A TALE OF GREAT DETERMINATION

AN EXAMPLE FOR ROHINGYA TO FOLLOW

The great educational achievement of one Rohingya I met in completing the "Global Youth Climate Training" program, despite being a displaced person, reminds me of the story about a great man who lived from 1759 – 1833. Although he was already a well-educated individual, William Wilberforce’s story is also a story of great determination. It is about a man who would not give up pursuing what he believed in.

Wilberforce was born in Hull, England, into a rich family of merchants who became a member of the English parliament in 1780. Wilberforce championed many causes, but he fought most tirelessly against the Slave Trade and slavery and started representing the cause in Parliament.

At the time, the slave trade made great profits for those who sold and exchanged enslaved people, apparently unaware of how unjust and inhumane the practice was.

Quoting him: “So enormous, so dreadful, so irremediable did the [slave] trade’s wickedness appear that my own mind was completely made up for abolition. Let the consequences be what they would: I, from this time determined that I would never rest until I had effected its abolition.”

Wilberforce persisted for decades to have the Slave Trade banned, eventually succeeding. He met fierce opposition but would not back off.

He fought without resting, so devoted was he to this cause. From 1789, he regularly introduced bills in Parliament to ban the Slave Trade. Those who were making fortunes from the trade fiercely opposed him, using all kinds of delaying tactics. The first time he introduced a bill, he lost the debate by 163 votes to 88. He became the target of tirades and death threats. But he never gave up.

Although Wilberforce reintroduced the Abolition Bill almost every year in the 1790’s, little progress was made. But he remained optimistic that one day, his cause would meet success. He was determined to never let go of the battle. Eventually, on February 23, 1807, he managed to wake up the British Parliament.

But slavery itself was not abolished, and Wilberforce’s resolve to end it never stopped. He was joined by like-minded Christian friends and for twenty years they worked to turn the public and political leaders against the evils of slavery.

Eventually, Wilberforce wrote one last petition. The debate lasted for three months. On July 26, 1833, the Abolition of Slavery bill passed its third reading. A messenger rushed to Wilberforce’s house where he lay sick to tell him that slavery in the British colonies would finally be abolished.

Just three days later, on July 29th, William Wilberforce died.

He must have died with great peace in his heart. How he must have thanked God!

Think of this: To have been disturbed by something as big and evil as this . . . to have been able to speak out this forcefully, not letting go until his cause was won—even till his dying day.

If fighting and winning against such evil was possible for Wilberforce, what might be possible for Rohingya?

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