

“The Giver of Assurance” □ WCF 18.3l (TPH p930)

2024.06.30 Sabbath School Lesson

Hopewell ARPC, Culleoka, TN

1. Although hypocrites and other unregenerate men may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes and carnal presumptions of being in the favor of God, and estate of salvation (which hope of theirs shall perish): yet such as truly believe in the Lord Jesus, and love Him in sincerity, endeavoring to walk in all good conscience before Him, may, in this life, be certainly assured that they are in the state of grace, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, which hope shall never make them ashamed.^d

2. This certainty is not a bare conjectural and probable persuasion grounded upon a fallible hope;^e but an infallible assurance of faith founded upon the divine truth of the promises of salvation,^f the inward evidence of those graces unto which these promises are made,^g the testimony of the Spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God,^h which Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption.ⁱ

3. This infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties, before he be partaker of it:^k yet, being enabled by the Spirit to know the things which are freely given him of God, he may, without extraordinary revelation, in the right use of ordinary means, attain thereunto.^l And therefore it is the duty of everyone to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure,^m that thereby his heart may be enlarged in peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and cheerfulness in the duties of obedience, the proper fruits of this assurance;ⁿ so far is it from inclining men to looseness.^o

4. True believers may have the assurance of their salvation divers ways shaken, diminished, and intermitted; as, by negligence in preserving of it, by falling into some special sin which woundeth the conscience and grieveth the Spirit; by some sudden or vehement temptation, by God's withdrawing the light of His countenance, and suffering even such as fear Him to walk in darkness and to have no light:^p yet are they never utterly destitute of that seed of God, and life of faith, that love of Christ and the brethren, that sincerity of heart, and conscience of duty, out of which, by the operation of the Spirit, this assurance may, in due time, be revived;^q and by the which, in the meantime, they are supported from utter despair.^r

l. 1 Corinthians 2:8–13 8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” 10 But God has revealed

them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. 13 These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

- The knowledge of redemption accomplished (v8–9) and of redemption applied (v10) is a work in us by the Spirit (v11)
- The increasing knowing of these things is an ongoing work of the Spirit (v12)
- “Spiritual for Spiritual”: Spirit-given knowledge for Spirit-regenerated people

1 John 4:13 12 No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. 13 By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit

- God freely gives assurance, because we are unable to obtain it for ourselves.
- It is especially the work of His Spirit, Who abides in believers, to make us know our life in God by union with Christ.

Hebrews 6:9–12 9 But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.

10 For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. 11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

- Though the warning is given concerning specific individuals in the church, there is a general confidence of “things that accompany salvation” about the visible church taken as a whole.
- Still, it is the duty of “each one” to “show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope.” Assurance is given, in part, through diligent effort; we ought not to expect it apart from that effort (which effort, itself, we will all admit in retrospect had been given by God—which is part of how it functions unto our assurance!). This is “until the end.” Assurance is something that must be maintained, and spiritual sluggishness should alarm us. Faith and assurance do not present as complacency and presumption but as imitation of “those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Ephesians 3:14–19 14 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

▪ The proof text is especially v17–18: a rooting and grounding in knowing the electing/saving love of Christ toward us. Prayer (such as this one) is one of those ordinary means that we ought rightly to use in pursuit of assurance.

m. 2Pet. 1:10. ▪ n. Rom. 5:1–2, 5. Rom. 14:17. Rom. 15:13. Eph. 1:3–4. Ps. 4:6–7. Ps. 119:32. ▪ o. 1John 2:1–2. Rom. 6:1–2. Titus 2:11–12, 14. 2Cor. 7:1. Rom. 8:1, 12. 1John 3:2–3. Ps. 130:4. 1John 1:6–7. ▪ p. Ps. 51:8, 12, 14. Eph. 4:30–31. Ps. 77:1–10. Ps. 31:22. Matt. 26:69–72. Luke 22:31–34. ▪ q. 1John 3:9. Luke 22:32. Ps. 51:8, 12. ▪ r. Mic. 7:7–9. Jer. 32:40. Isa. 54:7–14. 2Cor. 4:8–10.

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All right, so we're still in article three of uh, chapter 18 of the confession. Uh, which reads This infallible Assurance to not so belong to the essence of But that a True Believer. May wait, long and conflict with many difficulties before he be partaker of it.

Yet being enabled by the spirit. To know the things which are freely given him of God. He may without extraordinary Revelation. In the right, use of ordinary means. Attain their own tune. And therefore it is the duty of everyone to give all diligence to make us calling an election.

Sure. There by his heart, may be enlarged in peace and joy in the Holy Ghost in love and thankfulness to God. And in strength and cheerfulness in the duties of obedience, the proper fruits of this assurance. So far, is it from inclining, meant to looseness? So the section that we're especially considering this week is yet being enabled by the spirit, To know the things which are freely given him of God.

He may without extraordinary Revelation. And the right use of ordinary means. They're unto. And so this is a very important. This is answering a very important question for us after last week because last week we were thinking and hearing about how you can believe in the Lord Jesus and be sure about him that he is the savior.

But not be sure that you are believing in the Lord Jesus. Not be sure that you are in a state of grace. Not be sure about yourself that you have been saved. Now if you are sure about the Lord Jesus, that he is your savior and you are resting upon him to save you.

You are saved. You don't have to be sure about yourself in order to be saved but To being sure that you are saved is one of the ways as we heard last week. In first, John chapter 5 that the

Lord keeps us in the faith. Strengthens us gives us perseverance so that we keep on keeping on, so that we press on.

In believing in the Lord Jesus. And in Putting our sin to death and preparing for the glory that Jesus has earned for us and really not just has earned for us but that he himself is for us. Uh, that he himself is the heavenliness of Uh, when we talk about our reward and so Assurance is something that he tells us to seek Assurance is something that he tells us how and why it is useful to seek something that will get further on in article 3.

We heard just a moment ago, but Here is the question that, uh, this week's portion is answering since Assurance is something. That sometimes is difficult to get. Ha. And that's something that I should get or should pursue how can I get it? Yeah, how do we pursue Assurance? And, Uh, there is a A tendency, I don't know if it's in.

Our laziness or just lack of appreciation or maybe lack of instruction in many cases about how God gives Assurance. Uh, but The, uh, you children. If, if this is the way you're responding, then know that, uh, this is, uh, also something that I went through, when I was younger and wanting to know that I was saved, wanting to know that I was a Christian.

And wanting some sort of, Special word from God or maybe, uh, better than special word because at that time, The Lord's Mercy to me. And in my sinfulness and meaning a lot of Mercy, I was much more into feelings than I was into words. And so, I wasn't even looking for a special word from God.

As I was a special feeling from God. And we would go on these things called Retreats, or I don't know if if any of you are familiar with that type of thing and uh there would be very inspirational speakers and singing times that were designed to get you all frothed up and they'd keep you up late at night and ask really personal questions and yeah.

I don't know if it was invented by psychologists or just evolved that way. Kind of manufacture. These almost hallucinogenic spiritual experiences so that we could all get Assurance. Um, but praise God. Uh, we can see in the Westminster standards that those things are not new. Uh, nothing has Uh, tested you.

That is not common to man and our spiritual fathers in the faith. Knew of that tendency and wrote against it said, yet being enabled by the spirit to know the things which are freely given of him of God. He may without extraordinary Revelation. Now, if we stop right there, Right.

You can see that we need a Understanding or a richer better understanding of the word extraordinary. Because being enabled by the spirit to know the things which are freely given him of God. Sounds pretty extraordinary, doesn't it? I want the Holy Spirit to make me able to know the things which are freely given me of God, that sounds very similar uh, to what it was like uh for me growing up.

Um, but Uh, he says he may without extraordinary Revelation, and of course. Uh, I cheated a little bit by stopping right there. I said, if we stop right there, but if we don't stop right there, you can see what the word extraordinary or you can. Hopefully expand your understanding of what the word extraordinary means, especially in this context, he may without extraordinary Revelation in the right use.

Of ordinary means. Now, when we say ordinary means we mean Those means those actions, those activities that God has commanded us and given us that he uses to work by his Almighty. And all loving Grace in. So, when we say ordinary means of Grace, we don't mean. Unimpressive mundane boring, repetitive means of Grace.

Okay. The that list of adjectives comes from our flesh, not from the nature of the means or the frequency of their use. You know, if they're unimpressive that's because there's something wrong with us. We should be impressed. That the Living God has given us his word in writing. And that he has given to us to draw near to him in Union with his son by the help of his Spirit, by use of his word, that is impressive.

It should not be seem mundane to us. It should not be repetitive to us. Yeah, the the drug addicted user. Doesn't say, don't give me any more of that. It's too repetitive. Now, if he and his wickedness, and in his misdirected, abuse of the way, God has designed the chemistry of our brains can tolerate doing the same thing over and over again because of his, his perceived and mistaken benefits.

How much more are we who have the Living? God, and who are operating? According to how we were designed in our creation and how he has spoken to us about, how he redeems us. How much ought we not, find it repetitive. This is one thing I think that the Lord has taught us by giving us you children.

And I mean, especially, Uh, children under the age of, let's say about seven. There's something about children under the age of seven. That they seem to be able to enjoy the same exact thing over and over and over and over. And they get the same peel and squeal of delight every time and the same uh, infectious child laughter every time.

God, even in the creation. Has designed that, you know, we read and pray and sing in Psalm 19. About the sun coming out like a strong man and racing across the sky. God has been doing the same thing in his Providence. Uh, every day for some six thousand plus years now, uh, and never boring of it.

In fact, every day the same display is meant to look at for us to look and see. Again, the glory of God, if he does that in his creation and if he has designed us to have that childlike Constitution, Much more. With his Redemption and being Has adopted children and being brought near to him and being grown up into Christ as the children of the father, who are indwelt by By the spirit.

So All of that to, to mean. When you see the phrase ordinary means think ordained. Think designated by God, for a particular purpose so that you can have confidence. Not just that the means work. But that God who ordained them works. By those means. So that you're no longer.

Um, Asking for some, uh, some Revelation that comes in. A new and uncertain way but you are depending upon the God who in his Divine and Almighty and all loving way. Uses these particular means and you know that his spirit will do that. So, this isn't saying that this is a human endeavor.

When it says, ordinary not extraordinary. It's saying this is a Divine work of God. The Holy That he does by using those things that he has appointed. Now, one of One of the first things that one of the first proof texts that he gives us the first scriptures to which Uh, to which the confession, the pastors of the assembly refer us.

Uh, is in First Corinthians 2. Uh, verses eight. How about how far did I decide to take verses 8 through 13? Which says, which none of the rulers of this age knew. For had they known they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. Now rulers here means Herod and it means pilate.

But in God's mercy to you, you just heard last week about the ruler in Matthew who we know his name from Mark and Luke, his name was Jairus. What did he rule children? Ruler of Synagogue. Right. And that was Uh, that factored into how we understood last week's morning, sermon passage in Matthew.

Uh, and they are included here. And it's very impressive, then that there's something theological Spiritual biblical that the rulers of the synagogues did not know. And many of them were in that crowd, crying crucify, him, crucify him. Which none of the rulers of this age knew for had they known.

They would not have crucified the Lord of Glory, but as it is written, I has not seen nor ear heard nor have entered into the heart of man. The things which God has prepared for those who love him.

All right. Those of you who are in communicationless dreamers. I recognized that it had dropped and restarted it already, so tell them, to hold on, it'll be back in 40 seconds. Um, Now I grew up hearing verse 9 quoted often. As talking about what Heaven is going to be like I has not seen or ear, heard nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love him.

And so to me this was like uh trying to refer to the almost fantasy world that the new heavens and the new Earth. Going to be like you can never figure that out. Close. But no gospel. Um, If you like cigars, no, cigar Uh close but no gospel. Because verse 9 says that it's explaining verse 8, What I hadn't seen, what ear hadn't heard.

But the heart of man could never have come up with. Was that the Lord of Glory would come to redeem us. And that he would be crucified for us. And the reason why we say close in verse 9, when we say, well, it's about heaven. Well, it is about heaven.

If you think Heaven is about the Lord Of Glory, That Jesus himself. God himself in Christ. Uh, is the heavenliness. Of heaven. And so, Uh there are two things then going on when we get to verse 10. But God has revealed them to us through his In other words, Fallen man.

Which means every one of us until the Holy spirit gives us spiritual life. Because we come into this world, dead. That's your big problem children. When you come into this world, it's not that you don't know as much Bible as Mom and Dad do, although I I hope you want to know.

As much and Mom and Dad. As one, who is one of those dads has been one of those dads to many children. We hope that, you know, will come to know more Bible. Than we do. Uh, your problem coming into this world is not that you didn't know, theology like Mom and dad, or the elders or the or the pastor of the church.

No, our problem, every one of our problems, your problem, when you came into this world, is that your eye couldn't see your ear. Couldn't hear your heart. Couldn't understand. You need the Holy Spirit to open your eyes, to open your ears, to open your heart, every one of us have needed that, and That is the way that we come to realize who Jesus is.

Some of the smartest people have tried to figure out if Jesus is God and have decided that they have, they have Discovered or learned or come to the conclusion that he has not got. And they have some of the most religious people not just the smartest people have done that.

Well, one of the reasons that that happens, Is because in order to see that he is quote, the Lord of Glory unquote. Uh, the only way that you come to see that is, if the Holy Opens your eyes,

opens, your ears? Opens your heart. But this. Uh the second thing then that it's saying is that this is a relational action.

Uh, some erase sorry, relational interaction between godness, but God has revealed them to us through his Spirit for the spirit searches all things. Yes, the Deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man, except the spirit of the man, which is in him, even so no one knows the things of God, except the spirit of God, Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

So verse 12 is is talking about knowing about what happened in verse 10, verse 10. God has revealed them to us through his Spirit, he's revealed to us. That Jesus is the Lord of Glory. He has revealed to us, that Jesus was being given, uh, given to us and given for us, Both that he was sacrificed for us.

Two, very important things for you to believe in. Jesus, one that he is sacrificed for you. That all of your sins are taken away by him, that he is your righteousness with God, he makes you right with God, gives you right standing with God, but the second that he is given to you.

That when you are saved, it's not just because you get forgiveness from what Jesus has done. Uh, and it's not just because you get righteousness from what Jesus has done. It's because you get Jesus. And what Jesus has done that you get God himself in Jesus Christ. Now that's what is revealed to us through his Spirit verse 10.

But then verse 12 We have the spirit who is from God that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. In other words, one of the reasons God has given us. His spirit is so that we might know that we have freely received Jesus.

So wonder if you are A believer in Jesus Christ. He has given you his holy spirit. His Holy spirit was the one who convinced you about Jesus in the first place. But now his holy spirit is also convincing you that God has freely given to you to know this.

The Holy Spirit works on you to, to convince you. That you are a Believer. So first he brings you to Faith, he makes you a Believer. And then he works in your heart to teach you that you are a Believer. And as he does that, he does it in a way that is not achievement.

So we're gonna hear from second Peter chapter 1, That we are to be diligent to make our calling an election short. But we, when we get there, we need to keep that balanced with First Corinthians chapter 2. That our diligence. As we look for Assurance, doesn't mean that when we get Assurance, it's an achievement.

Assurance as a gift. It's a work of the Holy Spirit. There are means that he uses Uh there are things that he commands, there's a whole list of them, but that leads up to that be diligent to make your calling an election. Sure. But Assurance is not something that we achieve it is as our Salvation is, as a whole A gift.

Uh, and it's something that As the Holy spirit gives us, Assurance of our faith, he makes us to know especially that our faith in the first place. Was a gift. So the second passage then is first John. Uh, chapter four and we're just taking the one verse. Uh, in verse 13 by this, we know that we abide in him.

And he and us because he has given us of his spirit. So again, Who, uh, who is it? That gives us to know. He says, by this, we know because he has given us of his Spirit So what the Holy Spirit and, you know, maybe this is one of the reasons why Assurance of faith is.

Uh, increasingly rare. In our day. Is because the understanding of who the holy spirit is and what he does in the church and what he does in our lives. Has been. Has been Twisted, but The way that we know that we abide in, In Christ in God. Uh, of course, Christ is uh, God.

Has given himself for us and to us like we said the way that we know is by the ministry of his So, this isn't just by this, we know that Jesus is God. That's true. The holy spirit is the one who teaches us that Jesus is God. This isn't just by this.

We know that Jesus, who is God lived and died for us to save us. That's true, too. That's the only way you come to know that Jesus your creator. Has lived obediently and died. Atoningly sacrificially to pay for your sins. These are the two most of this. These are the most important things.

Of all to know. But this is by this, we know that we abide in him. So this is how, you know, That you have Jesus and that your life, your, um, your dwelling place, uh, as it were, that's what the word abide means you can hear the word Abode.

In there, probably. By this, we know that we abide in him and he in us. That Jesus has made us. Uh, into his dwelling place. So when you believe in Jesus Christ, when you repent from your sins and you trust in him, you cry out to him to save you.

One of the things that Jesus does is by his Spirit, he comes and lives into your heart. Okay, so there is a There's a way of thinking about coming to Faith and becoming a Christian that has been Kind of, Truncated. It's they've taken a lot of huge things and they've kind of just tried to Define it by one little thing.

And when, when I was growing up in the church, We were taught to quote unquote, ask Jesus to come into our hearts

Which is. Okay, if it's not by itself. Believe that Jesus is the Living God. Confess that you have sinned against him, and you deserve hell. Turn from your sin. And trust in the Living, God who gave himself for you? And one of the things that he will do, When he gives you himself by by that faith that he gives you when he gives you that forgiveness and takes away your sin, when he gives you his obedience to count as your righteousness.

One of the things that he will do. Is also by his And dwell in your heart. So yes, ask Jesus into your heart. It's a lot more than that. But it does include that. And if you have grown up reformed or maybe have gone through a season of coming in to understanding Uh, in a reformed way, how we get saved and you've kind of Uh kind of started to hold at arm's length.

This idea of Jesus coming into your heart or asking him to come into your heart. You actually the Bible never tells us to ask him to come into our hearts. So, Believe in him. And he will come into your heart. Uh, by his Spirit. But that is a big part of the Christian Life to know that, not only do you live in him and abide in him but he abides in you and that's something hard for us to believe.

Because we can see some of the other things that are in our hearts. That remain from our former Nietzsche that remained from our flesh. The kinds of things that The Apostle Paul was so distressed over when we were at the end of Romans chapter 7. As as it seemed like there was a law within his members.

Because every time he he didn't want to do something, he did it. Every time he wanted to do something, he he didn't do it. And it was like So if you know that you have that sinfulness

remaining in your heart, Uh, it is important. It is a great blessing and mercy and Powerful gift from God for you to know that.

God himself has come to dwell in you. And, You're someone who's been a Christian for a long time. Uh, and your walk with the Lord is strained or cold. Uh, you've maybe become tolerant. Of some CN, or Uh, or lazy and not diligent and making your calling an election.

Sure, or not consecrated unto God for obedience and service or whatever it is. And maybe one of the things that has been missing is this knowledge. That Jesus abides in you. Not just having the doctrine. That Jesus abides in you. But the experiential knowing in your day-to-day. That God the son and God the Father.

By the ministry of God, the spirit and your union with God, the son. That God has come to abide in you and that's something that his holy spirit in particular gives. By this, we know that we abide in him. And he and us. Because he has given us. Of his.

Um,

And I wanted to, To cover all four of those passages.

So, I guess we got as if you're looking back up at the confession, we got as far as being enabled by the spirit to know the things. Which are freely given him of God, and will continue. Uh, Lord willing thinking about the right use of ordinary means. And we're going to do that in two different places.

One, a very frightening place or at least it has been very frightening to me and many times and perhaps to you too. In Hebrews chapter 6 because Hebrews chapter 6 talks to those who have been in doctrinally sound spiritually alive churches. But warns about members of those churches, Uh, who end up going to hell?

Because they were never actually saved. Uh, and uh, and thankfully Uh, I don't know. I don't know why. Maybe it's just uncarefulness. But often when someone says well, you know, consider the warning passage of Hebrews warning passages of Hebrews. And this is one of the big ones and there's one in chapter 10 and so forth.

They usually stay in the first half of Hebrews chapter 6. It's important to get to the second half of Hebrews chapter 6 where we're going to spend our time. Where he talks about how to be confident of better things. Because the Apostle is confident of better things. Generally, speaking of the, of the congregation that he's writing to.

Uh, but he speaks in such a way as for each member of the congregation to learn, how God can make us confident to better things about ourselves so that we don't get stuck in the fear. Of what if I'm just in a saved church but I'm an unsaved person.

Uh, yes, Christian Absolutely, providing the insurance stuff that been talking through was Characters in the class. Today, we're going with the first Thessalonian surprise in about the Reality. Um, in the United States but over five nine through ten and then skip down to 23 years. Says for God did not appoint us around to obtain salvations, where Lord, Jesus Christ, who died for us that whether we wake or sleep.

We should live together with him. You mean, living together with him. And then there was the title of the next section of various exhortations, and it's kind of places. Always carried about seasoning, you know, consu. Patient with all. And then the 23 through 24 is now. May the God of Peace himself sanctify.

You completely, and may your whole Spirit soul and body. Be preserve blameless after coming of, unfortunately, because he who calls you the Statesman who also can do it. I think you mentioned like this McDonald's. The Lord is the one who keeps our insurance and the ones who sustains You know, so Capacity.

Thank you. Yes, the Lord is the one who uses the means. Uh, he gives us things to do but it's a Divine work. And therefore has also sought by prayer which will be the last passage that we consider in this section in Ephesians chapter 3. One of these great example prayers.

Uh, that the Apostle Paul prays and that one particularly a prayer for Assurance and it's tied to what we just saw in first John 4 because, right at the heart of that prayer. Is that Christ May dwell in your hearts through faith. But we'll get to. Uh, Lord willing.

And if not then hopefully, it will be because we came into the experiential reality of which we were hoping to be sure. And we would be sure then. Uh, so let's pray. How we thank you. Our gracious Godfather Son and Holy. That you have given yourself to us. In Union, especially with the And by the indwelling of your spirit.

We pray for his help. Especially not only. That he would continue to. Um, to give us that knowledge of you, and of ourselves, and of our Union with you, each, one of us individually, personally, By use of the scripture that we have just been studying. Uh, but also Uh, that he would help us now as we come to you.

Uh, in the public worship. That it would not barely be. External exercises of worship would not be. Merely internal. Uh, human exercises ourselves, trying to think and and feel and will rightly towards you. But that your spirit would sustain us and our Spirits That indeed, we might find that as we draw near to you, in Christ Christ himself has been dwelling in us and is even worshipping.

Uh, you are God through. Uh, so give us by your spirit. Partake. Now of that reality that your word teaches us about for, we ask it in Jesus name, amen.