

John: The Word Became Flesh - John 8:21-59

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[0 : 00] So if you turn with me to John chapter 8 and we'll start in verse 21 through the end of the chapter This is the word of the Lord So he said to them again I'm going away and you will seek me and you will die in your sin Where I am going you cannot come So the Jews said well he kill himself since he says where I'm going we you cannot come He said to them you are from below. I am from above You are of this world. I am not of this world. I Told you that you would die in your sins for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins So they said to him who are you?

Jesus said to them just what I've been telling you from the beginning. I have much to say about you and much to judge But he who sent me is true And I declare to the world what I've heard from him They did not understand that he had been speaking to them about the father So Jesus said to them when you have lifted up the son of man Then you will know that I am he and that I do nothing on my own authority But speak just as the father taught me and He who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone For I always do the things that are pleasing to him As he was saying these things many believed in him So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him if you abide in my word You are truly my disciples and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free They answered him we are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone

How is it that you say you will become free? Jesus answered them truly truly I say to you everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin The slave does not remain in the house forever. The son remains forever So if the son sets you free you will be free indeed. I Know that you are offspring of Abraham yet you seek to kill me because of my words my word finds no place in you I speak of what I've seen with my father and you do what you have heard from your father They answered him Abraham is our father Jesus said to them if you were Abraham's children you would be doing the works Abraham did But now you seek to kill me a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God This is not what Abraham did You were doing the works your father did They said to him we were not born of sexual immorality. We have one father even God

Jesus said to them if God were your father you would love me for I came from God and I am here I Came out of my own accord, but he sent me Why do you not understand what I say?

It is because you cannot bear to hear my word You are of your father the devil and your will is to do your father's desires He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth because there's no truth in him When he lies he speaks out of his own character for he is a liar and the father of lies But because I tell the truth you do not believe me Which one of you convicts me of sin if I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?

[3 : 37] Whoever is of God hears the words of God The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God The Jews answered him are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon Jesus answered I do not have a demon, but I honor my father and you dishonor me Yet I do not seek my own glory. There is one who seeks it and he is the judge Truly truly I say to you if anyone keeps my word. He will never see death The Jews said to him now we know that you have a demon Abraham died as did the prophets yet you say if anyone keeps my word he will never taste death Are you greater than our father Abraham who died and the prophets died?

Who do you make yourself out to be? Jesus answered if I glorify myself my glory is nothing It is my father who glorifies me of whom you say he is our God But you have not known him. I know him if I were to say that I do not know him I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad So the Jews said to him you are not yet 50 years old and have you seen Abraham?

Jesus said to them truly truly I say to you before Abraham was I am So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple People who often love us will say truthful things to us and Some of those loving and truthful things that individuals may say to us who

love us may not be received well At times parents often will inform their children the truth of a matter trying to solicit a confession of an agreement that they have done wrong and hoping for repentance to alter the trajectory of their decision-making others Families and friends we do this one it with one another in our families and even as a church family We are to speak truth in loving to one another To try to solicit confession and an agreement that this is sin and to repent of those things This is normative. This is good in all healthy and loving relationships Jesus today we will see and as Josh read Jesus is speaking loving and truthful words to the people of Israel and their Decision though in choice is not to warm up to what Jesus is saying In fact, we saw the very last verse that Josh read the end of the chapter in chapter 8 The last verse reads and they picked up stones to throw at him But Jesus hid himself and they went out of the temple and so they did not respond in agreement Confession yes, Jesus we see who you are. In fact, they responded quite the opposite Rejecting Jesus and his words So let us remind ourselves where we find ourselves in the text today. We're in John chapter 8 We Israel Has come to Jerusalem many have made pilgrimage to Jerusalem Jerusalem is bustling

There is the Feast of Tabernacles this eight-day feast that they are to have to remember the days when they Dwelled in temporary shelters as they wandered around the wilderness Following the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night and so to remember and commemorate that event and remember God's provision for them They built temporary shelters for eight days outside the city walls and they would worship the Lord in the temple every day And that we talked about that water parade that would occur every day Well, we're at the tail end of that now bear out the last day or maybe the days right after that Festival because Jesus is still in Jerusalem and in fact, he's teaching in the temple when he says these words And so imagine him there we have the We're imagine where the people of Israel were high on the Feast of Tabernacles where we're celebrating that we are God's people and we're enjoying that time and imagine that time and that season that

[8 : 17] High holy days of Israel Jesus is now in the temple and he is teaching and He is speaking loving and truthful words to them and let us look at them beginning in verse 21 and so he said to them again, I am going away and you will seek me and You will die in your sin where I am going you cannot come So the Jews said will he kill himself since he says where I'm going you cannot come and he said to them You are from below. I am from above you are of this world. I am not of this world Some of the loving and truthful things that Jesus is saying to his people is this Jesus is from heaven He is the eternal God sent from heaven. There are seven times in our text that Jesus indicates I am not from here. I am from heaven. I am from above seven occurrences of this in verse 13 16 18 23 26 and 29

He is saying I am not of this world. I am from above That's important to Jesus to communicate to these individuals who he's speaking to the Jews. I am not from here I am from above The lifeblood of Christianity is self-sacrificing if Jesus is not from here He came from above he condescended and He condescended to earth to be born of a virgin to live a sinless life to die for sin He he is not from here He came from above and he exemplified the lives we are to live a very self-sacrificial life And what did he give up? He gave up the privileges of heaven that is in heaven. He has worshipped on earth He was mocked and he ultimately died in Heaven he he enjoyed realized authority no one in heaven questioned is he God No one questions that in heaven whatever he says Happens it happens on earth few recognized who he was and submitted to his authority

What else did Jesus do in leaving heaven is that? It's what he took upon that is also just so shocking and startling We have the eternal God the second member of the Godhead condescending to earth taking on humanity Jesus adding to his divine nature becoming also fully human He humbled himself for us Jesus went The second member of the Godhead went from the glories of heaven to dying excruciating death on the cross He is not from around here He came from above and Jesus says I will return to heaven in verse 21. He told And he says I told you in verse 24 Or in verse 21 he will return to heaven in verse 24 We realize another thing that apart from Christ one will die in their sins

I am not from here I came down I condescended to earth to die for sins and if you don't believe that you're gonna die in your sins So look at numbers verse 24. I told you that you would die in your sins unless you believe That I am he you will die in your sins mentions it twice in one verse You will die in your sin. You will die in your sin, but what's the exception unless you believe in me?

I believe verse 24 to be so critical in that first section from verse 21 through 30 Unless you believe that I am he well Who is the he that he has already told them who he is that they have rejected so

far in the gospel of John?

[12 : 09] We know that he is the light of the world. We looked at that last week. He is God That is why they wanted to stone him. He is the long-awaited for Messiah. He is the one who will rescue you from sin He leads you to the way of everlasting life This is who he is and unless you believe that he is he that I am he Jesus is saying You will die in your sin it is one of the most sobering types of memorial services that I do To officiate when I know the person never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and While I will choose other ways to say it it is one of the hardest Memorial services to officiate to know this person has died in their sin It is one of the most hard Memorial services to officiate No one has to be in that state But all have to avoid that state by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ and he says so so clearly

And these are the loving and truthful words that Jesus is saying to the crowd now The crowd listening to this we have this hopeful response in verse 30 We dropped down to verse 30 and it says And he says saying to these things and many believed in him and at this point our hearts are filled we're like yes Some may not have to die in their sin some have believed in him But Jesus does not necessarily entrust himself to them because he knows something back in chapter 6 Some of the disciples that were following Jesus he turns to them also saying some loving and truthful things and he says He turns to them also saying some loving and truthful things and then at that point in time some disciples of Christ turn away and no longer follow him So Jesus knowing Not all who are following him Truly know him and so he is going to now and the following text from verses 31 through the end of the chapter

He is going to give a litmus test to say these are the ones who believe in me and you say well How do you know that Scott? Well look with me in verse 31. So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him We just read Jesus spoke these loving and truthful Things to him he gave them the appeal you don't have to die in your sin But you have to believe in me and some do and so then Jesus says to that crowd who just believed in him Okay, here's the litmus test to knowing if you believe in me and that's the logical flow of the text So it's good for us to listen today and say I've believed in Christ Do I fulfill the litmus test that Jesus is about to give and so you say Scott?

Well, what is the litmus test? I'm glad you asked I'm glad you asked I would say it this way as the overarching point Those who believe in Christ bleed God's word and we're gonna see three aspects today of how disciples of Christ Bleed God's word and I'm using the word in the term metaphorically bleed into saying that everywhere and out of every Aspect of a person's life just flows God's word. We can't help but emanate God's word God's word I'm using the term bleed To also emphasize this is not compartmentalization of a Christian's life my thought life ought to bleed God's word My social life ought to bleed God's word my private life ought to bleed God's word what I do online ought to bleed God's word

My work life should be dominated by God's word. It should be evident to everyone God's word influences how he works Every aspect of my wife my life and when I weep I ought to Mourn through the lens of God's word and when I rejoice I ought to bleed God's word when when when I have enemies I had a pray for my enemies because I bleed God's word. That's the natural response When I'm blessed I Had to receive that blessing rooted in God's word when I experience hardship my response to hardship ought to be Through a response of God's word when I see a need and I meet a need I ought to bleed God's word when someone is sick and In and hurting I ought to bleed God's word the Christian life is not to be compartmentalized

[17 : 08] We ought to just bleed God God's word so With that underneath that overarching thought we have God's people bleed God's word What's sub point number one if you will what's one aspect that we see of this that we come to in our text first?

We bleed God's word because disciples of Jesus hold on to God's word so Look with me in verse 31 again Jesus is speaking to those who had just believed in him so he gives the litmus test number one Disciples of Jesus hold on to God's word. Where do we see this in verse?

31 if you abide in my word you are truly my disciples Disciples of Jesus hold on to God's word we abide this is a continual Abiding remaining persevering relationship with Jesus through his word I Out on our Resource board on the back wall here just in the hallway. There's a reading plan of reading God's word and and and you can just Spend time in God's word every day and this is in one year's time You could read through the Bible and if it if a Bible reading plan will help you I Welcome you to do this. I just heard recently of two individuals who Face time a video way to see each other and talk to one another At early in the morning they both set their phones up and they they read

God's word together And then they pray for 20 minutes every morning. They they wake up. They at a certain time

They set their phones there. They say let's read the God's word together. They read God's word. They pray for the day hang up I Love that I love that. I remember when I was in college I was not accustomed to reading God's word daily And so I would meet a friend in the library and every morning we would rendezvous at the University library and we would read God's word together and and then go to class and It was our habit but that was helpful and Because disciples of Jesus hold on to God's word we abide If you abide in my word you are truly my disciples. So litmus test number one And and why do we see that as a contrast to the to the those who had believed in him in verse 30 because he speaks to them and He tells them in verse 43 look with me in 43 Why do you not understand what I say because you cannot bear to hear my word my word doesn't

Abide in you you don't abide in my word. In fact you reject it. It finds no place look with me in verse 37 I know that you are an offspring of Abraham yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you The disciples of Jesus are to hold on to God's word But he is speaking to people who have believed and he's saying litmus test number one My word has no place in your life No place This word no place Finds in the gospel of John two other times one time is when Jesus is at the Wedding at Canaan of Galilee They talks about the jars that contain 20 to 30 gallons and the word contain is this word that is It's a good another good way to to understand this word that

[20 : 59] The word of God for these believers that he's speaking to here in this to the litmus test that they're not passing very well He says you cannot contain there's no containment of God's word in your life There's it finds no place in your life And so they're not passing the litmus test very well And it's sad to see these individuals who have no place for God's word in their life I Pray that we would be a people that are so filled up with God's word that we can hardly contain it The the Bible dominates our lives the words of Jesus dominates our life every response to every circumstance is a response through the lens of truth to that

Circumstance every thought deed in action seeks its conformity to scripture This week my wife and I were spending some time with a couple and who knows us very well we've been friends for 25 years or so and we were sharing a meal together and The subject came to the subject of my brother who they know very well and I was about to say something That was not loving or edifying toward my brother and I've shared with you about my brother he I owe him Humanly speaking He's the one who humanly speaking I owe my salvation to he He had the courage enough to speak into my life But I I was tempted to say something and I caught myself And I stopped speaking And And it was obvious to everyone that I was about to say something and they all looked and they were like do you have something to say and I can't why

Because this message is hot on my mind and I'm thinking I Bleed God's word and and what I'm about to do is not going to illustrate that my my speech is Filtered through the lens of God's word. I can't say it That should be normative for us The other thing being holding on to God's word and Holding fast to God's word is it affects our perspective our culture seeks immediate results instantaneous results Instant coffee now someone would object to that But I don't mind instant coffee, but microwaves news at your fingertips one app I have found recently that I just have enjoyed is I love tracking people's flights if I know a loved one is on a flight I'm like, oh check them out. They're over Kansas right now. Look at them go. I

Have no idea, but I can find that instantaneously. There's their plane over Kansas. That's nice. I have no Why do I need to know that I I But we have all this information at our fingertips instantly But God's word shape shapes our perspective for long-term perspective on things We don't necessarily need to seek immediate or instantaneous results We can play the long game with individuals and be patient with ourselves and others a false faith flickers and dies like the seed on the rocky soil But the Christian life has not lived instantly, but we're living for eternity Anyone can follow Jesus for a day, but a genuine faith follows Jesus for a lifetime And this is being trained by God's word in these ways helps us gain maturity and

Helps us gain a heart of the Lord the second aspect of God's people who bleed God's word that's found in our text today is this this this Principle that disciples discovered the truth of the word so notice with me in this verse still in verse 32 this is likely not the first time that we have heard this phrase in verse 32 and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free that phrase by the way is found on many universities Many libraries many government buildings and so what on earth is this talking about? Well first of all Well, we'll get to that here in a second disciples discover the word

of truth It says and you will know the truth You will know the truth that disciples of Jesus Discover the truth of God's word that is they will learn more and more about what is genuinely real Let me illustrate

[26 : 21] Truth is reality God before creation has always existed One in essence three in persons there he is he's always been what is real is God at this point then he creates So if we want to know what is real or what is true it emanates from who God is and And so we take God at his word because we know it's true because it comes from him and he is the ultimate reality He's the source of reality all that is Look with me and So if we reject Jesus and his word we are rejecting Jesus himself You say well, how do we know this look with me in verse 39 through 41 and they said to him I think this is Look at their Yeah, looking for 39 through 41 and they said Abraham is our father and Jesus said to them if you were Abraham's children

You would do you would be doing the works of Abraham did but now you are seeking to kill me a man Who has told you the truth that I heard from God?

I Told you the truth that I heard from God that is what is really real and so you're rejecting me You're rejecting truth. You're rejecting reality First 45 but because I told you the truth you do not believe me To reject Jesus is to reject truth to reject truth is to deny reality Rejecting truth and rejecting reality is to reject Jesus That could be a logical flow of this aspect that the disciples of Jesus Discover the truth of God's word. That's what we do and so he's speaking to these believers in verse 30 And he's saying here's the litmus test You hold on to the word of truth you discover the truth of God's word and now we're getting to our third litmus test and again These individuals here in our text are not passing the test very well third aspect is this

Disciples of Jesus find freedom in this truth You will know the truth and this truth will set you free In verse 32 what I find humorous Is their response to this in verse 33?

They answered him and said we are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone How is it that you say? You will be become free so they take this phrase and they say The truth will set you free and they say we're we're we're descendants of Abraham We have never been enslaved by anyone now at this moment You should just laugh a lot because I found this to be the most humorous passage verse in the whole text because I'm thinking oh I think they must have forgotten their enslavement in Egypt for 400 years I think they they've just passed over that 400 year period of time Then they forgot the Assyrians came down and took them captive to Syria then they must have forgotten Babylon They they took them captive. Thank You Nebuchadnezzar and then they must have forgotten the Medo-Persian Empire Thank You Darius that they also must have forgotten Oh and in the intertestamental period between the Old and New Testament you have Alexander the Great and the Macedonian Empire who also enslaved them and then after that they had the Egyptian Empire who also enslaved them and

[30 : 01] In this time of the writing the Roman Empire is occupying their land and they're enslaved the of Rome They must have forgotten all of that But again, you're high on the Feast of Tabernacles where you're remembering how God has preserved you and so you forget those things so That's why I find this verse very humorous However, that's the wrong logic to be applied in this verse because they're not equating Foreign occupation as their form of enslavement. It's because they're not like them because they're using the logic We are the offspring of Abraham Ie. We're not Gentiles Therefore we haven't been enslaved by anyone. We're not like them That is how they are viewing this enslavement The truth will set you free well, we are free because we're not like the Gentiles

We're children of Abraham and so Jesus then helps form how they should understand this enslavement and read with me the following verses verse 34 How is Jesus speaking of this enslavement and freedom verse 34? Jesus answered them Truly truly I say to you everyone who practices sin is slave to sin. Oh Now we're getting a hint at what Jesus is saying. He says the truth will set you free free from sin And if you're practicing sin you are a slave to sin Their enslavement was due to the fact that they were sinners Not that they were under foreign occupation or not that they were not Gentiles They took this internal liberty that they felt because they were at least not like the Gentiles at least to the way they're God chosen people When I visit with I would from time to time take

College students and we would go around town, Spokane and other places and we would ask a series of six questions to determine where someone was at spiritually and inevitably I would ask some form of this kind of question. Tell me why is it that you feel like you may have a right standing

before God and God should accept you and inevitably this is what they would do I'm a pretty good person. I don't smoke and don't drink. I don't hang out with those who do those kinds of answers And inevitably what they would be doing is they're just pointing to everyone else around them and saying well at least I'm not like them I'm better than them. That's why I should that's why I think God would accept me The Jews are using the same method as I did in the Bible I'm not like them. I'm better than them. That's why I should that's why I think God would accept me. The Jews are using the same logic but Jesus cutting right through the chase and says no no no no This freedom that you have is a freedom because you've accepted Christ who is truth and you've received him and this truth will set you free otherwise you are enslaved to sin and look with me in verse 34 Jesus emphasizes this point by saying truly truly amen amen

I say to you everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin the slave does not remain in the house forever the son remains in the house forever meaning if you in a family's house there are slaves who may in this first century who may run the household but from a period of time but at some point in the time the slaves are kicked out of the house and who remains our family and the son and so verse 36 then reads and if the son has set you free you are free indeed and now we're getting the clear picture of what Jesus is communicating if you will know the truth the truth will set you free free from sin and who does that the son and if the son has set you free by believing in his sinless life his death for sin and resurrection from the grave for your forgiveness of sin if he has set you free you are free indeed from sin amazing truth

I don't ever want to have it lost on me or you what it means to be dead in sin in Romans 6 11 Paul writings don't consider yourself any longer to be dead to sin but alive unto God there was a period of time in all of our lives prior to Christ where we were all dead in our sin slaves to sin all we could do is sin but upon believing in Christ and now you're alive unto God and so when we are free when it says that you will know the truth and the truth set you free it's not to be free to live as you please I watch what our culture considers to throw off all social constraints and be free and then there's all these sinful expressions of what that means and sin enslaves you to choose any lifestyle you want that is a prison with consequences so we're not free to just do what we want we're free for the first time to live pleasing to the Lord because being dead in sin it was not possible anymore now we're free to live for the glory of God never possible before

[36 : 11] God's people bleed God's word I love how John Piper talks about this freedom if you have the son if the son sets you free you are free indeed John Piper talks about this free indeed and he summarizes it in this one sentence he says it this way you are fully free when you have the desire ability and opportunity to do what will leave you with no regret forever you have the desire ability and opportunity to do something that will have where you will have no regrets forever that's what you now have in Christ if you have the son you are free indeed to do that or you never had that possibility prior and he's appealing to these believers who had just believed in him and he's saying this is the litmus test

I think this text is a little bit sad and a bit scary and here comes our application for today and we'll close it's sad and a bit scary in this way the religious men think that they are doing just fine spiritually but they have been deceived and they saw themselves in verse 33 free they saw themselves as children of Abraham 39 and they saw themselves as children of God verse 41 but Jesus saw them as enslaved to sin intolerant to truth and an offspring of Satan there's a dichotomy of how they saw themselves and how the Lord saw them and so there may be some in here in this room who may be like these Jews spiritually deceived that is they think they know Christ you may have hung around church for some time you may have been baptized you may have had a lot of religious experiences you may even be a son of Abraham but if you do not have the son you are dead in your sin and if there's never been an agreement with what the Lord has said saying Lord I know I have sin I recognize that you the second member of the Godhead condescended to earth taking on humanity being born of a virgin lived a sinless life you died a death for sin my sin you were in the grave three days and you rose from the grave on my behalf overcoming sin and death and I trust in your provision to forgive sin and if you have the son you are free indeed and I pray that there would be none in this room who are spiritually deceived in that way secondly the reason why this is a bit sad and a bit scary is there may be those who may not know the Lord which I just mentioned there may be also some in this room who are like myself recovering legalists and I will not wear we imprison others as legalists we imprison others around us let me let me give you an example and boy legalists just bring out the warmth of friendship around them and I excelled at that

so I remember a time real briefly where I was in my young 20s I had known the Lord just for like two years so I knew everything by that time already and I was aspiring to be in ministry but I had no idea what that meant at the time I thought I did and I visited a church on the west side was visiting some friends and the pastor was sitting on a bar stool height stool and he was leaning on a table next to him and he was preaching using the Bible on his table and just kind of leaning casually and I thought that is no way to present God's word if you're going to present God's word just stand there and share and herald the truth of God's word to his people and the posture in which he was doing that I was really kind of critical of so the service concluded and I was in the foyer and I was reading kind of a biography of the husband and the wife pastor and his wife and they had there in the foyer and he seemed like a pretty remarkable guy and it was really honestly a good sermon but in my heart I was really critical of his whole posture and I didn't think much of him and then a lady in the church saw that I was reading his bio and she said to me hi there my name is and I don't remember her name but I will remember forever what she said to me and here I am with my little legalistic heart and being critical and so I said well tell me about your pastor I said tell me what is not on here what you love about your pastor and she said we are so thankful to have him a year or two years ago he was in a bad car accident where he almost died he spent three months in the hospital nine months in rehab and he still he'll be injured for the rest of his life he's not been the same and so he takes comfort relieving the back pain by leaning on a table and still preaching God's word and sitting on that stool thank you but it's hard to identify the areas of spiritual deception we have in our own life until it's kind of pointed out so blatantly like this loving woman did for me and here's what's so terrible I'm going to read a list but before I read the list I want to understand what is so bad is just like the Jews who Jesus is preaching to they're taking comfort because they are not like them they're not like the Gentiles

I mean we're better than that right and so we're not like them and so they become the standard by which they measure their lenses measure what spirituality really looks like they become the standard and so I don't know if you've ever been guilty of something like this but let me share I would never wear a hat to church I would never do that I would never dress like that I would never pierce myself or get a tattoo or I would never speak to someone like that I would never do that I would never make that kind of decision they just did never would have and I don't know about you but I can be guilty of these things and I'm again I'm a recovering legalist I've got a long list of things that I would have and I would have justified myself and until I read this text today I thought this is this may be what is acceptable in the church today is when we are spiritually deceived and we become the standard by which we measure others but I hope you see if you were to live into my legalistic life and how I see what is right and wrong I become the standard and it's a prison for people it's a prison for pastors to preach in any other way than to stand behind a pulpit it's a prison for it has to look my way that's such a prison and Jesus is trying to liberate people if you abide in my word here's the litmus test if you abide in my word and you truly are my disciples and you will know the truth the truth of who Christ is what he has done to forgive and he will set you free and that freedom is back to John Piper you are truly free when you have the desire ability and opportunity to do what will leave you with no regrets forever

I want that amen I want that and I want that for us as a church so let's pray Father thank you for this day I pray this litmus test for us would be applied thank you for your word thank you for the ways in which we fail and are convicted Lord help us to never measure spirituality by our standard by the standard of Scott or whoever but the standard of God's word of what you deem right and wrong Lord I thank you for the privilege to be truly free to live for your glory now after accepting your life death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sin I pray that we would live as free people thank you for that joy thank you for that privilege we love you amen