

195: Celebrate our stories from 2024 Testify Congress with Commissioner Bronwyn Buckingham

We're back with more highlights from the 2024 Testify Congress.

Last month, in Pasadena, California, The Salvation Army from around the Western Territory joined for an event focused on teaching, training and motivating Salvationists to tell the story of Jesus more often and to more people.

And The Salvation Army's international leaders, General Lyndon Buckingham and Commissioner Bronwyn Buckingham, traveled from London to be part of it all.



You [heard from the General](#) a couple episodes ago, and today, we're sharing Commissioner Bronwyn's message from the second main session of the Congress with some 3,000 attendees at the Pasadena Convention Center Civic Auditorium.

Commissioner Bronwyn, a Salvation Army officer since 1990, now serves as World President of Women's Ministries.

Listen in as she celebrates our stories, shares a bit of her own and encourages you in testifying to yours.

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Commissioner Bronwyn Buckingham: Well, I think that you would have to be a fairly heartless person to have not been moved by this evening. And I don't think there's a heartless person in the house tonight. I feel in a way like this is a salvation meeting that I grew up with in The Salvation Army many years ago, where I remember the saints in the corps telling their stories week after week.

My old granddad who used to stand up and we used to snicker a little bit because he would say the same thing over and over again every week. He would say, Down through the years, the Lord has been faithful to me. But I've been reminded again tonight about how rich my life is because of the

saints who I grew up surrounded by, who shared their stories. And I feel like I've been, in a way, transported back there tonight by hearing these amazing stories, but it's been in a wonderful, modern, relevant way.

The story of Jesus never changes the methods by which we portray it maybe do, and of course, they need to. But the story of Jesus is absolutely timeless and changeless. And I'm so grateful to have been part of this tonight, to hear this banquet of stories that we're feasted on. And I trust that you feel the same. Yes, yes, it's been wonderful, hasn't it? Yeah.

I've been really stirred in my heart by the truth that each of us is created in the image of our loving God and his greatest desire is to be in a personal relationship with him. And in the stories that we've heard tonight, we've heard again the creativity of God, that there is no one way in which he reaches into the hearts of people. He knows what our needs are and he knows where to meet us at the point of our need. And we've been reminded again tonight that he pursues and he guides us even before we acknowledge him.

Those who've shared their story tonight all had a different journey toward new life in Christ. But his protection, his guidance, his patience, his unconditional love, and his amazing grace leading to transformation are the common theme. Praise his wonderful name, yes?

We've been reminded by the singing of the youth chorus just a few moments ago through the powerful lyrics that they sang that each of our stories, with all their joys and all the heartaches, are held in love by the one who longs to hold us close.

Nothing given over to Jesus is beyond his capacity to restore and renew in us and through us for others. Your testimony. My testimony is a powerful tool in his hands. This is my testimony from death to life. Because grace rewrote my story, I'll testify. By Jesus Christ the righteous, I'm justified. This is my testimony. This is my testimony.

So sang my then 5-year-old grandson at the top of his lungs in the back of a car one day when we were traveling somewhere, listening to his church playlist, I kid you not, at five years old, his church playlist on his mum's iPad. Now I don't really think, that 5-year-old Israel fully understood the deep truth of those words. But now at almost eight, he's learning. And I'm praying for his understanding to keep growing deeper. Because I do know the life-transforming truth of those words.

God's grace rewrote my story when I first accepted the truth of Jesus and I asked his forgiveness and made him Lord of my life. Grace offers fresh forgiveness for every mistake I make. Grace reminds me that the unconditional love that God offers me is the love that I must then offer to others. Grace strengthens me to keep responding yes to the will of God, especially on the days when the easier answer would be no. Grace rewrites my story every single day.

In Ephesians chapter two, Paul describes how this beautiful gift of grace is offered to any who choose to accept it. God saved us by his grace when we believed and we can't take credit for this. It is a gift from God. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus so we can do the good things he planned for us

long ago. Amen. Now Paul quite obviously knew our human tendency towards wanting to take credit for things that really somebody else deserves. He makes it clear that nothing we have or haven't done can earn our salvation. It is only out of God's heart of love for his children, who he refers to as God's masterpieces. That's you and me, my friends.

Be reminded again tonight that you are a precious masterpiece of God, created in his image to do the works he has planned for you and that by his grace, he gave us Jesus through whom our restoration into relationship with him is possible. He offers and with humility and gratitude, we receive. Our gift to him is to make the pursuit of growing into the likeness of Christ the priority of our life.

We are called to live then in this world as people whose lives have been transformed. Transformed by Jesus, as we've heard over and over again tonight. Ensuring that the story we tell is modeled in our actions towards others. Grace given to others through us ushers in God's kingdom culture and a little piece of the world is changed in those moments. As I recall my grandson singing, grace rewrote my story at 5 years old. This is my testimony. I continue to pray every day that the life-transforming truth of those words will reach deep into his heart. And I thank God again tonight that it has reached into mine. I don't ever want to lose the wonder of this truth.

So whether you're in the house tonight listening to this or whether you're watching on a screen through a live stream, I pray you have a personal story of God's redeeming grace to celebrate and tell. And if not, then please know this evening that he is just one request away from rewriting your current script into something beautiful and transformative. He is just waiting for you to ask. Seek him. If you haven't already, seek him. And then seek out someone who knows this truth and who lives this truth, who can walk closely with you as you discover more about Jesus.

Praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear son. He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his son and forgave our sins. He has showered his kindness on us along with all wisdom and understanding.

Thank you Paul for writing those words to the Ephesians all of those years ago that remain so relevant and so life-giving for us on this evening here in Pasadena tonight. He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding. Surely there is no greater story that could be told. This is my testimony.

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