

Titus 3 v3-8 - Open Doors

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Date: 03 November 2024

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[0 : 0 0] the book of Titus and chapter three. So the focus of our evening tonight is to hear from Daniel about the work of Open Doors and Liz, also one of our church members who volunteers with Open Doors, is going to be leading some of that time for us together as well.

But before we hear from them and we pray for the work of Open Doors and get a chance to ask our questions about that, I want us to turn our attention just to a brief section from Titus chapter three.

So let me read it, I'll pray and then we will just consider it together. So Titus chapter three, beginning at verse three. At one time, we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures.

We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another, but when the kindness and love of God, our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.

He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ, our Saviour, so that having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs, having the hope of eternal life.

[1 : 2 9] This is a trustworthy saying. I want you to stress these things so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good.

These things are excellent and profitable for everyone. But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless.

Warn a divisive person once, then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them. You may be sure that such people are warped and sinful. They are self-condemned.

Well, let's pray and ask for the Lord's help as we look at that passage together. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we want to just thank you for your word to us and pray that you might help us now as we consider it together.

We may be tired. We may be distracted by thoughts of tomorrow and what's happening. And we pray, please, that by your spirit, you might speak to us from your word and give us ears to hear, we pray.

[2 : 3 4] In Jesus' name, amen. My intention is not to delay us for super long, but I want us to set the scene for the rest of the evening by looking at this passage in Titus.

And it will help you if you have the book open in front of you. I'm probably not going to tell you anything new. So much of what I say tonight is not groundbreaking, but it's probably just a reminder of things that you have heard before or might already know.

I think it might help us just to start with a few facts about the book of Titus so that you know what we're looking at in that way. Titus is a letter from the apostle Paul to his friend called Titus.

Okay, just one of you awake on the back row. Titus, who is working in a church in Crete. The church there seems to be planted at a point that we're not sure of and by a group of people who we're not sure of.

And Paul and Titus have visited. And again, we're not sure exactly when they went. But whenever it was, Paul left Titus in Crete with his task of appointing elders in the church.

[3 : 39] So the church had started already, but it had no elders. And so Paul says to Titus in verse five of chapter one, I left you in Crete that you might put in order what was left unfinished by appointing elders.

It's an interesting point there, isn't it? That basically churches without elders are kind of an unfinished job. But once they have elders, the task is really theirs to carry on with.

And that's Titus's job. And what you've got really in this letter is a kind of job description from Paul to Titus about what he's to do in Crete in this appointment of elders.

So it contains things like what you should look for in elders as you appoint them and recognize them in the church. What to get the church teaching to one another. How to deal with difficult or divisive people in the church.

And so what you've got here really in the book of Titus and one Timothy and two Timothy are very similar as well. What you've got essentially is church 101, right? This is basic teaching of how to run and organize the life of a local church.

[4 : 45] Church at 101, what ministry is meant to be like and what you're supposed to do. Now, there is lots of detail here, but I'm going to oversimplify it and tell you essentially that Paul has one goal for the church and one method for the church.

Okay, so he has one goal and one method. It is a slight oversimplification, but just run with me for a moment because I think it does help us. This is the one goal. What is the one goal of the local church?

What is it they're aiming for? Well, the local church wants members to be devoted to doing what is good. You see that in the passage that we just read. Look at verse eight.

So that those who have trusted God may be careful, here you go, to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.

If you glance your eyes back to chapter two, verse 12, you'll see it's the same there. saying no to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age while we wait for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and savior, Jesus Christ.

[5 : 54] This is what we want. We want people who are devoted to doing what is good. Those are excellent and profitable for everyone to be doing that. We want people to be living self-controlled and upright godly lives in this present age saying no to worldly passions.

At the end of verse 14, we see this goal is not just Paul's personal agenda, but it is God's agenda for the church too. This is what Christ gave himself for. Chapter two, verse 14, Christ gave himself to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Eager to do what is good. In other words, Christ has rescued and saved a company of people with the commitment that they might live good lives, doing what is good, doing what is good.

Now, although this is the one goal, still living like that is important, not only for its own sake, but also for the sake of those outside the church. These good lives are not inwardly looking lives.

It's not that we live good lives like ornaments on display just for their own sake. Rather, the church members devoted to what is good is important for the witness to the world. So look at chapter two, verse 10, so that in every way, they will make the teaching about God, our savior, attractive.

[7 : 11] The negative is used in chapter one, verse 16, about people who claim to know God, but their actions deny him. They're detestable, disobedient, and unfit for doing anything good. Here it is that the church, by devoting themselves to doing good, is to display to the world the attractiveness of belonging to Jesus, of being his people.

So here you have it. Paul wants, and Jesus wants, local churches full of people who are committed to doing what is good. And good in the broadest sense. So as you read through the letter, being good in the letter involves telling one another the truth, it involves loving one another, it involves being self-controlled, it involves not losing your temper, not being motivated by getting rich, not stealing from others, being concerned for the poor, concerned for one another, concerned for brothers and sisters in the world as well, who are persecuted, as we're thinking tonight.

That's the goal. Now I want to suggest to you that no one can argue with that goal for a local church. That is a great thing. Everyone can see it's a good thing. Growing Christians who are reaching the world.

That's the goal of every church in every place and every time. Grow Christians to reach the world. That's Church 101 in Titus. But the big question is how? How do you get that?

How do you get a church full of Christians who are committed to doing what is good, displaying the greatness of Christ the world? Well, one answer might be you could run very strict churches, couldn't you?

[8 : 37] Maybe that's how you're to do it. Maybe you run churches where you tell everybody exactly what they're to do with every part of their lives. And you make them feel guilty when they don't do it. That's certainly been the method of some churches.

The medieval Roman Catholic church was like that for sure. That's how it controlled people. Made them feel guilty and told them that if they didn't obey, terrible things would happen to them and their family.

But that's not the method in Titus or Timothy in these pastoral epistles. Instead, here's Paul's method. It's Jesus's method really. It's there in chapter three, verse eight. You achieve this goal by stressing these things, verse eight.

That's the goal is achieved by stressing these things. That's what he says, isn't it? In verse eight, this is a trustworthy saying and I want you to stress these things so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good.

What are these things? What is the trustworthy saying? Well, that then is the content of verses three to seven. So look at what's there. The thing to stress if you want church full of people devoted to doing what is good.

[9 : 41] Well, verse three, you need to stress the fact that the church is full of people who at one time were foolish, disobedient, deceived, and enslaved to their passions. Ouch.

Stress this, says Paul. If you want a church that's going in the right direction, that's achieving the goal for which Christ has given himself, then stress that no one has joined the church by being perfect.

Remind them of that. Remind them of that often, that the qualification for church membership is not perfection, but actually the qualification for belonging to the church is at one time having been a slave to your passions.

Sinfulness. You are a sinner. There's more than that, though, isn't there? Because that's not the case anymore, is it? There is a, that is the past. But people enslaved to their passions and are not committed to living good lives.

So what has changed? Look down at verse four. But when the kindness and love of God, our Savior, appeared, that's what's happened.

[10 : 40] The kindness and love of Jesus has appeared. Jesus came. And what is it that Jesus did? Well, verse five. He saved us. And how did he save us? Well, carrying on in verse five, look down.

Not by the good things that we have done, but by his mercy. Mercy in washing. Rebirth and renewal, he calls it, making us new people by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit who now, verse six, lives in us, given generously to us.

Verse seven, summarized it, doesn't it, by being, calling us being justified by grace. In other words, declared not guilty before the God who made us by a function of his kindness and not our works.

So that we are heirs of eternal life with him. And Paul says, verse eight, that is a trustworthy saying. It's a saying that the church must stress. So that, verse eight, people will devote themselves to doing what is good.

And now, if I've lost you in the weeds, come back to it for a moment. Church 101, one goal, members devoted to living good lives that commend the gospel and one method, consistently stressing the gospel of grace in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[11 : 47] That's it. That's what the local church is to do. One goal, that we might live good lives that commend the gospel to the world around us. one method by stressing continually the message of the gospel of grace in the Lord Jesus Christ, reminding one another that we are not here because we're better than anybody else, but we are here because God has been kind to us in the Lord Jesus and has rescued us by his blood and his mercy alone.

Now, I want to suggest to you that that is quite simple, right? That is not rocket science. You don't need to be a rocket scientist to understand that.

One goal, one method, I think we probably all get that. But although it's not complex, it is, I think, quite hard and quite counterintuitive. So, in verse 9, you'll find that to stress the gospel like that means that you need to resist foolish arguments.

And, Titus, you'll find that people love foolish arguments in the church. Stressing the gospel means resisting foolish arguments and people who would drag you away from it.

Stressing the gospel means empowering men and women to teach one another in chapter 2. And that will be hard because as you read chapter 2, you find that life gets in the way. People would rather give themselves to other things than to teaching one another.

[13 : 06] And so, it will be difficult. Stressing the gospel means having leaders who, chapter 1, verse 9, hold firmly to the trustworthy messages that has been taught so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

In other words, you are going to have to train the leaders of the church to understand the gospel so that they might proclaim the gospel and that they might be able to refute people who are opposing the gospel.

It's also hard, I think, because at times the tool will seem slow and ineffective. I think it will seem easier for Titus and maybe for the church in Crete and maybe even for us to use other tools rather than just the proclamation of the gospel.

Maybe it's easier to guilt trip people into living what we consider good lives. Maybe it's easier for us to set rules. Maybe it's easier to browbeat people. Maybe it's easier to generate a culture of judgmentalism. Those might get you quick responses but the fact is none of those things have any transformative power.

They're the operating tactics of dying churches. Living churches remind their members that they were sinners and that what changed was they encountered the grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[14 : 12] He gave them new birth by the Spirit for his glory. And that is what makes us new people with new motives and new desires and new longings. So tonight what we're sort of setting out before us as a church is we want to be a church that is committed to doing good for the persecuted church around the world.

How do you get a church to commit themselves to doing good for the persecuted church around the world? Let me tell you. You do it with the one method by stressing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

None of us are here because we're perfect. We're here because we've encountered the grace of God in Jesus Christ and that will motivate us to do good to the worldwide church as we pray for and stand alongside those for whom following Christ is costing their lives.

So we stress, don't we, the one tool of stressing the gospel. It's the only tool that we have for the liberation of ourselves from our selfish desires that we might live to the praise and glory of God.

Well, let me pray and then we'll sing and then we will hand over to Daniel and to Liz. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we want to be this kind of church full of people who devote themselves to doing what is good and so we pray that we might be a church that stresses this trustworthy saying that once we were foolish, enslaved to all kinds of passions and pleasures, living in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another, but we have encountered the Savior Jesus, not because of the good things that we have done, but because of his mercy, he has saved us and washed us by the Spirit that we might live lives now to your praise and glory doing what is good, excellent and profitable.

[16 : 12] Help us, we pray, to be that church. Help us especially to do that in response to the needs of the worldwide church. Bless the rest of our time together this evening as we hear how we might do that.

in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Instead of Steve, talking to Daniel, I just want to say a little bit about why I'm here and then I'm going to introduce you to Daniel who is going to ask, is going to answer a couple of questions and then tell us a little bit more about Open Doors.

So, I have volunteered to work with Open Doors as an advocate, so it's part of the advocacy team and that requires us or me to get you and others to really take the role seriously to understand what the persecuted church is all about and for us to be able to write to our local MPs and for Open Doors to send me information and for me on behalf of Open Doors to talk about the situation.

And so really the whole idea is that we as Christians, part of the whole body of Christ, see not just our brothers and sisters as people over in Africa or in India or in Sudan or in other places that are far off but actually see that we are part of the body of Christ and that together we are going to not just pray for them but do things that are practical which will enable MPs to speak on our behalf and have influence on people in other governments across the world.

So that's why I'm here because that's hopefully my role it's a volunteer role about three times a year I think it is to represent Open Doors. So that's me for now.

[18 : 02] So this is Daniel and so Daniel is the parliamentary officer for Open Doors. UK and Ireland and I'm going to just tell us a little bit about yourself that's the first question and the second question why Open Doors when there are quite a few other organisations that deal with the persecuted church.

Open Doors is hiring? No I'm joking. A little bit about myself. So my name is Daniel I'm the parliamentary officer for Open Doors UK and Ireland. I did that full time for about two and a half years and I now do that three days a week and I serve a couple of days a week with another ministry Jews for Jesus from a Jewish background.

I'm married I've been married almost five years my wife's American she also works for a church so we're a proper Christian family as you can see I'm joking and one of my favourite passages in the Bible is Titus chapter 3 so I'm really pleased to have heard that this morning as God's really used it to encourage me in my walk why Open Doors so I heard when I was gosh maybe 17 or 18 a speaker come and speak at my church about the work of Open Doors and I was really touched that they cared about both the physical health you know with humanitarian aid and food and water and things like that of the people to whom they were ministering and the spiritual health and that both of those were as essential if not the spiritual health being more essential to Open Doors and there were it sort of felt with lots of other organisations that you had to choose either to support people through material aid or spiritual aid like the Bible and church networks and things like that and Open Doors seemed to marry the two very well so I worked in politics for some years in sort of standard secular politics and so when the opportunity came up to combine my experience in theology and in ministry with my experience in politics you know it was a real opportunity that you know the Lord blessed me to sort of walk into okay can I just ask one other question sure we know that there are 100 and I think 195 countries in the world and of those the world watch list list 50

I don't know if you're aware of that 50 countries in the world that are high or extremely high in terms of persecution so 195 50 countries that's just over 25% of countries that suffer very high persecution are there any particular countries that are close to your personal heart or that's very close to Open Doors yeah I think the countries that have really sort of stuck with me are Nigeria I've done a lot of work on Nigeria and some of the stories you hear from Nigeria I mean frankly they're the most brutal and the most unpleasant often they're the ones where you sort of go okay I need to step away from my desk for a moment India has stuck with me I suppose partly because it's not a country you'd expect to have a large amount of persecution India I've spent a lot of time with North Koreans recently and they all have quite incredible stories North Korea is obviously a fascinating country you know so North Korea is very important to me as well and what about

Open Doors as an organisation are there sort of you know countries that would flag up to say you know these are the main countries that we when we meet in groups later on so we will be talking about the top 10 countries but I think outside of the top 10 as well you know increasingly concerning is India which is at number 11 China which is at number 19 Nikolagra which has shot up the list from 50 to 30 or something after imprisoning a large amount of bishops and then exiling them so those are countries which aren't we aren't going to discover India I will briefly discuss but are countries to remember in your prayers so I'm going to hand over to you to do a bit and what will happen after that is that there will be an opportunity for questions and answers questions and answers yeah that's it so you can ask us questions about the work of Open Doors but Daniel obviously will answer nearly all of them and then we'll break up into groups as we normally do to pray specifically about the work thank you thank you so much so firstly my first question you see you never know when you go into a church the level of knowledge and it seems like the level of knowledge is very high here so I'm not sure I'm going to inform you of anything but I'll do my best I'll tell you some good stories but I'm going to ask has anyone heard of the world watch list I suspect the answer may be yes yes okay good so the world watch list is sort of the flagship research project of Open

[23 : 20] Doors which has been going on since 1993 and details the worst places in the world to be a Christian it's fortunate that we really trust is a resource and it's a resource that's used by governments across the world to help inform policy and shape the way that aid is delivered and things like that so before I'm going to show you a brief video about the top 10 countries but before I do that the only bit of audience participation I'll ask for what do you guys might know this as well no no hints less but what countries do you think might be in the top 10 the hardest places in the world to be a Christian North Korea any others Somalia okay South Korea sorry Eritrea okay Iran Iran okay okay yeah yeah okay any any others any any more for any more before we see the answers sorry

Bangladesh okay interesting I don't think I've ever you know I don't think I've ever had Bangladesh that's a really interesting one well let's watch the video and see if any of those countries come up oh one more slide there you go could praying put you in danger could go into church risk your life could following Jesus cost you your job your home or your family around the world today our Christian brothers and sisters are counting the cost of their faith and these are the 10 countries where the price of following Jesus is highest number 10 Afghanistan the Taliban hunts for hidden networks of believers suspected Christians can be arrested interrogated and even killed and number nine Iran house churches are seen as a threat to national security pastor Anushivan has started serving a 10-year prison sentence after 30 agents raided his home

Sudan is at number eight in the chaos and conflict of civil war Christians are especially vulnerable believers have been attacked their property looted and churches closed number seven Pakistan Pakistani Christians are seen as second-class citizens false accusations of blasphemy result in innocent believers facing mob violence Christian girls continue to be abducted and forced to convert to Islam Nigeria is at number six more Christians are killed for their faith in Nigeria than in all the other countries of the world combined pastor Zachariah came home one day to find his village attacked and his wife and son murdered by militants number five Yemen the very small number of Yemeni Christians must worship in secret house church leader Salah is on the wanted list but despite death threats he courageously continues his ministry at number four is Eritrea

Christian activities are severely restricted when Abdullah told people about Jesus he was sent to prison the conditions were so terrible that he never came out alive Libya is number three on the list Libya considers itself to be a completely Islamic nation Libyan believers who tell others about Jesus risk arrest and violent opposition number two Somalia in this highly restrictive Islamic society even the suspicion of being a Christian is extremely dangerous converts who are discovered may instantly pay with their lives and at number one North Korea this remains the most costly place in the world to be a Christian even owning a Bible is illegal Jiho's father was taken away when security agents discovered his secret book she never saw him again Christians are sent to appalling labor camps or simply killed on the spot more than 365 million Christians face high levels of persecution and discrimination that's one in seven Christians globally and every one of them a son or daughter a mother a father a child of God for nearly 70 years open doors has been supporting our persecuted church family helping them to stand strong they are counting the cost of following Christ and with your help they can keep believing knowing that Jesus is worth everything so as you can see this paints a fairly sobering picture of the state of the world for many of our brothers and sisters and I don't want to share these stories just for sort of just because it's interesting or for some sort of voyeuristic thrill but because I hope that it encourages your faith and it's certainly encouraged mine and challenged my faith as well so briefly just before we start I do want to mention that I've shied away from some of the less than pleasant stories but some of these still will be quite heavy so do please bear that in mind firstly a little bit about the world watch list so open doors researchers on the ground use first second and third hand sources to verify allegations of persecution against Christians so we need to remember when we look at these numbers that they are vastly underestimated a colleague of mine just got back from Nigeria and told me how much he believes they are underestimated by so if a report of persecution could not be verified by an outside organization is not included now you may have seen in the video that more people die for their faith in

Nigeria than anywhere else in the world and you may be thinking well why is it not number one then and it's true 89 percent of those killed for their faith are killed in Nigeria on average 14 Christians are killed for their faith every day so in fact let me tell you briefly about one girl before I move on who you may have heard of and this is again on the lighter end of the spectrum of what happens in Nigeria her name was Deborah Samuel or Deborah Emmanuel depending on how you understand her name she was a young girl from a school in northern Nigeria and she was part of a class whatsapp group and after her exams she posted or a student sorry posted asking how everyone had done in the exams and Deborah posted that she wanted to thank Jesus that she had done well as a result of that she was dragged out by some boys in her class and stoned to death because she had committed blasphemy in their eyes and they were filmed doing this and the videos are over social media you can see them and the police have seen these videos and not one of those individuals have been arrested by the Nigerian police force so this is an example of what we call in the methodology the smash so this is the smash of persecution the outright violence and then we also have something that we call the squeeze and this is those daily forms of persecution like financial educational and health exclusion or community ostracism that make up these sort of more pervasive forms of persecution so the world watch list takes into account the smash the outright violence as well as the squeeze the sort of daily grind the christians face around the world as well as things like population sizes now i'm delighted to say that this is well received the world watch this last year the parliamentary launch we had over a hundred members of parliament from across every party when i say every party we even had andrew bridgen who briefly started his own party reform parties you may remember before losing his seat so we have literally every party exception fame but what can you do anyway um god has in his mercy used this world watch list as a way of sharing the stories around the world now earlier we heard a passage um written by paul to titus and many of the early christians that paul wrote to experienced persecution and it can be easy for us to assume that this is something of the past but it is really not for the vast majority of the world so i want to tell you briefly about a friend of mine timothy cho now timothy is from north korea he's the first north korean in this country to receive a master's degree he works in parliament he works for cchq as well and he stood for election for the conservative party um now when he was born he was born when kim il-sung was still the leader of north korea so the founder of the north korean state and when timothy told me that when kim il-sung died the first thing that he did was to ask his father when he would die because he assumed kim il-sung is his god he receives life from his god and so his god's dead he must be dead timothy uh who is now christian he was put in in a concentration camp eventually and he was tortured in horrendous ways and regularly beaten and he still bears the scars of this on his body and frankly on his his mind and spirit to this day um one of the things that open doors partners do around the world including in north korea is to get people bibles that they can understand in their own language and i've heard stories from north korean women who are in these labor camps where they work all day intense hours and they've buried a bible by a tree or something in the camp and they risk their lives to

[33 : 41] leave the the dormitories where they're kept in the middle of the night to get their bible and to pray quietly one with another and to sing to whisper the words of a song and to study the bible together instead of sleeping i think you know if i was working that amount of time i'd probably be like ah you know maybe another time i'd easily sleep but no they have the faith to get up in the middle of the night and do that and even if they manage to escape um you know before they're killed um you know it's it's a miracle it is a miracle and open doors helps to facilitate people when they can escape by providing them safety in in neighboring countries and ways out of danger so in the ancient roman days that we just read a document from many of the caesars were regarded as gods and i just googled actually when titus was written it was written under the reign of emperor nero who was very much regarded as a god and we can think of a time where leaders of countries are regarded as gods as being long dead but in north korea that is still very much the case i remember reading a story of a north korean man in every north korean home you need to have a wall which has a picture of the three leaders and nothing else can be on this wall and you can get inspected and this man a flood hit his house and he saved the two most important things in the world to him which was his baby daughter and a picture of kim il-sung and as the door opened a wave hit him and he felt the picture begin to slip and he let go of his baby daughter and he saved the portrait of kim il-sung and he was given a medal and paraded as a national hero similar things have happened in other countries and in china i was speaking to a chinese man recently who was six years old when chairman mao died and he recalled to me believing that chairman mao was god he said twice a day every day him and his classmates were hauled before a portrait of chairman mao and forced to silently confess their sins against him the party and the state and they had to vow to do better in the future in a sort of parody of faith now you may wonder how it's possible that christians can survive and the light of christ can remain in such darkness but as it did under nero so it does today under xi Jinping and kim yong un in china today there are more christians more members of illegal christian churches than there are members of the communist party so this year open doors launched its arise africa campaign which i think uh liz has done a wonderful job of of getting you to sign and it will be a multi-year campaign focused on sub-saharan africa now i've just briefly briefly touched on nigeria as i say nigeria is the place you're most likely to die for your faith most likely to be kidnapped for your faith the level of persecution in this part of the world is unimaginable we're talking uh tens of millions displaced tens of thousands hundreds of thousands murdered and in long-term kidnap and i want to show you one brief story from a guy called manga who i met just a couple of just a couple of weeks ago in northern ireland uh we had to do a speech together he gave his story this incredible testimony i'll share a little bit of it and then i had to stand up and talk about government works i felt a little bit uh i was like how do i follow that couldn't i go on first anyway um he told the story and i will i'll take it down a little bit because it's a hard story he was he didn't take his faith very seriously he lived in northern nigeria and one day boko haram came to his house and they demanded everything in his house that was expensive you know that was worth anything and then they beat his mother in front of him and left her for dead

and they took him and his brother and his father outside and um i won't get into detail because it is pretty horrific but they they believe that the more they cause christians to suffer uh the greater glory they receive so you know do with that what you will but they asked his father and brother to renounce their faith and they didn't and they were killed brutally and he realized at that moment as he watched his father die it's what he told me that his life flashed before his eyes and he saw his sin and he saw that he had not taken his faith seriously and he repented on the spot and they came to him and they said uh will you renounce your faith and he said no i will die as a christian and they began to kill him again in a long and very unpleasant way and as they were doing this the lord's prayer ran through his head and he said he got to the point where it says father forgive them for they know not what they do and he realized he needed to forgive these people who were killing him while they were killing him and so he did he prayed in his head uh father forgive them for they know not what they do those famous words of our lord and he said that moment the pain stopped unimaginable pain stopped and they left him for dead they believed they killed him he lost an incredible amount of blood was rushed to hospital and died in the hospital and you know by god's grace miraculously um was resuscitated and came back and survived and has incredible scarring now he was actually taken out of the area because the extremists found out he was alive and continued hunting for him and open doors took him out of that area and helped him with counseling um trauma counseling safe networks and that sort of stuff and you hear stories like this across the region of africa now there's one other brief thing i want to touch on which is what we call digital persecution and it's defined well i define it as the use of new and emerging technologies as a tool of persecution so a couple of years ago open doors held a digital persecution conference the result of which was a document which you can find on our website which the with the universities of birmingham and rohampton and we found that there were three major ways in which new technologies are used to persecute which is surveillance disinformation and censorship now where ai is a concern for many people around the world not many are thinking about the impact on already marginalized groups so of course it's not just christians that face persecution i do want to briefly touch on one example of a non-christian group because it's it shows us the extent to which this technology can be used and that's the uyghurs in china who are not christian most of which are muslim but there are a minority of whom uh that are christian they live in in a digital police state cameras have facial technology facial recognition technology and technology that can recognize your ethnicity based on markers they're constantly tracked through their phones and daily go through these big integrated gates that take all the data from your phone and analyze it all by ai and then the ai ranks you according to a traffic light system green normal surveillance amber maybe you get a camera put in your home maybe you get a you know bug put in your home and red you're arrested the system tells the police to arrest you and then the ai interviews you it measures your heart rate it measures your blood pressure it measures all sorts of things and if it determines that you are guilty you're then sent to a re-education or labor camp now china is using xinjiang this region where the uyghurs live as a showroom for the world's dictators and uyghurs are being used to show off their authoritarian wares to the rest of the world and it's alleged that chinese technology has been used against lots of people including christians as far as north korea iran myanmar and russia likewise in china when uh during covid when when churches met um online the equivalent of zoom uh

listened out for words like jesus and christ and christian and if these occurred repeatedly would shut down the meeting the only place you can get an online uh version of the bible the the characters for christ and christian have been replaced in india disinformation spreads like wildfire christians are frequently accused of forcibly converting people and of being cow murderers um there was a local pastor only 21 years old and he was accused of um there was some villagers came became ill and he was accused of using christian witchcraft against them and they killed him in a brutal way and it turned out to be uh the water was infected but this lie spread so fast that the newspapers reported it as true that this christian witch was doing this in manipal last year one social media lie led to 240 churches being burned down the public sexual assault of at least five christian women the deaths of many and the displacement of tens of thousands there are still 20 000 people living in camps supplied by organizations like open doors because they face persecution in the mainstream camps so what can you do and i'll wrap up here what can you do the first thing that you can do uh as manipal there the first thing that you can do is to give um obviously none of this work is free and unlike many other charities open doors is entirely funded by churches by people like you we take no government money and have no corporate backers if you want to give you can come and chat with me afterwards you can chat with liz chat with your pastor you can chat with whoever but do come and chat and the second thing you can do is act and liz has touched on this so i won't hammer the point home because i want some time for some questions but you you are your boss's mp right uh you you are your mp's boss other way around you are your mp's boss they do what you say i remember once a guy coming down to meet me an mp he had a stack of letters from open door and he put them on table he said how do i make this stop that you did that right we get 101 mps turn up to open doors world watch it's the largest ngo event in parliament i mean that's incredible i went to another comparable charity's launch of their report last week and they had three which is a very respectable number for an ngo god has graced us with 101 and he's done it through people like you so talk to your mp um you can talk to me about doing that talk to liz about doing that and finally pray which is the most important one and we'll be doing that later prayer changes the world if you take nothing away from this except this i'll be happy pray if your family who are persecuted again we have ways of doing this we we have a free um prayer journal that i can sign you up for at the back uh if you want to chat afterwards um um and and remember that they pray for you whenever we speak to persecuted christians they ask for prayer and they say they pray for the western church which never ceases to amaze me um but i will stop there you you you you you you you you