion to that title.

Well, I'm going to talk tonight about WWWD, which is what would Wilberforce do? And thinking particularly about slavery and various forms of work.

And in some ways, there's a spectrum there, just as Paul was saying, there's a spectrum in Scripture. We see something of that spectrum in the world today. So I want to touch on something of that spectrum.

[2 : 35] How are the slides going? We've got a problem. Okay. The joys of technology. I'll just kind of keep on talking, but while we try and get the technology up and running.

But Wilberforce, as you may know, William Wilberforce was an English parliamentarian who was one of the great lay heroes of church and world history.

And he was instrumental in the abolition of slavery, which we remember. The actual passing of the abolition of the Slave Trade Act in the British Empire was passed about 200 years ago this year.

And we actually sponsored, when I was still at Macquarie Christian Studies Institute, along with World Vision and TIER and MICA Challenge, a visit by David Batstone from the US, who runs the Not For Sale campaign.

I'll just show you the book by David Batstone, which is available at most bookstalls. It's a HarperCollins book, Not For Sale, A Return of the Global Slave Trade, and how he can fight it.

[3 : 53] Ah, good. So in asking WWWD, I'm asking about something that, while Wilberforce is one of our great saints, for evangelicals in particular, we can't necessarily, and I think there's been some tendency by some evangelicals in terms of this, just kind of sort of sit back triumphalistically and say, well, isn't this fantastic, and look what we did, et cetera, 200 years ago, without actually asking again, what would Wilberforce do now, particularly when there are still 27 million slaves in the world, and about another million a year coming onto the market.

So that's what I want to address tonight. Right. Now, there's a picture of Wilberforce. That's from a biography by Tompkins, which I have a couple of biographies I've read.

I've read one by Garth Lean many years ago, which was very good. This one's very up-to-date, and it's not a hagiography, but it's an appreciative, but reasonably critical, in some ways, biography of Wilberforce as well.

Now, next slide, please. If we think of Wilberforce, who lived from 1759 to 1833, think of the setting of, say, 1780, a slaver, slaving ship, sails the Atlantic.

It's overloaded with human cargo. They're chained tight on tiny shelves. They're soaked in sweat, blood, vomit, and excrement.

[5 : 42] Meanwhile, in a London club, there's a witty, young Cambridge grad, very elegantly dressed, who's gambling at the table.

He comes from a rich business family. He was already an MP in his 20s, but he's going to use those gifts and those contacts to the full.

He once said that when he looked back, he was actually thankful that after his sort of early Christian grounding, he was then taken away from that grounding, taken back to living whole, away from, I think it was an evangelical aunt that he'd lived with, and back into a nominal kind of Christian environment.

And he said he was actually glad of that as he looks back because he made an enormous number of contacts, people like William Pitt, who became the Prime Minister, and others who he was able to really network with.

And basically they became friends in many ways in some of the great struggles that he waged on a large number of fronts.

[7 : 01] So God actually brought those two worlds together, the world of slavery, the world of sort of upper class kind of world, of Wilberforce.

He brought them together in 1785 when Wilberforce was called to Christ, but also very, very soon after he was called. He had a very strong conviction about that calling, that he was called to abolish slavery, that that was to really be his life's work.

Now I want to go back and have a look at Scripture to try and set Wilberforce's and the others who joined him in that great task to set their work in that context and to get a broad historical kind of perspective.

So I want to look first at slavery in biblical times. Slavery, as Paul has noted, has been a real blight on humankind since that time, although it was certainly within Scripture, it was ameliorated in many, many ways.

I'll say a little bit more about that. But when we think of virtually all the great civilizations and the great tourist sites that we love to go and visit, the Parthenon, I went on a tour with Paul about four years ago, and you wonder at these great sites, the foundations of Western democracy in many ways, and yet they were built by slaves.

[8 : 34] You look at Egypt, again, the great monuments there, the pyramids built by slaves. Think of Rome. Islam, Islamic Empire.

Slavery was only abolished in the Ottoman Empire, officially, I think, in 1918. The English Empire, in many ways, was built on the backs of slaves.

The American, despite the Declaration of Independence, declaring the equality of, that all men are created equal. Some of the people who actually wrote that had slaves of their own.

In some cases, they had children to them. The Spanish and the Portuguese empires, great Catholic empires, were also built on the backs of slavery as well.

So if you have the next slide, you might see the irony in this. Beautiful. As the tourists look at the pyramids. A supreme example of the exploitation of the workers by the ruling class.

[9 : 40] And really, if we're going to look at history in an unblinkered kind of way, we have to recognise that. It has been built very, very much on the blood, the sweat, and the tears of slaves.

We have the next one, thanks. We'll see some pictures that kind of give a sense of slavery around the time of Israel's slavery in Egypt.

They show the kind of back-breaking labour that they're involved in. I think we often lose sight of the radical origins of God's people as slaves in the Exodus that the Jews regularly remember at the Passover.

As Bishop J.O.T. Robinson once said, the Exodus began with a brickie strike. Now, we could go back and say it actually began with God's promises, but God looked down on the slavery of his people.

When I think of brickie strikes, I remember working one day as a brickie labourer. It was only one day. That was about as long as I think I lasted. It was just a casual kind of holiday job, but it certainly wasn't a holiday.

[11 : 00] Although it maybe was for my mate because he was down the bottom with one of those big things that take the bricks up to the top floor, and he set it full blast.

So he had it on 100%. And I'm up the top, and the bricks are just coming off. They're falling off left, right, and centre. I'm sort of grabbing them and trying to line them and grab them and put them down. It was a kind of 20th century equivalent, I guess, in some ways, not nearly as hard, because we had the machine to actually take them up to the top in the first place to ease the back-breaking labour.

But of Israelites trying to make bricks without straw, in a sense, everything being sped up, no rest whatsoever against the, not only biblical command, but a creation-based command that we were made to work, but also to rest as God works and rests.

There was no time off whatsoever. Life was a labour camp. Arbeit marked Frey. As Hitler had at the gates of Dachau and every other concentration camp work makes free.

That was the Egyptian motto as well. It was basically totalitarian. And unless we realise that context, then we forget too quickly the radical significance of the Sabbath as a weekly strike, a weekly strike for former slaves.

[12 : 28] I think we often underestimate the radical significance of biblical economics and biblical laws. If we could just have the next one.

Thanks. That, I think, gives a good kind of picture of the real sort of back-breaking type of labour that the Israelites would have been engaged in. And the next slide takes us to more like the New Testament times, more like Paul's time where you would have galley slaves.

Of course, one of the harshest was those who had to row the galleys, but these are sort of labourers carrying the goods between the boats.

It would be fair to say that the Bible allowed slavery as a more humane alternative to debtors' prison.

I think it's reasonable to say that biblical slavery hedged around with a whole system of safeguards to protect the welfare of the slave was in many ways a much, much more humane system than our system of prisons.

[13 : 38] I won't go into too much, but I think, frankly, on biblical grounds, the prison for crimes against property is simply inhumane.

Prison for crimes against people, yes, there's a legitimate case for that, for protection of people, but prison for crimes against property, I think, probably the biblical system was a much, much more humane system than the kind of system that we actually have in our world.

Oh, we're some of our clients at Urban Seed, basically, prison system ends up being a de facto mental health institution in our society, and I think often we kind of turn a blind eye to those sorts of things.

But in Scripture it was always seen as second best. It was always seen as a fallen institution, something like divorce that God permitted. It wasn't God's original purpose designed in creation, as Jesus talked about in Matthew 19, 8, but it was something that was permitted like divorce because of our hardness of heart.

It wasn't God's original purpose for us nor God's ultimate purpose for it. wherein Christ is neither slave nor free in Galatians 3, 28.

[15 : 00] And that also, I'd want to say, is not meant simply as something we just say, well, that's just meant to be at the spiritual level. If we'll before thought that, we'd still have, we would never have had the abolition of slavery in the 19th century.

It's something that is meant to be given social embodiment, just as, the other aspects of that triplet that's used, Jew and Greek.

When Peter wasn't willing to sit down and have table fellowship as a Jew with the Gentiles, Paul came down on him like a ton of bricks and said that he had actually denied the gospel.

It was meant to be given real social embodiment, and Paul's quite right to stress this, in the Christian fellowship. From there, it often does overflow into the wider world and the wider society, particularly when Christians are involved in the wider society and politics and a range of other institutions as well, but it's meant to be given social embodiment in the church.

We're meant to be a reflection ahead of time of that new world in which there will be neither slave nor free. We see that also, if we can have the next slide, thanks, that one's a roll.

[16 : 20] We see it also in Paul's letter to Philemon. Now, Philemon was a slave owner, it's written probably around AD 60, and Paul writes, really advocating for Philemon's escaped slave and Paul's recent convert, Onesimus, trying to persuade, and it's a marvellous, marvellous example of sort of Greco-Roman rhetoric, persuading intellectually, persuading emotionally, really twisting Philemon's arm behind his back, stressing everything that Philemon owes to Paul as a convert of Paul, stressing Paul's own need for Onesimus, and really pushing Onesimus, who, sorry, Philemon, who was in the position of having the power of life and death over his escaped slave, it was a capital crime, yet pushing him to accept Onesimus as a brother in the flesh and in the Lord.

Not just in some sort of super-spiritual kind of sphere, but in the flesh it needs to be given social embodiment as, at the very least, in the church and in the Lord.

It's interesting that later a bishop Onesimus is noted in early church history and he may have been that liberated slave, we're not sure, but it's certainly an interesting thought and not an impossible one.

It's interesting too in Revelation 18, 11 to 13, the condemnation of Rome or Babylon mentions the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes anymore and it mentions a whole range of luxury goods updated from Ezekiel 27 in Old Testament times and it concludes and the bodies and souls of men which refers to slavery it would seem.

That is one of the great condemnations of Babylon and one of the signs of Babylon is that practice of slavery in that way.

[18 : 44] It's one of the great tragedies that when the empire was converted in some ways through Constantine in AD 312 nonetheless there are many ways in which the Christians were converted back to the empire's values as well including in some ways the values of slavery.

Constantine didn't allow slaves to be branded I think on the face from memory but we would have to say that Christians in many ways lost sight of the radicalism of scripture on the issue of slavery until many many years really a millennium or so later.

So let's pick up with that history if we can have the next slide please to look at slavery in the modern west. Now slavery in the modern west really got going around 1518 when De los Casas who was a Spaniard in the New World De los Casas who had been a slave owner he became a priest he made a suggestion to Charles V the Holy Roman Emperor and a Spaniard to stop the genocide of the very weak Haitians and that led to his suggestion was to bring stronger blacks over from Africa to do the work.

Now he deeply regretted that suggestion. It was originally meant to be relatively humane by comparison with what was happening to the Indians but it backfired before long the slave trade from West Africa amounted to about 10,000 per annum in the 16th century about nearly 3 million slaves who were sold in the 17th century.

It climaxed early in the 19th century with the four great slave crops of sugar rice tobacco and cotton and the triangular trade that was developed between Europe and the ships would go down they would collect the slaves from West Africa and then they would go across to the West Indies and the Americas etc.

[21 : 09] And then they would take sugar and other crops back to Europe. So it was incredibly efficient. They always had these full loads slaves and it was the very basis of global trade.

And we talk about globalisation today. Their equivalent was the global slave trade. It was the biggest game in town.

It was an incredible economic enterprise. over 15 million African slaves survived in the New World North and South Americas and the Indies but many completely forgot their roots.

They were just so completely uprooted but 30 to 40 million didn't survive. 30 to 40 million died during the time of that trade.

We'll have the next picture thanks. This is why they died. You might not be all able to see that but that is the way they were packed in and that's a picture of the Brooks which was a fairly typical slave ship and the demonstrations of that was one of the great sort of PR coups of the campaign to abolish slavery.

[22 : 35] If we can have the next slide thanks. And that's how people were packed in. No room to move whatsoever.

Utterly inhumane. Think of if you like battery hens today. These were human beings being treated like battery hens. And no wonder so many died.

Well, what about Wilberforce's role? Wilberforce needs to be put in context because he wasn't the first to and he wasn't the only person to seek to abolish slavery.

He didn't do it single-handedly. There were Catholic Rodney Stark. If you can get hold of any Rodney Stark books, Rodney Stark is a non-Christian sociologist who has basically been defending Christianity in a whole range of books over the last decade on purely sociological and historical grounds.

And Stark points out the extent to which there was a Catholic anti-slavery movement. And we see people like De las Casas who actually devoted himself to the abolition of slavery and deeply regretted his original suggestion.

[23 : 52] We see Quakers and other non-conformists, non-conformists are basically non-Anglican, non-Church of England, who were engaged in anti-slavery agitation.

They started the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1787. We see the former slave ship captain John Newton, who wrote Amazing Grace, which gave its title to the recent film.

And if you haven't seen the film, yeah, please grab the chance to go and see it. It's, I think, overall, a pretty faithful kind of adaptation.

It's a bit more romance perhaps than put into it, but it is a movie after all. But, yeah, and, but it certainly does give, I think, a reasonable sense, particularly of Wilberforce's role.

There's also the role of John Wesley, who, we had a great, well, Charles, Charles Wesley hymn that we sung just before I got up, forth in thy name, O Lord I Go.

[25 : 01] But John Wesley wrote an abolitionist tract called Thoughts on Slavery. It was early 1774. He preached very, very strongly against it.

He provided lots of people for the volunteer army of abolitionists, who collected signatures on petitions, et cetera. And on his deathbed, he wrote a letter to Wilberforce, apparently his last letter urging Wilberforce to abolish the slave trade.

So Wilberforce was by no means alone. What I think is a great distinction of Wilberforce, and I now want to spell out some of the distinctive marks of Wilberforce, as a kind of prototypical evangelical social reformer.

The first thing is that Wilberforce wasn't a sprinter. He was, having coined a new word here, a marathoner. That was because of running out of space. But he was really a marathon runner, who despite his fragile frame, and if you've seen the movie, you'll see the extent to which he was constantly battling against illness, despite that, he simply stuck at it, and every year, for decades, he would propose the same bill to abolish the slave trade.

There were changes to it, there were tactical changes, there were different alliances, etc., etc., but every year, it was the dripping tap effect.

[26 : 42] He showed enormous stamina, and I used to often say to ethics classes that I think we often think of prophecy as the big event.

We talk about prophets today, but I think in many ways, when you look at the biblical prophets, you look at your Jeremiah's, for instance, and you look at the description of how God is going to make Jeremiah like a wall of bronze, it's that incredible sense of perseverance that you see in some of them, and while Wilberforce isn't a biblical prophet in exactly the same sense, nonetheless, you can see some of that prophetic drive and perseverance in Wilberforce in what he achieved.

Now, he had to have stamina because even though they were on the verge of abolition of slavery in 1792, as early as that, and I think Wilberforce proposed the first bill in 1787, the French Revolution and war with France basically thwarted it for 15 years, and just when they're on the verge, basically the fear of revolution in England and Wilberforce's parliamentary opposition always sort of saying, well, if we do this, this is what's going to happen, we're going to end up like France with a revolution, we're going to end up with a guillotine, etc.

etc. And so it was incredibly difficult to try and get past that, and the war with France also basically gave bad associations to it at that time.

It took 30 years of prayer, and that shouldn't be neglected lest we get sort of just activist, it was 30 years of prayer, they would have prayer meetings, they met regularly in Clapham, which is basically the suburb of London where they went to, well, particularly for their weekends, from London, and it was empowered by prayer, but also incredible activism as well, they put legs to their prayers, and then it was a surprising change of government when actually Irish representatives actually came into the government, and because of their own battle for liberation, they strongly identified with the slaves as well, and a majority of abolitionists in the cabinet basically opened the door at that time, and on the 25th of

[29 : 30] March, which is when we actually had the conference celebrating the abolition of slavery in Sydney, celebrating the bicentenary of it in 1807, their bill banning the slave trade in the British colonies passed both houses at that point.

Now, if we can have the next, yeah, we've got that one, sorry, you're ahead of me. Free spiritual response to the gospel was something that Wilberforce, Wesley, I think the whole group associated with Wilberforce, as evangelicals, they saw that you couldn't have a free spiritual response to the gospel when people were enslaved, when they were physically enslaved.

There was something that was kind of fundamentally incompatible about those two things. I'm not saying that people can't be saved, but there was a basic incompatibility. They weren't content with some kind of dualism between body and soul, which is a fundamentally Greek idea, not a Christian idea.

They started, I don't say fully accomplished it, but they started to see people more as whole people at that time. And so as far as they were concerned, the two had to go together.

There was spiritual conversion, but there was also freedom. There was spiritual freedom and there was physical freedom as well. And that was because all people shared a common humanity.

[31 : 08] They were made in the image of God and they enjoyed equal rights to liberty. I think we underestimate the extent to which the gospel is not only the great source of spiritual liberty, but it's also a great source of a whole range of physical and social liberties in our world.

And I think as we become more and more de-Christianised, particularly Europe, as they forget their Christian roots, I think people will actually lose the source of many of the great liberties that we've had in Western civilisation.

And I think that would be a great tragedy. Next slide, thanks. The next thing to note about Wilberforce is that is Wilberforce and also the Clapham sect model of lay activism.

I'll say a bit more about the Clapham sect in a minute. But Wilberforce was a layman. He'd considered ordained Church of England ministry, but he was called to minister as a layman and as a politician.

He decided that he was called to public life. It was actually John Newton, who I think was ordained by that stage, but John Newton confirmed Wilberforce in his calling to public life and that God had raised him up, if you like, a bit like Esther for such a time as this, that he was God's man for that hour and for the abolition of slavery.

[32 : 47] If you want to read the whole story, I don't have time to go through it all, but see Os Guinness' book, The Call, and it really gives a magnificent description about that. I think Wilberforce is a great example of a Christian person called by God in their lay role who used that utterly and spent themselves utterly in serving God in their lay role and in their working role and is a great example for us in terms of that public lay ministry that he had.

Thomas Clarkson also, who lived from 1760 to 1846, he was also someone who abandoned preferment in the Church of England for lay activism as a full-time abolitionist.

He's a prodigious researcher and organiser, quite an amazing person who deserves more credit actually than he got. There are others amongst this group of lay activists.

Hannah Moore, the educator who's the founder of Sunday Schools, and Sunday Schools weren't just Sunday Schools in our sense, they certainly offered religious education, Christian education, but for lots of people that was the only education they got.

It was a way of educating the poor as well. Henry Thornton was another great evangelical who was a banker. Leslie Stephen was a great colonial administrator.

[34 : 20] There's a whole sort of honour role of people from the Clapham sect, which leads me to the next slide, which is that Wilberforce didn't work alone. We often, even when we think about biblical prophets, we often sort of think of them just as isolated individuals, but even Jeremiah had his Baruch people.

We think of there were schools of prophets and sometimes the biblical prophets did stand out on their own, but you've got Elijah and Elisha, et cetera, and certainly in the church God's people are called to be a community of prophets.

That's one of the big differences between the New Testament and the Old. And Wilberforce was part of this kind of community, the Clapham sect. I'm not sure if the term sect had the pejorative tones that it has today at that time.

But they called that sect because a very disciplined Methodist like holiness group. They had a strong sense of corporate accountability to each other.

And they would meet in the drawing rooms of their houses in Clapham, which is actually the first modern suburb just south of London and plot the overthrow of slavery.

[35 : 44] The interesting thing about them, I think, is that it was the first modern suburb, but they didn't fall for, I think, and let me say, frankly, the great modern sin of, I think, many evangelicals is our suburban captivity and our captivity to a privatised family values, which says, well, it's all right for you to be a Christian as long as you kind of basically confine it to bedroom ethics, but we don't want it affecting your boardroom ethics or your ballot box ethics.

And the great achievement of the Clapham sect is that they're able to kind of move between London and Parliament and business and all the things that they're engaged in there, but move back to Clapham and where they had their families and, but they're able to hold both of those things together, whereas I think many evangelicals, but let me say, particularly evangelicals at the fundamentalist end, have fallen for a fundamentalist family values kind of gospel, which is a privatised gospel, which is really a product of the Enlightenment.

It's really a product of secularism, in fact, and it means the world has got us exactly where they want us. As long as our values are confined to the bedroom and sexual ethics, etc., then they're not too worried about the effect that we're going to have in public life.

And you might want to disagree with me or ask a question about that later. I'd be quite happy to take questions about that. So they came to the conviction, as Clarkson said, that never was any cause so great and important where Christian charity could be so extensively exercised, and there was never one more worthy of the devotion of a whole life towards it.

And I think they showed the truth of Margaret Mead, who's no friend of Christians, but Margaret Mead said, never forget that small groups of friends are what changes history.

[37 : 56] in fact, it's the only thing that has. Now, we'd want to add Christ to that, but it's Christ and his friends who are the ones who have really changed history.

Another characteristic of them is that they did their homework and they mobilised public opinion. Clarkson, as I mentioned, was an assiduous researcher and a tireless organiser who rode about 33,000 miles by horse.

I'm not quite sure how that compares with Wesley, but he'd no doubt learnt from Wesley in Wesley's preaching. And he and they mobilised public opinion.

They got a petition signed by 60,000 Englishmen in 1786 to 7. And I think later, this is in the 1830s, with a sort of final sort of abolition aspects, I think there was a petition signed by, from memory, it was half the voting aged men in England, which is quite extraordinary.

They also had graphic depictions, like in those photos of the layup of the slavers, graphic depictions of the inhumanity of slavery and also of the humanity of slaves.

[39 : 22] There were freed slaves, who came to England, who spoke, who wrote up their stories, etc. What they showed is, again, in terms of contemporary social activism, for every statistic, and you need statistics, but you also need a story for every statistic.

And for every fact, you also need a face. And they got the balance right. they were marvellous communicators, Wilberforce most of all.

Next point is that Wilberforce worked with co-belligerents. Co-belligerents are people that you don't necessarily share the same presuppositions with. They may well not even be Christian.

William Pitt, the Prime Minister, who was basically on Wilberforce's side through most of the battle against slavery, who was one of those people that Wilberforce met at university and at Cambridge and gambled with at different points in his early days.

Wilberforce used his influence with Pitt and other friends and as co-belligerents. They engaged in the same battle in that way. Francis Schaeffer talks a lot about the need to engage with co-belligerents.

[40 : 43] We don't have to agree with people about everything to engage in common cause with them. Join with feminists against pornography. Join with Greens in terms of climate change issues, etc.

We may not share the same presuppositions, but if the cause is a just cause, then we should be willing to do that. But it was Wilberforce who was the great spokesperson.

He was the person who, in one speech, apparently it was the speech of the 19th century. It was the I have a dream speech of the 19th century.

And apparently in that particular case, although he was normally insidious in his preparation, in this particular one he had to do it virtually off the cuff.

It was just sheer passion and the 20 years of preparation all just kind of coming together in this sort of tidal wave of powerful rhetoric and argument.

[41 : 52] The next point is that Wilberforce and Company followed up or followed through. So the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act of 1807 wasn't just a motherhood motion.

They really put teeth to it. The British used diplomacy. They even resorted to bribery to get other nations to stop transporting slaves from Africa to the Americas.

There's a special naval squadron set up to enforce the treaties along the African Atlantic coast and they confiscated thousands of slave ships, freed more than 150,000 slaves from them.

The next point is that they addressed the hip pocket nerve. the economy stupid. I think it might have been Bill Clinton who said that. They recognised that that was one of the great things maintaining slavery and they addressed that.

Now this took a long time to do but they later developed the Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Dominions which is a really catchy name.

[43 : 07] But it basically talks about their strategy in some ways. And they addressed the arguments the West Indian sugar planters used that prices would rise.

They compromised by allowing compensation to the planters equal to half the annual English budget. could you imagine that happening today?

Imagine what Treasury would say the outrage that would be caused by that. The taxes and cost of living rose quite substantially.

Someone described it as voluntary economic suicide. And yet Britain was able to survive and the British Empire was able to grow.

and finally the act abolishing slavery in the Empire that passed in 1833 a month after Wilberforce's death.

[44 : 10] Like Moses he only saw the promised land from a distance at that particular point. So that was really abolishing slavery everywhere.

Originally they abolished the slave trade. This was actually getting rid of slavery at least everywhere within the Empire. It was seeking total abolition at that point.

I think when you think of the English and their tea and the English and their sweet tooth because they had lots of sugar with it and see how integral it was to the economy.

The next thing that they did was they defied the majority's pessimism. In Wilberforce's time most Christians basically accepted slavery as a fact of life. They just felt it was something that was unchangeable.

Just like there are certain things that the air we breathe is the air of consumerism for instance and individualism. So slavery was just part of the air that they breathed.

[45 : 13] It was just a common sense kind of assumption and most Christians accepted it as that. Today's church's consensus as Peter Heslam says as a global commerce inevitably impoverishes both rich and poor.

The rich get impoverished spiritually, the poor get impoverished materially. But Wilberforce actually offers a much more positive assessment I think of the spiritual and material potential of both faithful activism and also the use of business for freedom.

as Peter Heslam says. If we think of the slogan of David Livingston, Dr Livingston I presume, the great African missionary, he talked about Christianity and commerce.

Now I've heard lots of people kind of criticise the missionaries because they and particularly Livingston because of Christianity and commerce. Christianity was just kind of paving the way for the capitalists etc.

etc. And no doubt there have been mistakes made. But what those people don't realise is that in that context if you are going to get people out of slavery you have to provide them with an alternative means of living.

[46 : 35] Just as it talked about in Deuteronomy 15. That you were to provide them with something as they left. To give generously to them.

To give them an economic head start so they could support themselves. And that's one of the great things that they did at that time.

That's what the whole idea of Christianity and commerce was. It was commerce as an alternative to slavery. Let me just mention a few things today.

I won't go through all of these but just a few things in terms of the contemporary situation. when we look at work and slavery in the rest of the world, there are 27 million people still enslaved despite its illegality and there are about a million people a year who are basically drawn into that trade in various ways.

There are a whole bunch of types of slavery that UN talks about. Bonded labour, forced labour, child labour, child prostitution and adult prostitution, extreme poverty is the basic linking factor in all of those.

[47 : 51] Next one please. In a book called Global Woman, subtitled Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy, Barbara Ehrenreich and Ali Russell Hochschild are two eminent American sociologists.

show how it's not just the global brain drain that we have these days where people from the third world come to the first world and get their degrees and PhDs and then stay in the first world.

It's not just that these days but it's also the global care drain. It's the nannies, the maids, the sex workers in the new economy and they're full of stories of letters of Filipino maids, Hispanic maids in America, Filipinos in Saudi Arabia and other places who live there.

If they're lucky they get back to see their children maybe once in five years. Their children have forgotten them even though they're sending money back trying to provide for them to pay for cheaper maids or to provide for relatives to pay for them.

This is the only way that they're actually able to survive in so many cases. Prostitution is another form of that as well. People trying to send money back.

[49 : 15] I think that's a way to try and support their family in many cases. We see it in Australia as well. Sex workers, the seven Thai sex workers in Melbourne who are basically slaves.

slaves. And it's also, I think it was in Kew that there were basically enslaved sex workers were found there.

I remember David Batstone talking about it when he was speaking at St. Hilary's Kew who were found just around the corner. Yesterday I went and saw the movie The Jammed which to our shame has only been given an incredibly limited release.

It's possibly the best Australian movie this year and quite brilliant but quite gut wrenching about sex trafficking in Australia.

It's based on court transcripts so it is actually based on a true story. Another movie, an American movie that's out but will probably just go straight to DVD is called Trade which shows the ways of people from the Eastern Bloc, from Mexico, etc.

[50 : 23] are captured, trafficked and taken and used in the sex industry. If you want a little vignette of the kind of thing that happens for so many people who are caught up in this economy and nannies and others, there's a little vignette in the movie Babel where there's a nanny who's looking after the kids of Brad Pitt and Cate Blanchett while they take their holiday in Ethiopia.

Tiago Bar is a great event.