Respectable Sins 1 – Ungodliness

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[0:00] Let's see. Yeah, it's working. Guys, thanks so much for coming this morning for this first class out of four on the respectable sins of the saints.

! I was going to I meant to bring my book, but some of this is based off like Jerry Bridges. So some of the stuff that I've pulled this morning is from Jerry Bridges book, The Respectable Sins.

And that's kind of the basis of the series that we're doing the next four weeks. Considering what the believers have deemed as some of the respectable sins, which, of course, we'll go.

We'll get into that more. But before we get started this morning, let's pray. I want to ask for the Lord's help. Father, we come before you this morning. And Lord, we we need you. We need your help, Lord.

So we ask that by the by the spirit you would come and you would help us to to see our sin rightly before you.

[1:04] Lord, I pray that we would have a sober look today at our sin, our sin of ungodliness. And oh, Lord, I pray that you would come and reveal our sin so that we can apply the healing balm of the gospel and that we can know true life in Christ.

So we ask for these things. Come by your spirit. We pray in your son's name. Amen. All right. So out of out of introduction, I'm going to read a few lines from a fictional book.

It's well known. You guys will know it. And these lines are just just describing one of the lands in this fictional book.

And I'm curious to see if you guys can figure it out. So here here's the quote from this fictional book. And boys, you cannot say what it is. Out from their feet were flung huge buttresses and broken hills that were now at the nearest scarce a dozen miles away.

And they looked around in horror. Loathsome far was the country that the crawling day now slowly unveiled to their shrinking eyes.

[2:27] Here, nothing lived. Not even the leprous growths that feed on rottenness. The gasping pools were choked with ash and crawling muds, sickly white and gray, as if the mountains had vomited filth of their entrails upon the lands about.

High mounds of crushed and powdered rock, great cones of earth, fire blasted and poison stained, stood like an obscene graveyard in endless rows, slowly revealed in the reluctant light.

What fictional land was just described? Any guesses? Well known book. Well known book. Many of you guys would know it. Any stabs?

Nope, not Pilgrim's Progress. Nice try though. Alright, I won't make you guys linger for too long. This was actually from J.R.R. Tolkien's description of Frodo and Sam.

They had just come through the dead marshes. And now they were seeing more detail than the land of Mordor. They were knocking at the door. So did that surprise you at all?

[3:50] When you hear that description, did that surprise you? Oh yeah, land of Mordor. Kind of stunning. Would it surprise you though, if I said though, would it shock you even more when I say that the land of Mordor is a sobering depiction of the sinfulness and ungodliness of our heart?

It said, Here nothing lived, not even the leprous growth that feed on rottenness. And so Colossians 1.13 says, We were in the domain of darkness.

Ephesians reveals that we followed the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. We were dead. We were separated from Christ without hope, without God in the world.

Jeremiah 17 says, We were in an uninhabited salt land. Ezekiel 36 says, We had a heart of stone.

Apart from Christ, we were nothing but ungodly and unrighteous. Our mind, our heart, our will, our affections, all of us were opposed to God, separated from God.

[5:09] We were self-seeking and for the world. And God's wrath rested on us. As Roman 1 says, For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

Though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him. But they became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened.

And in Romans 1, it continues to go on to give a list of, a list filled with all manners of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice, gossip, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, and the list goes on and on with many more.

And when we read a list like that in scripture, we can begin to form these tiers of sin as the really ungodly and the not so much.

The scandalous and the respectable sins, as Jerry Bridges puts forward in his book. We can begin to assume that, well, if I'm not doing these scandalous sins, I'm doing pretty good.

[6:38] I am a pretty good, moral, decent person. And we often, if we're not doing the scandalous, we consider ourselves, well, fairly godly.

We would not consider ourselves ungodly. But as we read through scripture, this is not God's view of sin. If you read through Leviticus, God gives instruction on sin offerings.

And it is made clear, very clear in the book of Leviticus, that all sin, any breaking of God's law, requires atonement.

God does not require atonement for just the big sins. And then the rest of our sin, the respectable ones, can just be kind of covered by our good works.

All sin requires atonement by blood sacrifice without blemish. Our good works are not without blemish, are they?

[7:39] They are stained by our sin. The only means of cleansing and full atonement is through the shed blood of Christ on the cross, who was without blemish or stain.

And to consider further, the sin of Adam and Eve, in the garden, that separated us from the presence of God and placed the curse of sin and death on all mankind.

What was this sin? Surely, this must have been scandalous, to hold such a weight of punishment. They ate fruit.

But we know that it was not merely just eating the fruit, was it? It was a rejection of God himself. It was a pursuing of self-want, self-knowledge, self-gratification, self-glorification.

It was a turning away from the creator to creaturely things. Martin Lloyd-Jones said, that ungodliness was the first sin of Adam and Eve.

[8:50] So think about this. For before eating the fruit, they listened to the serpent, questioned the authority of God as something to be discussed and up for debate.

And then Eve adds to the command of God by saying, neither shall you touch it. Robert Lethem, in his book, Systematic Theology, he says that when Eve said, neither shall you touch it, this is an erroneous human embellishment, implying that God is stricter than he is, and that human regulations trump the word of God.

And so we see in their sin of ungodliness, this removal of God's authority and sufficiency and a substituting for our understanding and ability.

And Proverbs 16, 25 says, there is a way that seems right to man, but in its end is death. And so Martin Lloyd-Jones says, the real essence of all sin is ungodliness, a failing to live for God's glory.

And this is what makes sin truly sinful. We were made to glorify God, to which is our main calling and command. And therefore the essence of sin is a falling, a failing, a missing the mark of living for God's glory.

[10:30] Anything that falls short of hitting this mark is grievous and scandalous, for it's against the holy God. That is so completely worthy of all glory.

Our sin separated us from God, but Christ calls us to be separate to God through his redemption from our sin and death.

And so how do we define ungodliness? I think we should go back to Romans 118 to consider this. For again, there it said that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness.

Ungodliness and unrighteousness. And Paul is making a distinction between these two. And Jerry Bridges helps us. And he says, ungodliness describes an attitude toward God, while unrighteousness refers to sinful actions in thought, word, or deed.

So in other words, ungodliness is a matter of the heart, mind, and will in relation to God, as if he's irrelevant.

[11:49] It is a going about your life with little or no thought or regard to God himself. Ungodliness is a me-centered living.

It's my will, my wants. It is worldly focus, where your eyes and your heart are set only horizontally. And they are without any regard vertically to God himself for everyday life.

Ungodliness, though, is not wickedness. These are different. There is a difference between wickedness and ungodliness. But what we do see is that ungodliness, if left unchecked, unmortified, leads to growing unrighteousness, leads to growing wickedness.

Martin Lloyd-Jones said, the order that Paul gives in Romans 1.18, ungodliness, and then unrighteousness, is intentional, for ungodliness will lead to unrighteousness, just as godliness leads to righteousness.

Ungodliness leads to suppressing the truth of God, and it deceives us. John Owen says, sin aims always at the utmost.

[13:13] Think about that. Sin always aims at the utmost. It is modest, as it were, in its first motions and proposals, but having once got footing in the heart by them, it constantly makes good its ground.

That's sobering. And it presses on to some further degrees in the same kind. It prevails to the hardening of men, and so to their ruin.

It thinks all is indifferently well, if there be no such further progresses. But sin is still pressing forward, even when we think all is indifferently well.

Sin is still pressing forward, and that is because it has no bounds, but utter relinquishment of God and opposition to him.

The sin of ungodliness deceives slowly, and it erodes our affections to God, leading us to become hardened and calloused to God himself in our daily lives.

[14:25] One of the dangers of the sin of ungodliness is its deceptiveness. For many can think of themselves as godly, for they are not involved in what we deem as the scandalous sins, and we then think, all is indifferently well in my heart.

They read their Bible, go to church, do all their religious activities, live decently good, modest lives, keep a good-paying job, contributing citizen, and yet still can be ungodly.

So often we can have the view of the Pharisee in Luke 18, where Jesus says, Jesus told a parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and treated others with contempt.

Jesus said, two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and other a tax collector. And the Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus, God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners and unjust and adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

I fast twice a week and I give tithes of all that I get. But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to the heaven.

But he beat his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me, a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other.

The Pharisee was pleased with his decently moral good life. He was more aware of his abilities, successes, sufficiency, than was his need for forgiveness.

He was unaware of his abounding sin that was in need of a Savior for God's wrath rested on him. But the tax collector saw himself laid bare before a holy God.

He saw his life in relation to a holy God and his only response, God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

And Jesus also, in the same vein, addresses Simon the Pharisee in Luke 7. After he had invited, Simon had invited Jesus into his house for dinner.

[17:16] And Simon was completely repulsed when a woman came in. And the scripture identified this woman as a woman of the city who was a sinner.

And she comes in, she begins to wash Jesus' feet with her tears and her hair and anoints his feet with an alabaster flask of ointment.

And Simon was repulsed. And Jesus responded to his indignation and his lack of understanding of sin.

And Jesus said in a parable again, a certain money lender had two debtors. One owed 500 denarii and the other 50.

And when they could not pay, he canceled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more? And you can tell by Simon's answer.

[18:16] He knew the answer. He just didn't, he knew he had been found. And he answered, the one I suppose for whom he canceled the larger debt.

And Jesus said to Simon, you have judged rightly. Therefore I tell you, her sins which are many are forgiven for she loved much.

But he who is forgiven little loves little. And this is the great deceit of ungodliness. In that it seeks to blind us to the vast measure of our sinful hearts in rejection to God for all of life.

It is the arrogance of self-reliance of what we think are our good works and abilities that are produced by our own making.

This is at the heart of ungodliness. It is living a life in a posture of self-dependence, self-sufficiency, and not looking to the sovereign, reigning God who is over our lives.

[19:29] And we live with the thought, I've got this. And this is, and this ungodliness leads us to putting up blinders to our sinfulness.

And he who is forgiven little loves little. Many might say that pride is the root of most sin, but when ungodliness is seen rightly, we see that pride just comes from the sin of ungodliness.

Ungodliness is the beginning root of most of all of our sin. For in ungodliness we are not seeing and savoring God as glorious, majestic, faithful, and trustworthy, and most certainly worthy of our living for Him.

and to Him. So how does ungodliness look then in our daily lives? How do we even know when we might rightly not understand ungodliness?

And it's good to pause here for a moment and consider your daily life. Think about your daily moments, the patterns, the routines that you have. Our daily patterns and where your time is being spent.

[20:52] how you make decisions, what you prioritize, how you view money, where you spend your money, they're all telling and revealing something about our hearts.

Ungodliness is first and primarily a heart matter. We must not forget that. And Scripture reveals that what we treasure, what we prioritize, reveals what our heart craves and longs for

Jesus said in Matthew, where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. So let's do a blind test. I want you to, if I were to receive two reports today detailing about your life and the life of an unbeliever, and it would be comprehensive, outlining the content of your conversations and speech, media consumption and content, the things that preoccupy your thoughts, passions, dreams, financial budget, expenditures, parenting choices, TV habits, would I be able to distinguish your life from that of an unbeliever?

Would there be much of a difference? And as we've been learning in Ephesians, Paul would say, there should be a difference.

For he says in Ephesians 4, Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do in the futility of their minds.

[22:29] They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them. Due to their hardness of heart, they have become callous and given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity, but that is not the way you learned Christ.

Are you putting off the old self and putting on the new, being in the likeness of God and righteousness and holiness? Do you walk and talk differently?

And here I have a list of questions that I pulled from CJ Mahaney to help us evaluate ourselves. I would, and I, this list here that I'm going to read, I would really encourage you when you guys go home, consider these questions, ask yourself honestly, bring others in your life who know you well and ask them, do the hard work of identifying the specific sins so that you can get specific diagnosis.

John Piper said that superficial diagnosis lead to false remedies and no cures. And that's what ungodliness wants us to do, wants us to just look over our sinfulness and to really just glaze over it and not give it much attention.

So here are the questions. What dominates your mind and stirs your heart? Is it discontentment with your life or longings for earthly pleasures?

[24:15] Does outward prosperity appeal to you more than growth and godliness? Do you relate to God as if he exists to further your selfish ambitions?

Or are you convinced you exist to glorify him? Do you covet the esteem and crave the approval of those around you? Do you go to great lengths to avoid looking foolish or being rejected for your Christian faith?

Do you consider present and material results more important than eternal reward? So where can ungodliness be found in our lives?

And how might it look? We will consider a few categories, but the ones I'm going to share, it's not an exhaustive list. There are so many other ways that this can show up in our lives, but here are a few.

So functional atheism is one. And I define functional atheism as one that's going about your daily life just as if an atheist would, which is kind of in the same vein of what we've already been hitting on.

[25:31] It's with no regard to God himself, every day again brings number of decisions, conversations to be had, plans to make, plans to fulfill, and functional atheism is going about it with little regard to God.

Again, this is in self-sufficiency with little or no thought to God. And Proverbs 3 says, lean not on your own understanding, but in all your ways acknowledge him.

James 4, 13 through 17 helpfully says, come now, you who say today or tomorrow we will go into such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit, yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring.

What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead, we ought to say, if the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.

As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. It's ungodly. Whoever, so whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

[26:49] And so with this, James is not saying, well, you should never plan. Shouldn't plan, just trust God. No, saying, yes, make plans. But are those plans with God in the picture?

Am I going to God with my plans, asking for his help? Am I leaning on my own understanding or am I trusting the Lord in my planning?

Number two, acceptable versus unacceptable escapisms. And there are many escapisms that we would automatically deem unacceptable.

They'd be easy. Drugs, porn. But what about acceptable and respectable escapisms? What might be some of those?

Perhaps some of these respectable escapisms could be social media, food, alcohol, even known some people to do financial trading.

[27:51] That's their thing. They love it. Video games, recreational reading, TV shows, movies. Thought of you, brother. That's not of the spirit.

TV shows and movies, vacations. All these are respectable in our thought.

But we also hold to Christian liberty, right? These are things that God has created. They're good. And God has given his creation for us to enjoy.

But where might we cross the line with these things? Where might they become ungodly? And there are a number of considerations on this point.

So one, I believe the question of moderation is revealing along with our attachment to these things. So for example, if a person is giving disproportionate amount of time to watching movies or binging or recreational reading, when their priorities are being pushed off to the side, that's an indicator that this has become ungodly.

[29:08] Are you neglecting the important and the urgent for your liberties? And another consideration to build on that is what if the amount of moderation is appropriate?

What then? Is it then godly? You know, so for instance, I did my Bible study. I spent time with the Lord and now I want to enjoy my glass of wine or play my video game.

What then? Could it still be ungodly? Again, we always mustn't keep in mind as we're thinking through these things, ungodliness, the heart of ungodliness is our living our daily life without much thought of God.

And so with that, are we enjoying these liberties from God with an awareness of His kindness and His grace with thankfulness?

1 Timothy 4.4 says, for everything created by God is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving.

[30:20] So another thought is after a long day, tending to the kids, working, meal prep, poopy diapers, water spills, laundry, and you are just about to sit down.

Kids are in bed. You've got them in bed. You're about to sit down, enjoy some quiet. You've got the chocolate ready to enjoy. And right before you do, the chocolate's coming to your mouth, your child comes out of the door, and they've got another need.

What's your reflex? reflex? What's your response in that moment? Do you deal with them abruptly? Close the door and say, go back to bed in frustration and anger towards them?

I bring this example because I'm guilty. Your response, my response, reveals a lot.

Fourth consideration, what if you've had a busy day from the very beginning? You know those days, right? The moment your eyes open, it's hitting the ground running.

[31:31] Things come up unexpected and expected. And you've had a busy day, you've not had time to be in meditation in the Word, haven't had time to slow down and consider the Lord and the Word, but now you finally get a free moment.

In that moment, what do you run to? What do you crave? What do you long for? Do you just hop on social media or YouTube to help calm your mind down?

because I need to be calmed down, right? I've had a busy day. I need a moment. Where do you live within an awareness, a longing, and a need for the Word of God to fill your life?

Matthew 4, 4, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. All right, thirdly, work.

How about our work? When could our work become ungodly? And here, we must address the focus, the intent, and the purpose of our work.

[32:42] We are called as believers to work to the Lord and not to men. Colossians 3, 22 through 24 says, slaves, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye service as people pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.

whatever you do, work heartily as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord, you will receive the inheritance as your reward.

You are serving the Lord Christ. And so here in these verses, we see that godly work is done for Christ with sincerity, honesty, and heartily.

Therefore, ungodly work is for man and self. It seeks self-promotion, praise of man, more money, and not to please God.

Again, it is a matter of the heart. Promotions, pay increases, these are not inherently wrong. But what is our aim?

[33:55] What's the goal? What are we striving for in our work? It is my greatest desire in my work that God is pleased and that God is glorified. I remember a number of years ago training with a nurse back when I was taking on a hospice job.

And I was so convicted by this nurse. She wonderfully helped me. Every time before we pulled into a driveway because we were providing care in the home, and every time we pulled into the driveway, she would just immediately say a quick prayer asking for God's help before she went into the home.

And she was living in an awareness that she needed God's help for the tasks set before her as she went into that home. Godly work is not ultimately determined by the work itself.

That's good. whether serving Chick-fil-A or doing mission work. It is our aim in our work that makes it godly or ungodly.

For a minister, a missionary, can be doing godly work, but it be ungodly in how they are going about it.

[35:11] Their aim, just like me preparing this class, I could prepare ungodly if my aim is to please you, to get your praise, to get your recognition.

And I have to watch my heart. I'm prone to the fear of man. And that is ungodly. My heart's desire is for the Lord to be magnified, for the Lord to be praised.

And so there are a number of ways honoring God in our work that plays out. It means that we're honest. If we make a mistake, we own up. We don't try to cover it up.

We are honest about our time card when we are on the clock. We work hard when no one's watching because we work for the Lord and not for man. We celebrate with the one who got the promotion we wanted.

So many more ways than just these that we can do godly work. And in the same vein of work, schooling, that's work as well.

[36:19] Ungodliness can show up in our schooling and how we approach school. It can appear in laziness or like it was for me, it can appear as idolatry.

And what I mean by that is I crave the A so intensely that the time given in my study schedule was very imbalanced.

I had an overabundance of time given to study that took the place of communion with God. In the word and prayer, Bible studies, church itself, I forsook church so I could get a little bit more time to study and family functions.

What this revealed was my self-sufficiency and my self-reliance. It revealed what I thought was my greater need. My functional God in this moment, the lowercase G, functional God, was getting the A.

Whether for my personal ego, fear of failure, approval of man, and thereby placing God to secondary and not priority, I was living ungodly in my schooling because God was not ultimately in the picture and I was not resting in Him as my greatest need.

[37:39] Another is giving. Our finances can show and reveal many things. Is it wrong to save or spend? Clearly, if the Lord blesses you with the ability to save, then you should.

Proverbs talks about proper saving and planning financially. Sam's done a wonderful class on that. It's good. The ant in Proverbs takes us to school in these things, but how do we know if our financial transactions and dealings are godly or ungodly?

If I were to look at your transactions, would I be able to know if God is relevant to the way you spend or handle your money? How is your heart in giving?

Is it begrudgingly out of a sense of duty or do we give joyfully knowing that the present form of this world is passing away? another area that ungodliness can show up is unforgiveness.

Unforgiveness reveals a heart of ungodliness. For a heart that remains in unforgiveness holding to bitterness towards others displaces the gospel out of the equation.

[38:56] When one remains in unforgiveness, the gospel is no longer functional. but only theoretical in your belief. Faith in the gospel is a deep conviction that pierces through the old self, bringing about new life in Christ.

An unforgiving heart might just be a heart that is not rightly seeing the vastness and heinousness of your own sin, which nailed Christ to the cross.

An unforgiving heart could be a sign of a hardening heart by the deceitfulness of sin. Like we've already showed how sin always aims at the utmost, trying to deceive you.

Do you walk with bitterness towards others for wrongs done to you? and do you speak in wrongful ways about others who have wronged you?

When we live in unforgiveness, we live in relational ways with others where we elevate the greatness of others' sin above the powerful reach of the gospel.

[40:06] We elevate the power of sin and wrongdoing over the power of the cross, and this is ungodly. Like I said, we could do so many more.

Parenting, prayer, there's many ways that ungodliness can show itself. But where do we go from here? How do we turn from ungodliness to godliness?

Surely it can't be just, well, you need to do this, fill in the blank. For if godliness is only a list of do's and don'ts, that only gets at the outward manifestations.

It only deals with the externals. It is like trying to do landscaping on ground knowing there's a sinkhole underneath that's going to collapse at some point.

It doesn't work. It will not lead to true change. And if we think that godliness is in the doing only, then we are denying the power of godliness.

[41:10] As 2 Timothy 3, 5 says, they have the appearance of godliness, but they deny its power. And Titus 2, 11 and 12 says, for the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.

And what do we see right now in the present age? According to 2 Timothy 3, we see lovers of self, lovers of money, lovers of pleasure, rather than lovers of God.

And Paul says in Titus 3, for we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, but when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us.

Not because of our works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Christ.

The grace of God has appeared to train us to renounce all ungodliness and worldly passions. The godly life, as C.J.

[42:40] Mahaney says, does not move beyond the cross, but only goes deeper into the mysteries of Calvary, where we see our sin more fully, and we grieve the sin that nailed him to the cross.

2 Corinthians 7, 10 says, for godly grief produces repentance, a turning away that leads to salvation without regret.

And so we grieve our sin at the cross, but then we receive and know and cherish the forgiveness that God grants through faith in the finished shedding blood of Christ.

The godly life is not a list of do's and don'ts, but it is a savoring and seeing Christ as your treasure. For when we see Christ, the great treasure and joy of our souls, we will be like the man in the parable who stumbled across a treasure in the field, and he went and he sold all they had with joy so that he could have that treasure.

It is the sweetness of seeing the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ that compels us to the means of grace, to scripture, prayer, meditation, fellowship of the saints, worship, hearing the preached word, and then these things in turn bring full assurance to the believer that then leads to a greater savoring of Christ, but it is all begins with the appearing of grace.

[44:23] Paul said that I have not already attained or am already perfected, but I press on to the upward calling of God.

Hebrew says, run the race that's set before you. Throw aside the weight of sin that clings so closely to you that seeks to deceive you to not run, but to settle, and that settling leads to hardening.

God says to you and me, don't stop running. Keep your eyes on Christ. Throw off your sin of ungodliness by grace alone.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for meeting us here this morning. Lord, we ask for help. Lord, we want to be appropriately and rightly convicted of our sins of ungodliness.

Oh, Lord, we want to live in more awareness of you in our everyday life, for we need grace. We need your strength, for you are our portion and our help.

[45:43] Whom have I in heaven or on earth, but you and you alone? You are our great refuge. You are our shelter and so we pray that you would give us eyes to see, eyes to treasure you more fully so that we may live godly lives in faith.

We ask this, Lord, in all these things, in the name of Christ. Amen. Amen. Thank you guys for coming. Amen.