

Anchoring the Soul

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I want to pose a question with this thought. Have you ever noticed what we do the moment the lights go out in a room? Imagine what would be the first thing that you would do if suddenly the lights just turned off. Well, I'll tell you one thing. We don't stand still or sit still. We immediately look around in the dark searching for a flashlight, a candle, or nowadays a glow on your devices. We desperately crave what? A point of light to orient ourselves. Light to orient ourselves. Now just thinking personally but when the storm of life hits and suddenly there's darkness of the soul perhaps maybe when the doctor calls with some bad news marriage feels suddenly cold kids are just rebellious or when your bank account is draining and you're struggling where is the first place your mind looks in the dark. It is a strange and tragic irony that we enthusiastically affirm the truth of God's word when the sun is shining, when things are bright, things are going good. Yet, the moment trouble comes, we run everywhere else first. It's our sinful disposition. It's our default in our present world. We turn to Google or today AI. We consult our friends. We call a lawyer, a doctor, or a financial advisor before we ever open the pages of God's word and allow God's word to effectively work out those situations. The psalmist in Psalm 119 where we're going to go to tonight did not have all these options. He was in a situation by himself alone man familiar with deep hardship and certainly aggressive enemies and also painful jeering, sneering, mocking him. Where is your God? Yet his response in the dark soul of his night, his response was radically different than what most people in the world would do. He did not ask when will I get out of this. We will see this. He doesn't say that. Instead, he asks, "What can I get out of this? What can I get out of the dark soul of the night?" So let us turn in our Bibles to Psalm 119 verse 49-56. Psalm 119 verse 49 and 56. We are now turning to the Zayin

stanza which is now the seventh letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In the ancient Hebrew, Zayin is a letter shaped like an actual sword, a scepter as it were, a weapon, reminding us that the word of God is indeed the sharp sword of the spirit and signifying that we are in a spiritual battle. But also comes from the root word to mean to nourish. to nourish, illustrating that spiritual warfare and the word of God are necessary to spiritually feed, to protect, and to sustain believers. So, if you will go ahead and stand with me out of respect for God's word and follow along as I read from Psalm 119, beginning with verse 49.

God's word says this. Remember the word unto thy servant upon which thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction. For thy word hath quickened me. The proud have had me greatly in derision, yet have I not declined from thy law. I remembered thy judgments of old, oh Lord, and have comforted myself. Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law. Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage. I have remembered thy name, O Lord, in the night, and have kept thy law. This I had because I kept thy precepts. May God bless the reading of his word. You may be seated.

See, God's word truly produces hope, the everlasting hope, the blessed hope. Notice with me the first word out of the psalmist's mouth. Remember. Remember. This is the posture of the psalmist. He does not approach God again as I said in previous sermons with demands but he goes with understanding the kind of posture he must come before the holy God. He addresses himself as thy servant for whom we are all servants. This is a posture of absolute submission, yielding, and obedience. Before we ask God to work on our behalf, we must first yield to his authority fully as our master. And notice what sin does to make this kind of relationship a bad thing. Slavery. Yes. When you have man being the master, all sorts of sin comes out from that relationship. No man should have that much kind of power to be called a master. Only that name should be to the master, the Lord Jesus. Because God is always a good master. Amen. Psalmist cries out then continuing

remember the word. Remember the word. Now we know that God is all knowing, allseeing, all wise. He does not suffer from forgetfulness. But when God forgives our sins, oh, he chooses to remember them no more. Psalm 103:12, as far as the east is from the west, so far hath removed our transgressions from us. This metaphor emphasizes in this passage in Psalm 103 the complete infinite nature of God's forgiveness. Think about it. Unlike the north and south, which means at the physical poles, they meet at the north and the south poles if you were to go in those directions, either north or south. But when you go east and west, they never intersect. For there is no east pole or west pole because you can travel east or west forever without reaching a pole. This verse illustrates that God removes and forgets our forgiven sins to an immeasurable distance. Amen. But when God makes a promise on the other hand, he is physically incapable of forgetting it. and the Hebrew mind to remember zahar. It's an active word. It means to actively intervene and act on a promise on someone's behalf. That's you and me. The psalmist is saying, "Lord, act on the promise from the word you spoke to me." He says, "Upon which thou hast caused me to hope." Notice the past tense. The psalmist is not asking for a new word, a fresh revelation or even a better circumstance rather. No, he is simply holding God to the word he has already spoken. Past cause the Bible. The Bible in scripture hope is never a wishful finger crossed. I hope so this might happen. It is rather a great guaranteed expectation that's rooted entirely in the unchanging faithfulness of God. By the way, you got this in the morning. You're getting it again this evening for chance that I was able to connect these both sermons together for the benefit of his people. Now I want to draw this as an illustration how the word of God anchors your soul. Imagine with me a ship caught in a violent storm at night, pitch black. The crew throws the anchor into the black agitated water. They cannot see the anchor as it's going down. They cannot see the ocean floor, but they know that the anchor has gripped the bedrock because they can feel a tension. It stops. There's a pull. The iron chain has attention. You see, when you are in a night season of life, you might not see God working, but when you anchor your soul in his word, you will feel the stabilizing

tension of his hope. Amen. keeping you from drifting into despair. The imagery I get is that when a ship is anchored, you can drift and drift and drift, but you'll be always pulled back to where the anchor is. Pull it back. Pull it back. That is what the word of God does to us. You're always pulled back by the word of God, namely the Lord Jesus Christ, who says, "I'll never leave you nor forsake you. Not in any dark storm of your life. He will always anchor you. But we have to wait, don't we? We have to wait for the violent storm to pass, the dark soul of the night to pass instead of being swept by the storm. This is a constant battle of us waiting upon the Lord. You see, are you trying to manufacture hope any other way than this? Let me tell you that there are warnings here. You see, every other ways of anchoring our lives outside of the word of God is like a vapor that vanishes at the heat of the day. And that heat is our trials. True unshakable hope is something God causes you to have through his word. Don't you want that? An unshakable hope. Nothing can shake you. Nothing can move you away from God's will and purpose. If you want your hope to return, you must first return to the Bible. You want hope? Return to the Bible. That's your anchor. You see, we live in an age where the world has this done really well. And I bring this point up again and again because I find this to be our problem in our world today. It's our devices. And imagine you at night with your device. What is the thing that you turn to first? Cuz that's in many ways our world, isn't it? Where you spend your time in is your world. And this, as I mentioned in previous sermons, where we spend a lot of our time. And a lot of times it can just be scrolling through how the world looks for comfort. But you see, picture an anchor not gripping the bedrock when you're trying to find comfort in this world. There's no anchor. There's no tension rather. There's no stabilizing tension because this world is like sand, isn't it? Like the Lord Jesus says, you'll never find stabilizing like the word of God. And so through the meaningless scrolling that most people do in this world ends up them frustrated and full of anxiety more than what you had at the beginning is because the only way to be relieved truly in our soul to have real comfort is in the word of God. It's in the word of God. And to have true meaning in your life is found in the

word of God. And so the psalmist pleads for the promises of God's word back to him and says, "Lord, remember the word upon which thou has caused me to hope." He knows that there's no other hope outside of God's word. And you can count that as your prayer. This is not just a psalmist praying. is giving us an open window to how we as believers today are to anchor ourselves. Amen. In our lives.

Now look at with me verses 50 to 52. We're going to now open this up to where our comfort lies. He continues and says, "This is my comfort in my affliction. For thy word hath quickened me. The proud have had me greatly in derision. Yet have I not declined from thy law. I remembered thy judgments of old, O Lord, and have comforted myself. I want you to look at verse 50. With the word quickened me, this is important in what the psalmist declares here. The psalmist does not say God's word merely gave him some wishful thinking. No, he says, "Thy word hath quickened me." The word quickened means to resuscitate, to revive, or to bring back from the dead. When affliction leaves us spiritually flatlined, human words fail. You know how that feels like, right? You can find so many other ways. But whenever you go back to the word of God, it's like, "Ah, I'm comforted my affliction, right?" And that's what the psalmist is doing here. He's looked around, but he knows this is where true comfort of the soul is found. See, God's word possesses the supernatural power to shock our souls back to life. Let me just share a testimony. God placed in my life over 20 years ago when I just became a believer in the Lord. And I was going through my devotions and Proverbs 4:13 stood out like it was my life verse. It says, "Take fast hold of instructions. Let her not go. Keep her for she is thy life. Take fast hold. Let her not go. Keep her, for she is thy life. You see, the word of God gives us the ability to continue to live on. The more you read God's word, the more instructions you take and hold on to them. Another way of saying remembering them. It's not the idea of like you got to hold on physically, but rather you're remembering it, taking fast, and letting God's word work in your life. I remember I was like, I needed to just I want to do something about it. But God just kept reminding me with this

instructions, no, wait on my timing. Wait on my timing. Wait on my timing. That's what hope means. Expectantly waiting for him to move. Right? And we have to do this always again and again. And I thank God that God put that verse in my heart 20 years ago. And I can still reflect back. That's what kept me going. And the thing is, it's not the words itself because we know in John 6:68, this is another verse that spoke directly to my heart. This is Simon Peter saying, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. You see, everything points to Christ. His word is life because he is living. Amen. He's living everlastingly. And that's what we need to hold on to. Something that is everlasting life. And he's not he's not going to ever let us go. Like I said, he'll never let us go. He'll never leave us in despair. He'll never leave us in the darkness of our soul forever. He will always resuscitate us. He will always revive us. He will bring us always back to life. And so the source of his trial, our trial, the psalmist's trial, our trial is revealed in verse 51. This is where the battles, the spiritual battles are. Look down with me. In verse 51, he says, "The proud have had me greatly in derision." The proud. Just take that word. That was you and I once. We were once proud thinking we can live our lives the way we wanted, however we wanted to live in our time. And he says the proud they had me greatly greatly in derision. He's using strong words here. He knows. He knows this is a great weapon used against believers. You see that word derision comes out and defined as bitter, biting, cruel mockery. The enemy uses verbal and emotional abuse to get you to wave the white flag of surrender to them. Here's one tactic. It's like when you are a Christian, it's going to be a life of suffering. Oh, you're going to suffer more than you have joy. You're going to suffer more than you're going to have true happiness. You're going to go through so much pain. Oh, you're going to And then God's not going to come through. Has people done that to you? That's their arrogance. That's their pride. And they don't truly know that living a Christian life is actually truly joyful. It is truly a life of meaning and it's Satan using people and he uses the proud always the proud and he will use great derision trying to get you to feel like them bitter and empty and just living a cruel life. They don't know that Satan has them

in their cribs that there that he is destroying them. And so take that pause. And like the psalmist, the proud have had me greatly in derision. You see, the psalmist declares, "Yet have I not declined from thy law." The purpose of the proud is to take you and remove you from thinking of God's word and making them think about their words. You have this battle of whose words am I going to hide in my heart that I might not sin against God. And so he refused to let what people said about him dictate his devotion to God and his word. That's the battle, isn't it? to pull you away from God's word, his anchoring word, comfort for your afflictions. And then he says in verse 52, I remembered thy judgments of old. Here we're he's acknowledging I want to remember I do remember and specifically thy judgments. And he says of old. when the present is dark in the moment, we must look backwards in God's history. What do I mean by that? The psalmist recalled how God stepped in to judge the wicked and deliver his people in times past. Think of times such as the overthrow of Pharaoh at the Red Sea or Moses and the rebellion of Korah. You see, God always brings judgment to the wicked and he will always deliver his people. And you can trust God as he done that in the past, he will do that in the present for your life. And then we can think of it another way. Do we know what a defibrillator is? So a defibrillator rather is something that brings a person back to life. Patients heart stops. You can imagine in the emergency room the doctors do not try to comfort him and sing help yourself save yourself. That would be foolish right? So then how come we do that in the spiritual? You see, just like in the physical, the doctor or the EM grabs the defibrillator and he grabs the paddles. He charges them up and shouts clear. And they send a current that saves the person from lifelessness. So when your heart is then cold spiritually or when you feel dead in your soul because of the trauma that you're experiencing from the outside in, we don't look to try to save ourselves to help ourselves. We need the spiritual life brought to us again. And who is the one that gives us spiritual life? for us is the Holy Spirit who lives within us and brings us back to the word of God. The Holy Spirit will never point himself to himself. His purpose is always to point us to Christ and his word. And so that word quickened,

quicken means to restore one's life or one's soul. That is the purpose of the Holy Spirit. One of his many purposes for the believer's life is to quicken us, to restore us back to spiritual life. You see, do not let the scoffing, the cruel, the bitterness of the proud cause you to be living in trauma, in their trauma, in their words, to pull you away from your devotion unto the Lord. Take that time to remember the judgments of God in times past. He what does it say? Vengeance is of the Lord. Vengeance is truly of the Lord. And so when people mock your standards of living and God's standards of living, your purity, your faith in the Lord, do not, this is the danger, don't argue with them. He says rather no Lord your judgment is your call. You're going to do it like you have done it in the old and you'll do it for me in the present. You can trust in the Lord in that. That's what this verse is to help us and comfort us. The God who parted the sea, the God who closed the mouths of lions is the same God who is standing with us today. He is truly the almighty God.

Now if you will look down with me verse 53 the psalmist continues and he were and the words are these he says horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law. The psalmist uses the word horror which is translated as burning indignation. He is not here rather filled with malicious anger. No, he is actually this word horror means to be brokenhearted over the proud, to be brokenhearted over those that are greatly in derision. He's grieving over them because men are trampling on God's holy standard. See, Satan can't attack God. So, he attacks God's people. And he does that all the time. And so he specifies that his horror is toward the wicked that forsake thy law. Those are the words. The judgments that's going to fall on them. You think I'm upset. No. His wrath is sure and it's measured and it's perfect. To forsake means to turn away from something you once held. I've lived now a Christian over 20 years. I've seen so many people just compromise after compromise after compromise until they decided, I don't want to be part of God's family. I don't want to be a part of this group. people who once knew the truth but abandoned it for the sake of cultural convenience or another way of

putting it the temporal satisfaction versus eternal satisfaction. We see this over and over again. And so that's the horror. They don't realize the judgment that's going to come unto them. They're having the temporary pleasure, the temporary relief. But what's more important? Like Apostle Paul, the light affliction for eternal weight of glory or the temporal pleasure and eternal judgment forever in hell. This is where Satan constantly deceives people in this area, exchanging the temporal for the eternal. And so one person by the name of General Booth, William Booth, he's the one that founded Salvation Army, he would often wish that those that he was training that they'll be able to see the open flames of hell just for a few seconds, just to see where the wicked are going to end up. Why? because he knew that if they could just see the terrifying reality of a soul lost without God, they will be seized with a kind of holy zeal and urgency to preach the gospel and not fear man, not fear the proud, not be upset by the derision, the great derision upon one's soul. That's a good reminder, isn't it? Think of where the wicked are going to end up. And then when you do that, you'll have the kind of boldness that you need to preach the gospel to them. Have we become too comfortable then with our sin? Do we scroll through wickedness on our own screens with complete indifference? A heart that is saturated God's word will not be indifferent to the evil that surrounds us. You can't just be upset. You can't just say, "Oh, there they go again." but that you actually say God use me to help them to know the truth even if I have to go through some insurmountable battle and if if they even don't get saved that even then I would you will still proclaim the gospel to them. You see, we should grieve over evil, not with self righteous anger, but the holy desire to see God's truth honored and lost souls redeemed. Amen. That's what we see to the end of verse 53.

Now, if you look with me down in 54, he continues and says, "Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage." The psalmist refers to his life on earth as the house of my pilgrimage. And we know as a pilgrim is a sojourner, a temporary traveler. He's reminding us that this world is not our home. Okay, that this is all

temporary. All the attacks, all this stuff that I have to go through, it's all temporary. We're just passing through. And we saw this in verse 19. He says, "I am a sojourner on the earth." And he says it again here as another reminder. And then he goes on. He says to think upon the statutes not as a dry rules or codes or regulations, but rather here the psalmist says to think of God's statutes and to make it a song. You see that? And to make it songs instead of viewing God's commands as a heavy restrictive chain. His view is to look at it as a melody and put his spring as it were in his steps and travel through the dark foreign land that we are in. You see, think of Paul and Silas in the dark dungeon, deep underground. Acts 16:25, we see Paul and Silas. They were beaten, bleeding, and locked in the lowest part of the Philippian jail. And it was at the stark evening hour of midnight. They weren't singing worldly songs. They weren't thinking about, oh, having a church building and having a worship time. No, they took that moment in that dark dungeon. They remembered the word of God written on their hearts and they sang the words of scripture, the statutes. That's what they did. It says there that they prayed and sang praises to God and the other prisoners listened.

You see, many times we can understand God's word better if we think of it in the way how the word of God is applied in different situations. In the prison, it was to make melody. It wasn't to preach. And many times as believers, we think just one way. We got to do it this way and no other way. Let's think like Paul and Silas. be more like them. Ask God to change your own heart so that when you give the word of God, people are actually listening to you. Amen. People are actually listening to you. It turned to prisoners. People were saved because they made the house, their house, a pilgrimage, as the psalmist puts it. They saw that, oh, this is a temporary place. They saw that they they didn't need something external to make them happy. They were just full of joy. Suddenly they were praising God without any external responses.

And so they fill their mouths with song. You see, if you only sing when times are good, your joy is fragile. But when you let God's word become

your song, you developed an uncompromising joy that the world did not give you and the world that cannot take it away. You can sing in the hospital room. You can sing when your finances are struggling. You can sing when you are feeling alone. That's what Paul and Silas did as a testimony for us. Look now down at verse 55 and verse 56. He says the words a second time. I have remembered thy name, O Lord, in the night and have kept thy law. This I have because I kept thy precepts.

Remembrance in the night. This word night represents solitude, fear, vulnerability and spiritual darkness. It can mean a variation of all those depending on the situation. Here with the psalmist lays awake, tossing and turning and remembering instead of being filled with his anxieties, he's being filled in the night with the word of God. He says, "I have remembered thy name, O Lord, in the night." Here to remember the name of the Lord is to meditate on God's character, on his holiness, on his sovereign power over your life, his instructions and directions in your life as well. And then he sums it all up with this word in verse 56. This I had. This I had. This is summarizing all the things that he just mentioned from verse 55 back to verse 49. This I had because I kept thy precepts. The Hebrew points to an inheritance or a personal possession here. This I had. This is saying all of this, all of this that I have remembered, all of this hope, all of this comfort, all the holy zeal and the midnight songs. This has become now my personal treasure because I live a life of obedience to his word. Charles Spurgeon's devotion sharing on this verse he said this he found sanctification through meditation by the thoughts of the night he ruled the actions of the day. Let me say that again. He found sanctification through meditation by the thoughts of the night. He ruled the actions of the day. What he's saying is the battle that is won at night will be much easier battle in the day. The night is where we have to guard ourselves. Guarding our minds in the night seasons. Think of and reflect on the Lord Jesus. He would often what? slip away at the night or early morning before the sunrise. What? To pray unto his father. What did he do at Gethsemane? It was at night that he prayed unto his father. You see, this is a very important part of where

we must focus on at night. A lot of times we just think about the day in day out. But how many times you think of the night in and night out? The night in and the night out of your life. See, we can easily walk into our night and going end of the day. All right, I'm done with the battles. All right, let me go to my phone. Right?

That's not the way to live. The battle is in the evening to win during for the day. Let's not walk easily into the evening nights without thinking about what the battle is. You do not become holy by accident. No one does. We see this illustrated so well by the psalmist. A life of unshakable faith is built one quiet night, one step of obedience, and one kept precept at a time. Notice I started with night, not with day. If you want to say at the end of your life, this I had, you must begin keeping his precepts today. But here's the thing. If I just left it to that, it'll be on you. But that doesn't that's not how the gospel wins. Amen. We are completely honest. We ourselves can't do this in our own strength. We must constantly go before the Lord and say, "I've not always kept thy precepts. I've not kept them perfectly. There have been nights when I did not remember your name. There have been nights when I fed my soul with fears and anxieties instead of your holy character. I allowed fear to creep in, anxieties to creep in rather than depending on you. You see, that's often the case, isn't it? There have been times when we did decline from even his law. Why else would the psalmist declare, "I need your help here." Where do we find hope when we have failed? This is the question I pose to you for the remainder of this message. You see, we must look to the living word of God. And I told you it is the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, Jesus is the ultimate pilgrim who left the glorious palaces of heaven to enter the house of his pilgrimage. on this sin-cursed earth. The Lord Jesus is the one who was held in greatest derision. The Roman soldiers spit on him. The crowd mocked him. And the religious leaders laughed at him. Yet he never declined from his father's instructions and directions. He kept it perfectly on our behalf. The Lord Jesus is the one who faced the darkest night this world has ever known. In the garden of Gethsemane under the shadow of the cross, he prayed in the night. And

on the cross of Calvary, as physical darkness covered the whole land, he was forsaken so that you and I might never be forsaken. Because his body was torn, his spirit now quickens us, taking us who were dead in trespasses and sins and making us alive for ever more. This is our savior. This is our Lord Jesus Christ. And so when we stand before God, we're not standing by ourselves. We're not standing at night by ourselves, brethren. We're always with the Lord Jesus. We don't present our own flawed record. We present Christ perfect record on our behalf. We can say this I had by simply paying this salvation, this righteousness, this eternal hope, not because of my own works, because Jesus kept the precepts perfectly for me. We just need to keep looking to the Lord. We just need to depend upon him to come through for us. Remember, the night of trouble falls, the word of God becomes your song. Let the Lord Jesus be your song. I want to give you then something to remember. The next time you find yourself awake at 2:00 in the morning, whether you're dealing with your physical pain in your body, whether you're being filled with anxiety about your children or stressing over your job the next day, please don't reach over for your smartphone.

No, don't scroll through the news or social media. Instead, go back to what I read from Psalms verse 55. Remember his name in the night. Open your Bible at Psalm 119:50. Meditate on it and turn your worries into a conversation with the Savior. Let the Holy Spirit connect you to the Savior who can save you from your anxieties. Save you from the fears, save you from the pressures that come from the outside and from within. You see, stop scrolling your way to sleep and start praying to the shepherd. Stop scrolling your way to sleep and start praying to the shepherd. Imagine what your life will look like if you do this. every night. Picture us as a church family that doesn't panic when the world around us shakes. Imagine walking through cancer, grief, financial trials with peace that surpasses all understanding because Jesus holds you perfectly.

The world will look at your unshakable joy and ask, "How can you how can you sink? How can you seek seeing in such a dark place? And here it is. You will point them to the savior. You will point them to the savior of your life and the savior for their life. And the lord that will take care of all of what we actually need in our lives. And even all the trials is to make us even more conformed not to the world but be conformed more to the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Let this be so. Let us pray.

Father, help us to understand the depths of where our hearts can lie when we anchor our hearts to your word, namely to the Lord Jesus Christ. Help us father to not rely upon our own strength. Not rely upon rely upon our own wisdom, not rely upon our emotions. Lord, that's our fallen nature. Help us to deny ourselves, to deny ourselves, to take up our cross daily, and to follow Jesus and what he has for us. God, ourselves is our problem. And so the Lord Jesus told us to deny ourselves. Help us to do that again and again daily and to remember that our sins were placed on the cross. Meaning it was put to death and Jesus absorbed the death that we deserved so that we can live. Father, what a great exchange that the Lord Jesus did for us. And we have opportunities to be more and more alive in our faith in the Lord. be more and more alive in our trials. More and more alive through the things that are happening with our circumstances, whether it is bad, Father, or good. Help us to be only comforted in our afflictions by your word in Christ, Father. And we know Lord, we know that you will stabilize us through all the difficult times, all the times of shaking of our lives, through the storms of life. And I pray, Father, at the end, Lord, that we will be so purified in this present life that Jesus will look down upon us and see his own reflection on our lives. Oh, Father, please do this. And then Lord, help us to share this testimony to others that are dying in their sin, who are on their course to being shipwrecked. Lord, I pray that we would not be self-righteously angry or upset by the things of this world, but rather be a light and salt to them. Help us to go to the dying world, to our family members, to our co-workers, to those that we meet that you put a burden in our hearts to share the gospel with truth and love. And Lord,

even in this area, we need to deny ourselves again and again so that we can truly live for Christ in this area of evangelism. Please, Father, bless our discipleship. Bless our evangelism, Lord, because we're doing all this for your glory. Because you have changed our affections to no longer focus on ourselves, but to focus on thee. Father, bless this message to our hearts in a glorious way. In the only way that you can with your word, we thank you. We love you. In Jesus name I pray. Amen. Amen.