

Peace in the Church Part 2

1 Thessalonians 5:16-22

14 March 10

Let's take our Bibles and open up to that passage that we just sang in First Thessalonians chapter five. Tonight we're going to look at verses 16 through 22 and, Lord willing, the next Lord's Day we'll finish up our study in First Thessalonians. And then we have the two Sundays, Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday, where we won't be meeting on Sunday nights because some other services that we're going to be having. But after that I am planning on starting a series on, I don't know what the title will be yet, but it will be something like the Christian and his finances. About you and your money, what God says about you and your stuff. Obviously our economy is up and down, nobody knows what's going on right now. And there is an awful lot of Christian material, some of it is so called Christian material regarding you and your money, and we want to just dive in and look at what does the scripture say not only about the practical how do you handle your money, what does the Bible say about that, but what does it say about your heart, your attitude, your plans? All those kind of things. We'll be starting that up in a few weeks.

But tonight I'm really excited to come to this passage in First Thessalonians chapter five verses 16 through 22. Let me read those verses for us as we come to our study of God's word tonight. It says, "Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil."

As we've looked at this book together we've seen that in many ways the Thessalonians had a model church. We can be thankful for this letter that Paul wrote to this church and for the example that it presents to us and the insight that we gain into this wonderful church which really provides a model for us. And as we have seen in our first three chapters, the first three chapters were more personal in nature as Paul gave thanks for the work that he had done and it was preserving in the city of Thessalonica, even though Paul and the believers in Thessalonica had suffered and were suffering persecution, God was preserving them and the work there was advancing.

Chapters four and five were much more pastoral. He addressed a few key issues like purity in their lives, love for one another, future events, and now he's bringing this letter to a close. And in this final section which really began in verse 12 here of chapter five, Paul gives a series of short summary commands. I mean they just fire out one after another. And these commands I don't think are addressing any particular or specific issues or problems in the church rather they appear to be designed to keep the church on the right track. And these commands appear to center around one in particular which is found at the end of verse 13 where he says, "Live in peace with one another."

Live in peace with one another. The Lord desires peace in His church. We have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ, and we are joined to one another in Christ. But we have to work to maintain the peace within the church. We don't create it. It has been created for us in Christ, but we do have to work at maintaining it. You know what I'm talking about?

And the key to maintaining this peace, I think, is found in having right relationships. Last time we looked at two, we looked at our relations with the leaders of the church in verses 12 through 13, specifically the elders of the church and how we are to appreciate them and to esteem them very highly. That goes a long ways towards maintaining the peace of the church when the people respect their leaders. And then we saw secondly relations within the congregation in general, verses 14 and 15, and how we're to respond to situations which could affect the peace of the church, or more specifically how we're to respond to people who could affect the peace of the church. Did you know that in the church you are going to encounter people who are unruly, fainthearted, weak? Do you know that in the church you'll even have people do evil things to you? They might slander you, they might gossip about you, they may something unkind about you, something untrue about you. I have heard of churches where things like that happen. And you might bump into it from time to time. Those kinds of things, it's so important to respond in a correct way and a real key there is at the end of verse 14. "Be patient with everyone." A little patience goes a long way towards maintaining the peace of the church.

Tonight I want us to look at two more sets of relationships. If we're going to enjoy peace in the church we have to have proper relationships and the next one I want us to consider is right relations with the Father and the Son. Right relations with the Father and Son. Verses 16 through 18. "Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." Paul lists three commands here which he says are God's will for believers. These are God's will. These aren't the total of God's will for you, but they are part of God's will for every single believer. These three commands tell us an important part of God's will for every single believer. They are His will for you in Christ Jesus. And so in the keeping of these commands, we're really living out our relationship to the Father and the Son.

Let me show you what I mean by that. Look at the commands. Look at the first one there, verse 16, "Rejoice always." That's a command, by the way. I don't know how many times you parents have given that command to your children. It's the last time I am going to tell you, Rejoice! It's a command, it's indicating that this is our continual duty. We're to have a characteristic of rejoicing in our lives. It is a command, it is an appeal to your will. It's something you can do and it is something you must do always. He's appealing to our will, giving us a command, telling us to do this. Implication that you can do it.

So you are to do it always, not just when you're circumstances are pleasant. And the Thessalonians, they weren't necessarily having pleasant circumstances. We know that they were suffering. They were being persecuted, yet here they are being commanded to rejoice. And this is a distinction of a Christian, to be rejoicing all the time. It should be our outlook, a rejoicing outlook. This rejoicing should be constant in our lives, that's the command. Rejoice always. It doesn't mean that you don't have sad experiences. But what it does mean is that those sad experiences can't take away your joy.

Paul I think expressed something like this in Second Corinthians chapter six verse 10 when he said, "As sorrowful yet always rejoicing." So you can be in sorrowful circumstances and yet still be rejoicing. You says, well how is it possible to maintain joy even in sorrowful circumstances? And the answer is because of your relationship to the Father and the Son. They never change. The Father and the Son never change. Their love for you never changes. So you can even be in a sorrowful circumstance and rejoice because you have a heavenly Father and a Savior who never change, who are always there with you, and

who love you perfectly all the time. What you have in Christ can never be taken away from you no matter how bad the circumstance might be.

Jesus told His disciples this. They were grieving because He was about to leave them and He says this to them in John 16:22. It says, "Therefore you too have grief now, but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice and no one will take your joy away from you." No one can take your joy away from you because you have a risen, living Savior. There's an expression, you may have heard it before. It goes like this. No matter what happens to me today, I'm still going to heaven. And a lot of bad things can happen to me today. But I'm still going to heaven. And I can rejoice in that because I have a heavenly Father who is gracious, who sent His Son who died for me. He rose again. His death covers all my sins. His resurrection guarantees my resurrection, the fact that I am going to heaven, so no matter how bad it is today I'm still going to heaven. I can rejoice always.

Our rejoicing is to be focused on the Lord, that's the only way you can rejoice always. Paul gave similar commands to the Philippians. In Philippians 3:1 he said, "Finally my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me and is a safeguard for you." This is something we need to be reminded of. Rejoice in the Lord. Something we need to be commanded of, and he does it again in Philippians 4:4. "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say rejoice." It is a command, it is an appeal to your will, it is something you can do, it is something you must do, it's something you can always do.

Lack of joy is to mistrust God. It's to mistrust His power, or to mistrust His providence. It's like saying God must not know what's going on here, or He must not be able to do anything about it. When we start thinking like that we're not going to be rejoicing. To not rejoice is to forget what you have in Christ. To forget that all of your sins are forgiven forever. We're to rejoice always and that's closely connected to the next command in verse 17, pray without ceasing.

Another command, by the way. Pray without ceasing. A common command. You can see similar commands given in Romans 12:12 where it says we're to be devoted to prayer. It's the same idea. Be constant in prayer. The same kind of idea. And Ephesians 6:18 says that with all prayer and petition, pray at all times. That sounds an awful lot like pray without ceasing. Pray at all times. It's a command, it's a common command. What does it mean? What does it mean to pray without ceasing? Well it means to maintain a God-centered attitude. A God-centered attitude that produces constantly recurring prayer. It's a spirit of constant communion that breaks out into prayer on a regular basis. And again, that just reminds us of something we talked about this morning. Prayer isn't limited to a time or a place. You can pray any time, any place. And the person who has a God-centered perspective will do that.

It's to have a God-ward focus, to have an awareness of Christ's presence. Do you know that Jesus Christ is with you all the time? That's what He said. The Great Commission. Go and make disciples and lo I am with you always. So the key to praying without ceasing is to remember that Jesus is with me always. He's with me always. I can talk to Him any time, any place. That's a privilege, wouldn't you say? To have Jesus Christ with me always? To be able to pray to Him at any time? What a privilege. And the Lord desires that communion with His people. He wants us to pray. He invites us to cast all our care upon Him. And again, praying like that is just a natural reaction to the new life we have been given in Jesus Christ.

We have this new life that now, we're alive to God. We're aware of Christ. And we want to commune with Him. We want to talk to Him. Martin Luther said, "To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing." And there certainly is enough to keep me praying, wouldn't you say? Just to think of all the things that I can give thanks for God for and glorify Him for all that he has done. This morning when Dave Herman read the scripture he talked about being out in West Texas and stopping the truck and getting out and looking at the stars. You could praise and glorify and worship God for a long time just looking at what He's made and thinking about who He is and His power and majesty and glory. Certainly I can spend a lot of time in prayer fellowshiping with my Savior, just communing with Him, expressing my thoughts to Him, my desires to Him, my concerns to Him, knowing that He's listening. He's hearing it all. He's not going to hang up. He's not going to say, sorry I have to go now, I've heard enough. He never does that.

I can pray to Him all the time just expressing things to Him and certainly I can express needs, mine, which would be a long list and everybody else that I know. I could go down the calling list of Believer's Fellowship and it would be a long time praying for everybody and the things that I know how I can pray for them. Praying without ceasing, when you start thinking about what you can do in prayer it's not hard to do. It's not hard to do. And it is something we're commanded to do. And certainly the apostle Paul is an example of that. He's always writing to these different churches and telling them how he is praying for them all the time.

And this prayer, this praying without ceasing is linked to rejoicing and to giving thanks. Look at Philippians chapter four verse six, just back a couple of books. Philippians 4:6. "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God and the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." There you can see that prayer is at the center of think but linked to prayer is the giving of thanks and the result of all of that is the going away of the anxiety and the coming of peace and rejoicing. Be anxious for no thing, pray about every thing.

Anxiety is what robs us of our joy. When we get worried about what is going to happen, how is this going to work out, what direction is this going, how am I going to respond to that, that's when we lose joy. We get anxious. We're to pray with thanks and there is certainly much to be thankful for and that leads us to verse 18 in First Thessalonians five where it simply says, "In every give thanks."

That's an amazing thing there, isn't it? Where it says in everything? In everything give thanks. How many things? So that's your assignment for tomorrow. In everything that happens tomorrow, give thanks. Let's just try one day. Tomorrow. We'll try doing that tomorrow, okay? In everything give thanks. That means all circumstances all the time. Our thanks aren't dependent upon our circumstances, they are dependent upon our relationship with the Father and the Son.

Christians should meet negative circumstances not with just some sort of stoic resignation like a Muslim does, Insha'Allah, it's God's will, it's just the way it is, it's kind of a feudal way of thinking when you do it with a spirit of unflinching gratitude.

Now I mentioned this morning, in Job where he found out all the bad news that had happened including the death of all of his children, and he said the Lord gives, the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. And he worshipped the Lord. But, that doesn't mean he didn't have any feelings about what had happened because we're told that he tore his robe, shaved off his hair, and fell down on the ground. It wasn't a happy circumstance that he was in, but he could give thanks. He could give thanks that the Lord had given him all that he had and that he was able to enjoy all that he had. We should meet circumstances with an unfailing gratitude because after all, what do I deserve? Everything I get, even the worse thing I experience is way better than what I deserve. Way better than what I deserve. The Lord rescued me from what I deserve. That's enough to give Him thanks all the time, just for that. He rescued me from the thing I deserve the very most. He was gracious to me. He showed mercy to me. He reached out to me and He rescued me.

In Lamentations 3:39, and this book Lamentations, guess why it was given that title? It wasn't a happy day for Jeremiah, the guy who wrote it. You write something and you title it Lamentations. That's a bad day. He's watching Jerusalem being destroyed by the Babylonians because of their sin. It's something that he had warned them about for years and they refused to listen to Jeremiah. And so he's watching happen, but he says this in Lamentations 3:39. "Why should any living mortal or any man offer complaint in view of his sins?" There's no way I'm getting anywhere close to what I deserve. What do I have to complaining about? I have everything to be thankful for.

It's abnormal for a Christian not to be thankful. It is normal for an unbeliever to be unthankful. That's what characterizes somebody who does not know God. In Romans 1:21, it says, "For even though they knew God they did not honor Him as God or give thanks." That's characteristic of an unbeliever. They are not thankful. They don't express thanks to God. In Second Timothy chapter three, starting in verse one, it says, "Realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful." Which means they don't give thanks.

That's the characteristic of an unbeliever, to not give thanks. The believer is known for being thankful. We are commanded to rejoice. We are commanded to pray. We are commanded to give thanks all the time. This is God's will for us in Christ Jesus. It can be done. It must be done. It's not dependent upon our circumstances. It is dependent upon my relationship with my heavenly Father and His Son.

When I keep that in perspective, then yes, I can rejoice all the time. I can pray without ceasing, and I can give thanks in everything because of the relationship I have with my heavenly Father through His Son. Does that make any sense? So what is your assignment for tomorrow? In everything give thanks. I'm going to call you all tomorrow night and find out how you did and tell you how I did. I have to meditate on these things. I have to think about what I have in Christ, not what I don't have in this world. That makes a huge contribution to the peace of the church, by the way. When we think this way, when we live this way, anxiety, fear, worry, doubt, prayerlessness, lack of faith, whining, griping, complaining, destroys the peace of the church. Destroys it. But it's pretty hard not to get along with people who are rejoicing all the time, praying without ceasing, and giving thanks in everything. Pretty hard not to get along with that person. So be that person. And people will have a hard time not getting along with you.

Be that person. Makes a big difference to peace in the church. Peace in the church depends on relationships, especially our relationship to the Father and to the Son.

And here's a second thing for tonight, a second relationship to consider. And that is the relationship to the Holy Spirit. Verses 19 through 22. "Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil." The Holy Spirit provides the fire for the church. The Spirit is often associated with fire. You can see it in Matthew 3:11. You can see it in Acts 2:3 when the Spirit ascended upon the church. Tongues like fire appeared.

Timothy is told to rekindle the fire in his own life in Second Timothy 1:6. The Holy Spirit provides the fire in the church so you don't want to quench the Spirit. You don't want to extinguish the Spirit. You don't want to put out the fire of the Spirit. You don't want to hinder the working of the Spirit in any way at all. Well, how would I do that? How would I quench the Spirit? Well, verse 20 gives an example. "Do not despise prophetic utterances." The Spirit is the one behind prophetic utterances. Turn over to Second Peter chapter one. Second Peter chapter one, verses 20 and 21. It's a familiar verse when we talk about the inspiration of the scripture but it's also really helpful when understanding this verse in First Thessalonians. Second Peter chapter one verses 20 and 21, it says, "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." So, behind every prophetic utterance that has ever been given it is the working of the Holy Spirit, working in the lives of the man so that he would speak the very words of God.

So by despising prophetic utterances we are quenching the Spirit since He is the one working in the person giving the prophetic utterance. Now in the New Testament you can see prophetic utterances that were spoken. For example, in First Corinthians 14:6, and also a couple of places in First Timothy. But mostly it refers to written revelation like what we just saw in Second Peter. That's talking about the inspiration of Scripture that was given under the work of the Holy Spirit. But there were prophets in the early church. There would have been prophets in the day that Paul was writing to the Thessalonians. These prophets worked alongside of the apostles.

Let me just read you a few passages that make that connection. In Ephesians 2:20 it says, "Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone." The apostles and prophets, their ministry there is linked together, a foundational ministry to the church.

In chapter three verse five of Ephesians it says, "Which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit." So, new revelations in New Testament times, and it's being given by the Spirit, and it's coming through the apostles and the prophets.

Chapter four verse 11 of Ephesians says that Christ gave to the church "some as apostles, and some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some as pastors and some as teachers." There again you see the linking of apostles and prophets. In the early church they worked closely together, they worked laying

the foundation for the church. They were the means by which God was giving our New Testament revelation.

In First Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 28 it says, "God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets." The apostles and the prophets laid the foundation for the church because they were the ones used by the Holy Spirit to give prophetic utterance, to give us the revelation we now call the New Testament.

And so to despise them as he says there in First Thessalonians 5, to despise prophetic utterances, meant to treat what was being given by them with contempt or looked down on them or to deny those things, or to disbelieve them. And that could have been happening there in Thessalonica because we know that along with the right kind of prophets, there were also the wrong kind of prophets. We call them false prophets. And there no doubt was the abuse of prophesy. So the tendency might have been to despise prophecy all together. Let's just shut this whole thing down and we don't know who's right and who's wrong so let's just forget it and stick with what we do know. But Paul is warning that in doing that you are in danger of quenching the Spirit.

Now we don't have prophets today giving revelation to us. It's all been recorded and passes on to us. But we can do the same kind of thing today by treating God's Word lightly. We can quench the Spirit by leaning more towards pragmatic or humanistic techniques other than trusting in what God's Word says. We need to be careful that we hold to a high view of what the Spirit has given us and we have to be careful to handle it right and that's the point of verses 21 and 22. "Examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil." We're to examine what we're taught and that's an ongoing command. You're to be continually examining the things that are being taught to you that are supposedly representing the Word of God. You're to examine how much? Everything. All teaching that is saying that it is representing what the Holy Spirit has for us. It's a call to spiritual discernment to be wise and to think carefully.

In First John 4:1 John said, "Beloved, don't believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world." We're to test and check them out, examine them carefully. Are there a lot of false teachers running around today? Yes. So you need to examine everything carefully.

Paul and Silas and Timothy, they were in Thessalonica, they got run out of town there. They went to the next major city down the road which was Berea. And this is what we're told about the Bereans in Acts 17:11. It says, "Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica." And that's saying quite a bit because the people in Thessalonica, they were a sharp group. But the ones in Berea were more noble-minded. Why? "For they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." They got the apostle Paul talking to them, but who are you apostle Paul? So they are going to examine everything according to the Scriptures. And that's the means by which we do the evaluation. The examination is by the Scripture. Scripture is the sole and sufficient criterion for examining everything that is being taught to us. The test is theological. The test is biblical. Does it square with what the Bible really says.

So the call here is to not be gullible but be discerning. And, when it's good, when what you're told is right, you're to hold on to it. Hold fast to that which is good. Hold fast. Don't ever let it go. Cling to the truth as you receive it. That's important because I have known a lot of people who held on to the truth for a while but then they let it go and they drift off. People who are really involved in the church. Even people, guys I know who are pasturing churches. But for some reason it seems like they let go. And this all wasn't that important to them anymore. And they just drifted away. Hold on. Hold on and don't ever let go of what is good, what is true. Hold fast to it.

And what is evil, in fact every form or appearance of evil you're to abstain from, you're to avoid. As it says in verse 22, abstain from every form of evil. Hold yourself off from it. It's another command. It's something you're to be doing all the time. You should be completely avoiding anything that is evil and the context here is evil teaching.

Things that are evil destroy. Evil teaching leads to wrong thinking. Wrong thinking about the truth which inevitably produces wrong living. You know that you live out what you believe? So if you believe the wrong stuff what is going to come out of your life? Wrong stuff. It's just how it works.

And can you see how this affects the peace of the church? The importance of being discerning? People who treat God's Word lightly, they quench the Spirit. Those who are not discerning and who follow after wrong interpretations of Scripture destroy the unity of the Spirit. Because we're not all lined up on what the Spirit says. Some people are holding to wrong interpretations and that leads to conflict and that affects the peace of the church. The Spirit worked in and through the writer of Scripture and it is the Spirit that illumines us as believers so that we can understand the Scriptures. According to First Corinthians two, the Holy Spirit is involved in the whole process. He was involved in the giving of the Scripture. He's involved in us being able to understand the Scripture. And when we don't all line up behind what the Spirit is saying and we feel free to treat it lightly and make it say whatever we want it to say, that's going to affect peace in the church.

For us to treat the Scripture lightly, to not examine everything carefully, that is to quench the Spirit. So we need to take the Word seriously. You need to examine everything, even everything here at Believer's Fellowship.

Do you think that Satan would want to get us off of our commitment to the Bible at Believer's Fellowship? What's one way he could do that? Just get somebody in here who's teaching the wrong stuff. And have a bunch of people start lining up behind this person who's teaching wrong stuff. And that destroys the peace of the church, the church splits, all kinds of stuff. That happens all the time. All the time. It would have never happened if those people who started lining up behind the guy who was teaching the wrong stuff had examined everything carefully and has said, that's not right. That is not what the Bible says. And, just because we have a commitment to the Scripture doesn't mean that that's not going to happen here. You need to examine everything carefully. It's important and it's important to the peace of the church. And peace in the church is important to the Lord.

Just to remind you of that, turn back to Ephesians chapter four. Ephesians chapter four. Therefore, this is Paul writing. He's just given three chapters of incredible theology about our position in Christ, all that

Christ has done for us, all the blessings that we have in Christ. "Therefore," based on all of that, all of that truth, all of that great theology, "I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility, and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all."

We've made a united body in Christ that's brought out strongly in the first three chapters of Ephesians, therefore we are to walk like that, we are to be diligent to preserve the unity and that unity is all wrapped around the Holy Spirit, the Son, and the Father, as all three were involved in our salvation. The Lord wants peace in the church. And we saw last time the warning in First Corinthians three that God says whoever destroys my church, I will destroy. It's something He takes very seriously. And it's our relations that make the difference, our relations to the leaders of the church, our relations to one another in the church, our relations to the Father and the Son and our relationship to the Holy Spirit. I just want to close by reminding you that those verses what we looked at there in First Thessalonians, those are all commands. They are all commands. Not rejoice when you want to, not examine things when you feel like it. They are commands. Things we need to be doing all the time.

Your relationship to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is so important. There is one thing I would want to encourage you in regards to this tonight is to consider, meditate upon all that you have from God. The relationship that you have, that you can call the God of the universe your Father. And that the God of the universe would send His Son to die in your place so that you could be forgiven forever and have an eternal relationship with Him and the Holy Spirit came in to your life to open up your eyes to that truth to give you a new life and to open your eyes to the Scripture. I was talking to a new believer just recently and this guy, he's been in church his whole life, heard the Bible his whole life, heard hundreds of sermons, but now he's been a Christian for like two weeks and he just can't read the Bible enough. That's because that is what the Holy Spirit does in a person's life.

Think about all that you have as a Christian. Don't be so concerned about what you don't have. Be thinking about what you do have, so meditate on those things. So here's the deal. Meditate plus relate equals peace in the church. Does that make sense? And tomorrow, in everything give thanks. Alright. We're going to be checking on you. Because that is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for Your Word, for these reminders so easy for us to get pushed around by our circumstances. So easy for us to fall into kind of the complaining attitude that is so common around us. Lord, we know that unthankfulness is a characteristic of unbelievers. We're not surprised that that is the prevailing attitude around us. Lord, we know You've called us to something different. Your will for us is completely different. You want us rejoicing always, praying without ceasing, in everything giving thanks, carefully listening to what the Holy Spirit says to us through the Word, examining it carefully, holding on to it tightly. Lord, we're so thankful that we can meet here in talk about these things because of the relationship with have with You. Help us Lord, to keep our minds on these things. Help us Lord, to set our minds on things above instead of things in this world. Help us Lord, to obey these commands so that

we might prove that the will of God, it really is perfect. We give you thanks for Your goodness and Your grace to us, and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.