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Ewald Frank

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Topic: 1 Peter 4:11: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God - as the "Thus saith the LORD!"

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As we sang the hymns and the prayer of Brother Russ rose up to the throne of God, I couldn't help but think of Philippians 2, Philippians 2, verses 7 to 9, Philippians 2, 7 to 9:

[7] ***But made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men:***

[8] ***And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.***

[9] ***Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.***

We all know what is written further on, that "***at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow of those in heaven, on earth and under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that he is the Lord, to the glory of God.***" [Phi 2:10-11] Just as surely as this is written here in the Word of God, so surely shall it come to pass; soon it will be history.

Then just one more scripture, actually a few, but specifically that one verse, from Hebrews chapter 4 verse 16:

[16] ***Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.***

There are experiences in our lives where we can simply say that we did not recognize things in time, did not realize them in time; to put it plainly, we were too late. Here we are reminded that we should approach the throne of grace with full confidence. From his fullness we have all received grace for grace. [Joh 1:16] But this requires approaching in faith; nothing happens of its own accord. God has prepared everything; people are invited to receive what he has prepared.

And so we must approach the throne of grace with joyful confidence, not in unbelief, not in doubt, not with timidity, but with joyful confidence, to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. [Heb 4:16] And this finding of grace is linked to the concept to help in time of need. May God now help us in time of need on the day

of salvation and grant us grace that we may approach him and do so in faith with full confidence. And why are we permitted to do this? Because he, our Lord and Saviour, having entered the heavenly sanctuary with his own blood, which flowed for our atonement and redemption, and has presented it upon the throne of grace.

So we come to the Lord as those reconciled to God, as those who have been granted mercy to find help in due time, according to the Word of the Lord in Isaiah 55:

[6] ***Seek ye the Lord whilst he may be found; call upon him whilst he is near.***

[7] ***Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord...***

Not to a religion but to the Lord, in whom alone we have salvation and deliverance.

The thought that moves me today is that when we consider God's plan, we are on the one hand dealing with an outward fulfillment of Bible prophecy, which we can perceive externally, and on the other hand we are dealing with an inward working of God, which we cannot perceive through outward signs, but which takes place within the individual. Just to give an example, if we take the people of Israel, there are of course many scriptures which tell us that in the last days Israel will return to the land of their fathers, to the promised land. That is purely external and it takes place before our very eyes. But when the returned people come to faith and look upon the one whom they have pierced, then it is no longer perceptible externally, but can be experienced internally, and they will weep bitterly and mourn as one mourns for a firstborn son, as it is written in the prophet Zechariah. [Zec 12:10]

In Zephaniah chapter 3 verse 9 we read of the nations and then in verses 12 and 13 of the people of Israel. Zephaniah chapter 3 verse 9, here it says:

[9] ***For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent.***

This is not an outward matter, but an inward one, for of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh. [Mat 12:34; Luk 6:45] And when God has worked something in the heart and it overflows, then the lips will praise his name.

Verses 12 and 13 read:

[12] ***I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord.***

The very same thing that will then, that is, in the future happen to Israel, is happening today to the called-out church. Tell me, in whom should we or could we place our trust? Nothing on earth is permanent, nothing is trustworthy. Our trust is in the Lord, our God, who created the heavens and the earth, the seas and all that is in them. So this evening, too, let us put our trust wholly and completely in the Lord.

And whilst we listen to the Word, let us please seek and find a connection with God. As we have often said in this place, the purpose of preaching is indeed to bring about a connection between those who hear the Word of God and God himself. Through the sermon he speaks to us and through prayer we speak to God. In any case, let us experience God during these days.

I couldn't help but think of this whilst singing hymns. Do we truly love the name of the Lord? Is our whole being surrendered to him? Has he truly become the first and the last in our lives? Is our heart filled with the love of God which is poured out through the Holy Spirit? [Rom 5:5]

It goes on to say in verse 13:

[13] ***The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.***

That is the remnant. And Paul writes to the Romans that God, even in our own day, just as in the time of Elijah, has a remnant who do not bow their knees to Baal [Rom 11:4], a remnant, a chosen people by predestination and foreknowledge, who place their hope solely in grace, set everything else aside, and trust in the Lord and in what he has done for us. It is also true for true believers that they lie down in peace, that they become sheep of his pasture, that they are led to green pastures, and that they are at peace.

We have sung: "*My old self is gone, hallelujah, praise be to God.*" Is that so? Can we sing this with a sincere heart? "*My old self is gone, hallelujah, praise be to God.*"

Beloved, especially all of you who have for years been initiated into what God has done in accordance with his Word, as has so often been mentioned with gratitude in this place, the question nevertheless remains open. Have we merely heard the Word as doctrine or the Word of prophecy? Or has God, under the sound of the Word, been able to bring about new divine life within us, so that we have become partakers of the divine nature as it is written [2 Pet 1:4], and have become a new creation in Christ, and can say: "The old self is gone, behold, all things have become new"? [2Cor 5:17]

You know of course that we are living in a time that has probably never been quite like this before, a time full of misunderstandings, a time when one no longer knows with whom one may or should still speak, and how one should phrase one's words, so as not to cause any offence. May God grant us grace, that we may be renewed within, and that we too may take into our hearts the thoughts of God, thoughts of peace, and not of suffering. According to the scripture: ***"Let this mind be in you all, which was also in Christ Jesus"***. [Phi 2:5]

We, upon whom the end of the ages has come, know that only those who are truly ready will enter into the presence of the Lord. And I do not wish to be found guilty on that day, but to have proclaimed the whole counsel of God. In 1 Peter chapter 4,

the very well-known scripture, though I am actually reading from verse 7, yet, for the sake of verse 11, 1 Peter chapter 4 from verse 7:

[7] ***But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.***

[8] ***And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.***

[9] ***Use hospitality one to another, without grudging.***

[10] ***As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.***

And now comes the verse:

[11] ***If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.***

Particularly, verse 11: ***"If anyone speaks, let their words be as the thus saith the Lord, as the oracles of God,"*** as the original word, as it came forth from the mouth of God. We have read this here in 1 Kings 17, the last verse, and in many other places, there the widow said to the man of God: ***"Now I know that you are truly a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth."*** [1Kin 17:24] What shall we say to this? In the Bible, God's Word is true. Is it still true in the mouths of all those who proclaim it? Or has it been interpreted, as in the Garden of Eden, when it all began?

Satan will never write a new Bible. That would be too obvious. No one would fall for it. He calls the Word into question. He interprets. He turns it on its head. And if it is written here: ***"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God."*** That is to say, when we speak on God's behalf, it must be the original Word, the "Thus saith the Lord" in the original, that must be passed on.

Whether this claim is merely made, or whether it is justified, let God and God's people decide. We, as preachers in this place, feel very much at ease in the knowledge that we did not put forward our own opinions, have no doctrine of our own, nor represent any denomination that we must do justice to in our preaching, rather, before the face of God, we may pass on, as Paul said: ***"What I received from the Lord, I delivered unto you."*** [1Cor 11:23; 1Cor 15:3] And so, let us take to heart that we speak what God has already spoken.

It should also be noted that when dealing with a subject, we do not take just one scripture, but all scriptures relevant to it, so as to shed light on the Word from all sides and ensure the subject we are discussing truly appears in divine light, so that no aspect remains in shadow. If we shed light from one side, a shadow may arise. If we shed light from all sides, then everyone is helped, and we have divine

information and insight into what he has said and still says today. Then, "***if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth.***" [1Pet 4:11] Paul writes: ***"We have this treasure in earthen vessels, not as though this power were from ourselves, but that the excellency of the power may be of God."*** [2Cor 4:7]

There is no revelation of the Word and the Spirit that we have brought with us; everything has been given to us by God's grace.

From 2 Corinthians, chapter 4, probably familiar to everyone, but I must confess to you, allow me to make this remark. I have recently read articles that I wrote myself, and when one then re-reads Holy Scripture, one might re-write or add to it, the Spirit of God leads us deeper and deeper, and for that we are grateful to God. There is no spiritual stagnation, on the contrary, there is a journey from clarity to clarity, being led, and also from truth to truth. In 2 Corinthians, chapter 4, verses 1 and 2:

[1] ***Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;***

[2] ***But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.***

This too is very important. If in the days of John the Baptist people had gone to the scribes and asked: "Gentlemen, what do you have to say about this man, his conduct, his message?" Then they would certainly have replied: "Dear friends, God is here in the temple, here songs are sung, here sacrifices are offered, here the Law of Moses is observed. This man stands outside everything that God has ever ordained." He did not stand outside everything that God had ordained. He stood right in the midst of it all, namely in the fulfillment of what was to come to pass according to God's plan of salvation. But the scribes did not see that.

And when it is written here that "***through the proclamation of the Word of Truth we commend ourselves to man in the sight of God***", then that is very important. It is not what people say about such a gathering, about such a proclamation that is important. Let us ask ourselves today, what does God say about this? After all, we have not come here to create a bit of a religious atmosphere, perhaps to swing some incense or ring a few bells. We are here to hear the Word in the presence of God, and we commend ourselves to every man's conscience, but not arbitrarily, rather in the sight of God. [2Cor 4:2]

And whoever comes in the sight of God will no longer ask people, they will ask God. If something is new to someone, they will not go off somewhere else, but will turn to prayer and say: "Faithful God, I have heard things that are new to me. I come to you, please let me know whether this is true or not." And then we open the Bible,

search the scriptures to see if things are so. [Act 17:11] And then great joy wells up within us, because in the presence of God we have been convinced of the truth of the proclamation of divine truth. And then we are convinced forever and ever.

As I was walking through Salzburg on Saturday, I saw people by that tower. There was a banner reading "Awake". And I must say, in all honesty, I'm not passing judgment, because it's all just grace. But to myself I thought, "dear lady and dear gentleman," there were two of them standing there, "an awakening would do you both a world of good." What use would it be to me or to you if we knew what Armageddon is, yet did not know that we are in God's favor and have heard and accepted the Word? Is that true or not?

When I tell people: "Wake up, Armageddon is coming, good heavens", I'm certainly not waiting for Armageddon that will come years after I have left this earth. I'm waiting for the coming of the Lord, for the return of Jesus Christ, and therefore not an awakening for things that are supposed to happen at some point in the future, but an awakening to hear the Word of the hour, the Word of truth, and to do so in the presence of God. I'll read that verse again: ***"But by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves,"*** not in secret here or there, but by the open preaching of the truth***, "commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."*** [2Cor 4:2]

And God sees all things, he knows all things. The proclamation that comes from God has nothing to fear. It takes place openly before people and in the sight of God.

There is something very beautiful about reading Paul's letters. He writes of those who introduce destructive teachings, who go from house to house, ensnaring widows and women a little here and there, and thus carrying out their mission. [2Tim 3:6] Anyone who carries out such a mission should be driven out. Proclaiming Bible truths does not mean going from house to house to gain a foothold there, rather it must be an open, free proclamation before people and in the sight of God.

If anyone has something to hide— I shall never forget that day. It was a second day of Pentecost, in one of the 70s, it may have been 1978, in any case. Somewhere in the Hanover area there was a conference of people spreading the end-time message, and as we didn't have a meeting on the second day of Pentecost back then, I thought to myself: "Well, then let's go there." And lo and behold, as soon as this man saw Brother Frank, it was all over. Brother Dell, you know him well, and some others know him too, that was the end of it. Only one sentence came out of his mouth: "The meeting is cancelled. If you are here, I can't preach." Well, fine.

And as he wasn't a German citizen, I told him what the German law on public assembly says. If a meeting is not of an expressly closed nature, then anyone may attend. And then there was a huge fuss, and lo and behold, it didn't work. Why not? If what we proclaim cannot even stand up to scrutiny before me, Brother Frank, how is it to stand up before God?

Secret dealings, certainly there were a few widows and orphans, and some deluded men too. But what was it? It was not an open proclamation. And doctrines were intended to be spread that do not fit anywhere in Scripture.

Not that, as we said earlier, we take credit for this, but God has placed this truthfulness in our hearts, so that we ourselves do not depart from here deceived for all eternity, nor do we wish that others who have heard the Word from our lips should be deceived on the day of the Lord. On the contrary, we wish, together with those who hear the Word from our lips, to stand before God. And it must always be the original Word of the Lord, the "Thus saith the Lord."

In verse 13 of 2 Corinthians 4 we read:

[13] ***We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written...***

Do you see? The spirit of faith is connected to the Scripture. Any other kind of faith is of no value whatsoever before God. It is a self-made, homemade, imaginary faith that has never saved anyone. This is about the faith that is brought about by the Spirit through the Scripture.

And then,

[13] ***...I believed...***

Yes, whom have I believed? Paul writes: ***"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."*** [2Tim 1:12] We do not merely believe, we believe the Lord God who has redeemed us, and we believe His Word in its original form by grace.

There are a few more scriptures I would like to read, but for now from 2 Corinthians 4, verses 17 and 18:

[17] ***For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory...***

And the reason for this is given in verse 18:

[18] ***While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.***

What a wonderful passage. Certainly, as believers we go through times of trial, sometimes even through suffering of our own making. And it would be good if we do not feel sorry for ourselves, but ask God to help us. But when hardships are laid upon us, let us bear them and lay them before the Lord.

What this is really saying is that we are to receive an overflowing measure, a full measure, a measure that overflows, not just a little now. God has the fullness, amen. God has the fullness, and from His fullness we receive and may take grace upon grace. [Joh 1:16] We receive in an overflowing manner, beyond all measure, there

is no measure. God goes beyond any measure we might ever set, a glory without limits.

What love God has shown us, that we receive not just a little here and a little there, but in an overflowing way, beyond all measure, an eternal, full measure, no empty space in it, substance, weight! The things God gives have divine weight, there is no empty space in them, there is divine substance within them, for we have this treasure in earthen vessels. [2Cor 4:7]

As stated earlier, the reason is as follows:

[18] ***While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.***

What matters today is where you and I direct our gaze, where our thoughts go, and what inspires and moves us. If we turn away from all that is visible today and direct our gaze towards the invisible, we shall be helped. The visible is temporary and passes away. We have certainly noticed that. Every circumstance that befalls a person comes and goes.

If we were to dwell on all that is temporary and visible, we would come to a standstill in our entire life of faith. No, that is not possible. The visible is not there for us to dwell on or fix our gaze upon, but rather to direct our gaze upwards towards the invisible One who has prepared for us what is as yet invisible to us, yet already exists, as it is written of Abraham in Hebrews 11. He dwelled in tents together with Isaac and Jacob. [Heb 11:9] Why in tents? They were all heirs to the same promise.

And then there is the verse:

[10] ***He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.***

He could always easily take down his tent. If one were to take down a building, that would be very difficult. A tent can be here today and there tomorrow. At some point he pitched it for the last time, and then he was allowed to enter into glory. And our Saviour said: ***"On that day we shall be in the kingdom of heaven with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."*** [Mat 8:11; Luk 13:28] And we believe this, because we too have become heirs of the divine promises by grace.

As we have read, we do not fix our eyes on the things that are seen, nor on the things that are passing away, but on the invisible One as we would see Him. And we fix our eyes on the things that are unseen, which are as yet unseen to us.

I do not know whether you have all read this in Brother Branham's sermons. There are, after all, scriptures which say: ***"The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him."*** [Psa 34:7] There are many scriptures, and then Brother Branham said in a sermon: **"If only you could see now what I see."**

There are heavenly beings in this room, the Lord is present. We cannot see anything, but we know that the Lord is present, and how grateful we can be that the Lord has allowed His presence to be recorded by critics.

You are all thinking of the photograph taken on the 24th of January, 1950, in Houston, Texas. How often had Brother Branham said: **"The angel of the Lord is with me. He stands at my right hand."**

And he even said: **"On the day of judgment you will see that he stands no more than two feet away from me."**

And he also said: **"The light comes down, and wherever the light rests upon a person, that is the person with whom God is now dealing."**

And in that light he saw, as if through an X-ray, with a prophetic gaze, he saw what God was showing him at that very moment and heard what was being said to him.

He could have claimed this for a thousand years, but it would not have carried the same weight as this one photograph, when skeptical, critical photographers sought him out at a hotel after midnight and asked: "Do you know that a supernatural light was upon you?" He said: "I know, for it was not the first time this has happened, but it happened for your sake."

What was it? God owes this world nothing.

Even those who cannot believe can now see. Have you understood?

Those who could not believe, because there is so much deception, let us be honest. Is there any worse deception than that found in religions? The greatest deception is committed on earth in the name of God, that is well known and has been for a long time. But please believe me, there is not only deception and deceivers, there is also the true God and true men of God, and there is the true presence of God in the gatherings of the saints, and he bears witness to them and confirms his Word. There may be much falsehood and deceit, and most of it is just that.

It is enough for us to know that God has granted us this grace to have been snatched from deception, from error, from all confusion, and placed in the divine light, that we too can say in this place, not in secret, not in hiding, not: "Have you heard yet?" and "Do you know what happened to me?" I am not interested in that. I am only interested in what God has done here and there and everywhere and is still doing today. And we are most deeply grateful to the Lord for this divine reality that we have been born again from the true seed of the Word unto a living hope. And the Word cannot be mixed, it is an original seed.

I give you the scripture for this, Matthew chapter 13. The Son of man was like a sower. He went out and sowed well in the daylight. The seed sprouted, and the seed were the sons of the kingdom of God. And then night came, darkness fell, and then the enemy appeared. He also sowed, and these were the sons of the evil one.

There was no mixing, even though it was in the same field, but two seeds that were different from the very beginning. [Mt 13:24-32, 36-43]

The same is still true today. We are on the same earth, living under the same circumstances, but the divine seed has always been divine seed from the very beginning and will remain so forever, and the other seed has always been so and will remain so too. So let us not be afraid, perhaps as a comfort, not intended as a resting pillow, but rather to strengthen our faith. Whoever in these days has the grace from God to receive by faith the true Word of God, the genuine "Thus saith the Lord", thereby confirms that God is true. There is no other way. I shall read it to you tomorrow, God willing. Time has passed very quickly today.

Let us summarize. The end of the days has come upon us. We are to approach the throne of grace so that we may receive help from God in time of need. [Heb 4:16] Today is the day of salvation. Today is the time of grace. Our help comes from the God who made heaven and earth. [Psa 124:8] Today he wants to take us under his care. Today he wants to reveal himself. Today he wants to place his Word in your heart and come upon it with his Spirit to create new life within you. Today he wants to create true divine life.

Let us believe with all our hearts that he, our Lord and Savior, as the mediator of the new covenant, as it is written in Hebrews, that he has truly entered the heavenly sanctuary with his own blood to obtain an eternal redemption for us. [Heb 9:12] And in this context we read, "***this is the new and living way***" [Hebr 10:20]. Hallelujah, new life, new hearts, a new and living way which we can walk in Jesus Christ and with him. It is "***the narrow path that leads to life, and few are those who find it***", as it says in Matthew 7. [Mat 7:14] May it be so today.

I wish this especially for our brother from Zaire, who has tried so hard, and let us all remember him in prayer today, that every bond of Satan may be broken, every claim of the enemy set aside, and that by God's grace he may experience God in this very place, and all of us too, if there are others here today who have not yet experienced God. Let me tell you this: God is real, God can be found, God can be experienced, he forgives, he saves, he pardons, he welcomes, and he accepts, and even today he transforms children of men into children of God. This is what we wish for with all our hearts. The Word has been preached, may the Spirit of God, by his grace, do the rest in us all. Amen.

Let us all raise our hands for a moment and sing to the Lord.

[music]

In the Gospel of John chapter 1 it is written: "***As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the children of God, even to them that believe on his name.***" [Joh 1:12]

If you can believe today that God has revealed himself in Christ, that he became man for the sake of mankind. If you can believe that this Jesus of Nazareth is the Word

made flesh, Emmanuel, God with us, our Savior and Lord, with his redemptive name, Yahshua in Hebrew, and Jesus in our language from the Greek: "Yahweh is Savior." If you can believe, just as the shepherds heard it in the fields of Bethlehem, when the angel, surrounded by the heavenly hosts and heavenly choirs, singing praises and glorifying God, proclaimed: ***"For today the Savior, the Lord, is born to you."*** [Luk 2:10-14] Today it happened. The announcement was made. It happened in the city of David, as foretold in Micah chapter 5. [Mic 5:1] Beloved, we are not fools who close our eyes and believe blindly.

By his grace, God has opened our spiritual eyes. We are not among those who believe blindly. We are among those believers who have come to see by grace.

The Lord calls: ***"Come unto me, all ye who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest for your souls."*** [Mat 11:28-29] Every person has a longing. They just do not know how to satisfy it. Today it can happen. Today your seeking can turn into finding, your knocking into the door being opened, your asking into an answer. [Mat 7:7-8; Luk 11:9-10]

Whilst all heads are bowed, all eyes are closed, and we remain in silent prayer, let me pass on the Lord's call. As Paul said: ***"We beseech you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."*** [2Cor 5:20] Seek God's help in good time, so that you may find grace before him, before night falls, and the day of the Lord comes upon mankind.

Whilst all heads are bowed, and we remain in silent prayer, I would like to ask that if there are any here who would like to be included in this prayer, please raise your hand briefly, is there anyone here? God bless you, hallelujah. I can assure you, on the basis of the Word of God, whoever comes to the Lord, he will not cast out, thus it is written, he will not cast out, on the contrary, he prepares a feast for the lost who return home. [Luk 15:22-24; Joh 6:37] A feast from God has been prepared for you too.

Perhaps there are others as well. It was simply in my heart to pass on this call from God. God bless you.

Let us pray. Lord our God, through the open proclamation of the truth, you have spoken to people, you have let the gospel resound, the message that brings joy and freedom, that you, O God, have pardoned humanity and reconciled it to yourself on the cross of Calvary. You have taken upon yourself the curse, borne our sin, and granted us salvation and grace. We come to you today with all those who are entrusting their lives to you today. Beloved Lord, we too came to you in this way once, took that first step, made our decision for you, and it was the most beautiful day God ever gave us, when Jesus came into our dark earthly existence. Beloved Lord, we now ask you to save them all, to forgive them all, and to show them all your mercy.

May they now feel that you are near them. Lord, may they call upon your name

to find salvation and by faith accept what you have done for them. They are now consecrated to you, O Lord.

You have taken the first step with them. You have accepted them as your own.

Beloved Lord, may their conversion be a turning towards you, the Saviour, the Lord. May they now receive by faith the assurance wrought by your Spirit that you have accepted them and that they have become your own, that you have set them free, redeemed them and forgiven them. We thank you for this in Jesus' holy name. Hallelujah, Amen.