

Stand Against Slavery Launch  
8<sup>th</sup> November 2013  
7:45pm  
Manukau City Baptist Church

[Transcript START]

**Play You Tube Video “The Voice of Justice” by Micah Bournes**

[YouTube link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IuA2kl7yox0>]

**PART ONE:**

Good evening,

God’s voice of justice speaks tonight...

He speaks an invitation for this year’s gathering of the Baptist Churches of New Zealand, here in South Auckland.

This is not an evening of shock and awe about the atrocities of our broken world forcing you to respond with your wallet first, your fist second and your heart third.

But it is about revealing what grieves God’s heart.

This is not an evening of debate about our theological idealism between evangelism and social justice in trying to discern the appropriate Christian response to the world’s injustices.

But it is about following the footsteps of Jesus and his example.

This is not an evening about illuminating something in the cosmos where the mystical scales fall from our eyes to see the reality of the world, that up till now, was nothing more than a historical, or even a fictional notion.

But the mystery of Christ in the Holy Spirit will arouse our spirits afresh on what we already know to be true and his prompting for us to respond.

Followers of Jesus the world over grapple with many global and local issues and the issue of injustice is but one of those. Yet it seems that the issues of injustice do seem to polarise the brethren of believers in every corner of God’s creation.

Social Justice advocates are quick to own the famous passage of Luke 4 and claim the words Jesus reads from the prophet Isaiah that Jesus came for the physical poor, the prisoner, the blind and the oppressed, and claim many other passages in the attempt to advocate that the way to reach people is through our social concern and action. Here the debate begins to get inflamed and the staunch evangelicals argue evangelism is the first and foremost, and sometimes only, passage to Christ. And if you a proponent of prosperity theology you must therefore conclude that once you have been “set free” in Christ Jesus the money will come rolling in.

This two-sided debate is futile and not what Jesus was on about at all in the Luke 4 passage.

A close examination of what Jesus did, having come from 40 days of ruthless temptation by Satan to break him, filled with the Holy Spirit he announces the arrival of the Kingdom of God and God's just rule, through Jesus himself.

Not only does that need to be heralded to all who have eyes to see or ears to hear, but to heal those who have lost the ability to see or hear.

Not only does it need to be announced to those imprisoned unjustly but it needs to unlock the captive from the dungeons of a life separated from God.

Not only does it need to be proclaimed to the oppressed that freedom will come, but it also needs to promise release from the oppression of the entanglement that are shackles of Satan.

As Baptists, the inspiration of the Bible and its authority in all matters of faith and practice, is one of the mantras by which we stand. It was recently enshrined, in 1923, into our Baptist Union Incorporation Act. I say recent because this has been a mantra for the past 400 hundred years for us, as we have associated and related together under the banner of Baptist.

And so it's to this inspiration we must draw our faith and practice in the arena of justice.

These past few years, and more recently the last two, I have sensed through the whisperings of God's spirit that we must together, as a movement, reveal the Kingdom of God in all its fullness, in both proclamation and demonstration.

We must add to our strength of the proclamation of Jesus as King with the demonstration of the just rule of Jesus. A rule that requires us to make a stand on issues of injustice that we believe God is calling us to.

With mind, heart, soul and strength we must discern and establish Baptist Justice Initiatives that compel us to act as Jesus would in his ruling Kingdom.

Words are not enough on their own... Action is not enough on its own... it's only when we bring both words and action as Jesus demonstrated on numerous occasions can we truly reveal to our fellow human beings the Kingdom of God, and all its fullness. This is the Mission of God.

So tonight, having gone through much discernment, reflection, discussion, listening, and response, we introduce a new, perhaps a first, Baptist Justice Initiative, supported by both the New Zealand Baptist Missionary Society and the Baptist Union of New Zealand, an initiative that responds missionally, in both word and deed, to modern slavery and the slave trade.

**Play Video "SAS Intro" by Stand Against Slavery**

[No link - in house]

## **PART TWO:**

The Mandate of the Body of Christ to respond to the injustices of the world is well known and documented.

The call for us to respond to the plight of the poor and oppressed is clear.

The church and those who are part of its ranks has a long history of action.

Voices and action like those of Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King Jr, William Wilberforce, to name only three, have stood up and stood out as followers of Jesus marking their lives with action on what they believed and were compelled to do to right the injustices in their world, in their circle of concern with all the influence and means they could muster.

They have stamped their mark on the fabric of human society and we applaud them. They are our heroes.

Our history books echo back to us the deeds of our fellow human beings as generation after generation have attempted to fight against a prevailing evil that continues to grow as we speak.

This evil?

It is the evil of the sale and trade of a human being from one to another for the purpose of profit and/or exploitation.

What I speak of tonight is modern slavery.

What I speak of tonight is one of the fastest growing criminal activities in the world, the slave trade, or more commonly known as Human Trafficking.

What I speak of tonight is about the estimated 30 million men, women and children who do not have a voice because they are simply the property of someone else and are used for their economic uplift and perverted pleasure.

Like the 11-year girl in rural Nepal who is enchanted by the glitter and glamour of a woman who visits her village, dressed in a beautiful sari, promising the beauty and bounty of the city and with a cash payment to her parents with the promise of more, she ends up in a brothel servicing 10 to 20 men a night who simply rape her. That is modern slavery.

Or a young man, in desperate need to put food on the table, is forced to cut down trees in remote Brazil and burn them to create charcoal that is then transported to fuel the furnaces of the steel industry, for little or no pay. That is modern slavery.

Or the young boys who are lowered into deep mines in the Congo, because they are small enough, to extract a mineral called coltan that enables you and I to text, surf the internet, and talk to one another on our cell phones. That is modern slavery.

Or the whole villages trapped in rural Pakistan, or India, or Bangladesh to make millions, no billions of bricks, for virtually no pay, supposedly paying back a debt that was established three or four generations before. That is modern slavery.

Or the children who are not in school but rather rolling thousands of little cigarettes a day in India, known as the bidee industry, because their fingers are so nimble. That is modern slavery.

Or the women owned by brothel owners who every two to three weeks shift them from brothel to brothel in Lambton Quay in Wellington to ensure that customers get variety. That is modern slavery.

Or men, with the promise of money for their families back in the Islands, through an “agent” are forced to work in our agricultural and horticultural industries for very little real cash in their individual hands, because the agent has taken his profit margin. That is modern slavery.

Or the teams of builders who enter New Zealand on tourist visas to work for a building contractor, in the lucrative building industry, but must work from dawn to dusk for seven days a week, are crammed into small houses to sleep and have little food. That is modern slavery.

Or when, in every one of these scenarios, a person tries to escape and look for the help of those they think can help, are dragged back to their place of enslavement, beaten to a pulp and threatened that if they try again they will be killed, or worse their family back where they came from will be killed. That is modern slavery.

These are a very small sampling of the thousands of stories that you can read about, hear first hand from people, about the prevalence of slavery in our world today.

Last year the International Labour Organisation, part of the United Nations, published a report estimating there are 21 million slaves in the world.

Kevin Bales, well-known abolitionist and researcher, estimated that there were 27 million disposable people in the world.

Sidharth Kara, another well-known researcher in the world of anti-slavery, estimated that there were between 20 and 30 million slaves in the world.

Three weeks ago a new report was published called, **the Global Slavery Index**, by Kevin Bales and anti-slavery research organisation, Walk Free, which puts the estimates of slavery at 30 million.

This report says that there are between 470 and 520 slaves here in New Zealand. Anecdotal evidence alone suggests that this is a very conservative estimate for this country.

There are hundreds of organisations around the world who have joined the abolitionist movement to eradicate slavery.

I’ve had many discussions with people about being involved in the eradication of modern slavery to be quietly scoffed at that this is just the latest and trendy thing to do, it’s the latest fad!

A fad it may be, but 30 million people on the planet that God created for us to be free in, are not free.

Folks we have a problem, and it seems to be getting worse not better. And perhaps it is alarming for you, that it is happening right here in Aotearoa New Zealand.

When I investigated to find out what hard data there was for New Zealand, I was disappointed. The only hard data we have at present is related to one industry, the fishing industry. I have been told by researchers that gathering data for this type of thing, even here in New Zealand, is incredibly difficult to do. In the often-covert operations of data gathering they were threatened about what they were doing.

I hope that we can get some hard data that will provide for us, here in New Zealand, a sound understanding of the prevalence of slavery here.

So what should we do?

Well, as God has led and guided me, NZBMS and its Council, the Baptist Union and its council, and the many many people I have dialogued and shared this information with, and many of you are here tonight, we must respond.

We must add our weight to the already huge and growing abolition movement around the world. We need to join organisations who already have expertise in every country in the world, including New Zealand, and say we will stand, we will come alongside and we will join the fight for freedom.

How will we do this as New Zealand Baptists?

With the permission of the Mission Council of NZBMS and with a unanimous endorsement by Assembly Council of the Baptist Union, I have begun the process of starting an organisation that will provide a simple but clear interface between our Baptist Churches and the world of slavery that will help resource us in understanding what slavery and the slave trade is and how as a body we can respond.

There are many people in our Baptist churches who are already involved and already committed to eradicating slavery. At NZBMS we already have ministries that press into these areas. Some of our Baptist businesses overtly seek to address Sex Slavery in India. Many of you know that story. Go to the Marketplacers Pop-up Store in the Chapel and you buy a bag, or a journal, or a hand sewn sari blanket. So we are already involved, but we must do more.

The interface, this new organisation will be called, Stand Against Slavery.

Stand Against Slavery!

If there was an organisation that in three words covered your vision, your elevator speech, your bumper sticker, your strategy, your message, your point of difference, your proposition, your reason for being, your purpose, these three words are pretty clear.

Stand - To be in an upright position on the feet. To rise to one's feet.

Against - in opposition to; contrary to; adverse or hostile to. In resistance to or defence from. In an opposite direction to. Into contact or collision with; toward; upon.

Slavery - The condition of a slave; bondage. The keeping of slaves as a practice or institution. A state of subjection like that of a slave. Severe toil; drudgery.

These are the regular definitions of these three words and when strung together in a sentence creates a clear, concise and robust message.

Stand Against Slavery exists to "fight for a world where freedom reigns."

It is not enough to advocate freedom and call humanity to the cause of freedom. The reign of freedom comes when it has conquered and removed slavery from its throne.

The initials of the name Stand Against Slavery are not lost on people, particularly the warriors among us. This is a battle and it's a battle that must be fought.

Stand Against Slavery will have five underlying guidelines that will shape our activity.

### **1. We will be a voice for the enslaved**

The world has already determined that freedom and liberty is a right of every human being. As a nation we signed the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 1948, 65 years ago. Article four of that declaration says:

**“No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.”**

In every country in the world, slavery is illegal. In every country in the world slavery exists.

Stand Against Slavery will be a voice for those who are enslaved and can no longer, or may never have been, able to speak for themselves and their desire for freedom.

We will do this by partnering with organisations who have solid reputations in the world around slavery eradication.

We will help you engage with those organisations as you discern your participation.

We will also be engaging in the different ministries within our Baptist movement.

We have already begun the strategic dialogue with Baptist Youth Ministries with Gary Grut and his team. I would love us to grow a movement of 20,000 young people to stand against slavery as a statement here in New Zealand.

We are talking with Children & Family ministries on how we help grow the next generation of abolitionists now.

I would love to develop a dialogue with community ministries, with Māori, with our ethnic communities to better understand where slavery interconnects with them.

### **2. We will seek holistic freedom**

If complete freedom and liberty is a right for all, then every dimension of freedom is important, be it physical, spiritual, emotional, or psychological.

In advocating for the enslaved Stand Against Slavery will fully respect culture, background and belief without compromising a person's right to freedom.

We will do this by committing to the long haul of helping people to freedom and we will choose partners who have a similar commitment.

We will help you by providing you with opportunities to engage in that long term help. You may be skilled in trauma counselling; you may have expertise that a partner organisation needs; you can pray for people who have long term rehabilitation needs in order to re-enter society.

### **3. We will strive to eliminate slavery demand**

Intervention in the slavery supply chain is critical, and it must increase with urgency.

However, it is insufficient if we are to genuinely see a world where freedom reigns over slavery.

We must also enter the fight to end the demand for slavery.

This is an area where very little is done around the world because it is so complex, however Stand Against Slavery will do everything in its influence to see initiatives started that will see demand eliminated.

This includes addressing uninformed and greed based consumerism, disproportionate wealth distribution and the devaluing of humanity because of gender, societal ranking or ability.

We will engage this area by first being learners and gathering around the table people who can inform us.

We have great thinkers in our movement of Baptist Churches and I hope you will want to be part of building knowledge and steps toward action.

### **4. We will be local and global**

Freedom is the right of everyone the world over and this includes New Zealand.

Stand Against Slavery will apportion sufficient energy and time to the enslaved in New Zealand as it will to those enslaved around the globe.

We will help you by resourcing you with avenues to serve in both local and global contexts.

### **5. We will pursue justice from a Christian Worldview**

The Christian faith teaches that followers of God, through Jesus Christ, are called, among other things, to set the oppressed free.

As a Baptist movement this allows us another opportunity to bring Christ's light to this country and to this world.

We want to encourage people of all backgrounds and faiths to join in the cause of Stand Against Slavery, however, we want to be clear that we act and pursue justice from a Christian worldview.

The task I have painted just now is enormous.

To consume it in one bite is impossible, but together we can build a movement of people and a movement of action a little bit at a time.

As Steve Mihaere said at the Powhiri yesterday afternoon, to eat an elephant, you eat it one bite at a time.

If you read all the literature on Modern Slavery they will nearly always say that slavery CAN be eradicated and it can be eradicated in our life time, in one generation, within 25 years.

Having personally walked the streets of Dhaka and Kolkata, and seen the red-light districts of Bangkok and Pattya, let me say this. Slavery will NOT be eradicated in one generation. It might be eradicated in New Zealand in one generation, but not around the world. More realistically it could be eradicated in 4 generations. My daughter's grandchildren could live in a world where slavery does not exist.

But that can only happen if this generation does what it needs to do to leave a legacy for our children to carry on.

So Stand Against Slavery needs to recognise the marathon race it is in and go step by step to build something that can be wound down at the close of this century.

It begins with us folk. It begins with New Zealand Baptists.

In establishing Stand Against Slavery as an organisation, which will stand independent of NZBMS and the Baptist Union, but strongly linked, we want it to be available to the wider body of Christ and the wider community of Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Its genesis is Baptist but its reach is far wider.

There are many here who have already seen some activity on Facebook and on our website. I am in discussion with a number of churches who have already indicated "we want stand, we want to engage."

What has been a real blessing with these churches and individuals is that they are uncertain as to where this will go but they have discerned already that they must join in the stand against slavery.

I want to give shout out to Royal Oak Baptist Church. Eric Schilperoort following a Carey Baptist College conversation evening marched straight up to me after the meeting and said "can Royal Oak Baptist Church be a founding church for Stand Against Slavery?"

What has happened in the weeks that have followed is a group of people who simply want to serve the vision. From within their congregation a group of passionate people have gathered around the table to try and understand what the heck I'm going on about in an attempt to respond.

Nicola Winthrop, who is part of this group, has come on board two days a week to help me put wheels to this idea and you will see more of her in the days and months ahead.

It's time to rise up! It's time stand up!

We are on our way and we do this to serve you the family of Baptist Churches in this cause that has captured so much of our hearts already.

As I was discerning what all this meant during my six months of sabbatical I wrote down a few words of lament and have just this week refreshed it for tonight...

Twenty-one Million! Twenty-seven Million! Thirty Million!  
Why do you shout out? Why do you cry for freedom?



Why the noise? Why the call? Why the pleading? Why? Why me?

Why not?

Why don't you give voice to the voiceless?

Why don't you give freedom to the slave?

Why don't you rescue those who are helplessly trapped?

Are you not compelled to respond?

Are you not instructed to make a stand?

If I don't, what does that say about my faith?

My life in Christ? My being? My relationship with you oh God?

I heard it once declared,

"A decision to be silent is a decision to be in favour."

A decision to be silent about slavery is to condone slavery.

To be silent... to do nothing, is to sin? Is it not?

Yes we can speak about other things...

We can speak about the devastation of land mines.

We can speak about the war on terror.

We can speak about the hungry, the poor, the HIV/Aids epidemic, the leper, the disabled, the disadvantaged, the disenfranchised.

And we must.

But who will speak for the child soldier, the forced bride, the forced donator of organs or babies, the forced prison slave, the forced prostitute, the enslaved village who for several generations have been enslaved for a made up debt?

Who will stand for the enslaved?

My God! My Saviour! My King! My Ruler! I serve at your pleasure!

You ask, who will stand?

I will O Lord, I will stand,

I will stand against slavery!

**Play You Tube Video "Twenty Seven Million (with Lyrics)" song by Matt Redman & LZ7, video mash by christpoherscott2112.**

[YouTube link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IZyrh5XmoGQ>]

[Pastor Das and his team come on stage]

### **PART THREE:**

Earlier I said that this is not an evening of shock and awe about the atrocities of our broken world forcing you to respond with your wallet first, your fist second and your heart third. But rather it is about revealing what grieves God's heart.

When we, the body of Christ, have God's grieving heart revealed to us, we must respond. Tonight I want give you an invitation to respond.

The words in the bridge of the song we have just listened to are the most challenging to me...

“Little girl don’t cry  
Let me dry your eyes  
In the darkest night  
You’re not alone  
Hold on through the storm  
You’re not on your own  
Hold on, love will come”

Will the enslaved in the world hold on through the storm?  
Will love come? Will we come?

So I invite you to act on this knowledge tonight. I understand for some this will raise more questions than answers. If you’re coming to my QnA workshop tomorrow you may discover Q’s win over A’s, but if all the answers were neatly sorted and arranged we probably would not have needed to be here tonight.

At four commitment stations around this auditorium is a table with two of my team standing by. On the tables are four things for you to move, just a little bit, from knowledge to action.

1. The first item is a commitment book inviting you to simply write your name, your church if you attend one, and your signature. This book is nothing more than a physical commitment for yourself, that on this day, having heard about Stand Against Slavery and you want to commit to learning more or be involved somehow. You just know deep in your spirit this is an issue we collectively need to respond to. We will not contact you on the basis of you writing your name. For me it will signal the number of people who said yes, we must do something.
2. The second item is a small candle, with a silver ribbon. Please take this home and commit to stopping for approximately an hour. Remove the ribbon and place it in your Bible, and light the candle, which represents Christ’s light shining on the injustice of slavery and the slave trade. As you sit, lament, pray, seek God as to how he would have you respond to this injustice. If you are able to, sit until the candle self extinguishes. Can we give that amount of time to think about this important issue?
3. We have reproduced the lament I read to you before, for you to use when sitting with God.
4. Finally, the fourth item is an information card and how to contact us.

So, sign the commitment book; that’s the immediate action step.

Light a candle and pray; that’s this week’s action step.

If you believe you want to be part of the Stand Against Slavery, then having done these two things, go to [standagainstsavery.com](http://standagainstsavery.com) and subscribe to our regular communication and be part of a new movement of God’s people, which will extend to a wider community involvement across this nation.

Our website over the next few months will expand and increase. We will let you know as it changes and is populated with important information and avenues to get involved.

On stage is Pastor Das of the Otahuhu Community Baptist Church, Tamil congregation, and they will sing for us. When he and his team sing that will be your invitation to go up to the commitment stations.

Once you have been to the station please return to your seat because we have not finished. Our final act tonight is to cover, to seal this time with prayer to God.

Pastor Das invited me to share at his church family camp. It was a true privilege to be with them and talk about a topic that is extremely sensitive to talk about, but I was astounded and blessed by the reception and dialogue.

The team wrote a song for the weekend about how we respond when God calls us.

So I invite you to come, make a stand, a stand against slavery.

[Pastor Das and his team sing their song]

[Soft music in background if song finished and people are still at stations]

[As people were still coming forward National Leader Craig Vernall, Mission Council Chair Greg Knowles, former NZBMS General Director and former National Leader Ian Brown, and former National Leader Brian Winslade came on stage to pray for this venture.]

[Transcript END]