

Saved From What?

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Date: 02 April 2023

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[0 : 00] And turn in your Bibles to 1 Thessalonians. This is going to be a little harder to find than Psalms. It's in the New Testament.

After Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians comes 1 Thessalonians. A letter that Paul wrote to the church.

They're in Thessalonica. So we're going to read chapter 1. Paul, Silas, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians, in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, grace and peace to you.

We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

For we know, brothers, loved by God, that he has chosen you because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit, with the Holy Spirit, and with deep conviction.

[1 : 25] You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord. In spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.

And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord's message rang out from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia.

Your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore, we do not need to say anything about it, for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us.

They tell how you turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who rescues us from the coming wrath.

Jesus saves. Many people, inside and outside of the church, have heard that Jesus saves.

[2 : 38] But not everyone could answer the question, saves from what? Saves from what? And the most important answer is clearly stated in our text here of 1 Thessalonians 1 and verse 10.

They tell how you turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who rescues us from the coming wrath.

He saves us. He rescues us from the coming wrath. God's wrath is not a popular message today.

But let me tell you something. It never has been a popular message ever.

Because of this unpopularity of God's wrath, the church has felt that she must downplay this part of the message about God.

That we must present him as all love and no wrath. But whenever that happens, several bad things result.

[3 : 51] Number one, sin is trivialized. It's not seen for the evil thing that it really is. That it's so offensive to God's holiness that every sinner well deserves the coming wrath of God.

That's the first thing that happens. Second thing that happens is that the sinner is not made aware of his desperate need of Jesus Christ. In the absence of preaching about the coming wrath, people are left to think, well, what Jesus saves us from is, well, from financial problems.

That through Jesus, I can handle my finances better and be better off financially. Or maybe he saves me from sickness and diseases.

Or from depression. Or from a life that's meaningless and really insignificant. Or just that as things go better with Coke, so things go better with Christ.

And some of these are true, but they're not the biggest reason why we need Jesus Christ. We need him, according to this text, to be saved from the coming wrath.

[5 : 09] That's the desperate need of the world. And it's what the world knows so little of. So, that's the second thing that happens.

The third thing that happens is that the gospel of Christ is yawned at. It's seen as the most irrelevant thing. Anytime a remedy is offered without an awareness of the disease, interest falls off immediately.

So, I come to you with my needle. And I say, I've got a shot to give you. It's a cure. And you say, oh, okay.

What's the disease that it cures? Oh, never mind that. I've got a shot for you. Can I give it to you? Well, good luck with that.

No, the gospel of Christ is only appreciated when the disease, the problem, is appreciated. And then, lastly, when the wrath of God is downplayed, the wonder, the sheer wonder of Christ's love and salvation is undermined.

[6 : 24] So, salvation by Jesus becomes a remedy without a serious disease. And salvation by Jesus becomes a rescue without any real great danger.

And salvation by Jesus becomes being saved without really being lost. And it's good news without any real bad news.

And even in literature, that makes for a boring read. No wonder such a gospel has no traction and grip with the world. Who needs it?

I'm getting on fine without it. Now, if you need it as a crutch for you, good for you. But as for me, I don't. So, you see what happens that the church, in trying to make the gospel more appealing to the world, hides and downplays the wrath of God.

And in doing so, they made their gospel totally irrelevant to the world. They don't want it. They don't see the need for it.

[7 : 33] But in reality, the biblical gospel, the only gospel, the only good news that there is from heaven, is the most relevant thing. The most important thing for every boy and girl, man or woman here, and in all the world combined.

Why? Because we all need to be saved from the coming wrath. The coming wrath. So today, I just have two points. Number one, the coming wrath.

And number two, how to be rescued from the coming wrath. So point number one, the coming wrath. Whose wrath is it? Well, it's God's wrath.

And he clearly is not hiding it from us. He speaks of it over 200 times in the Bible and shows it over and over in biblical history.

It's the church who has hidden this from the world. And this is to say, peace, peace, when there is no peace. You know, Moses had seen God's wrath in the ten plagues upon Egypt.

[8 : 46] And so he says to God in Psalm 90 and verse 11, who knows the power of your anger? For your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you.

Moses knew about the wrath of God. He had seen it enacted in those ten plagues. And it's one thing to come under the wrath of man whose power is limited in what he can do.

It's another thing altogether to come under the power of God's wrath for his power is limitless. And so the church today wants a kinder, less offensive message to the world.

But to hide the reality of God's wrath from people is not kindness. It is not love. It is hatred. Some would say, well, that's the God of the Old Testament.

Come on, John. He's different in the New Testament. As if God has changed. He says in Malachi 3.6, I, the Lord, do not change. And no one taught more about God's wrath in hell than the loving Lord Jesus Christ.

[9 : 56] In the New Testament. Jesus said to his disciples in Luke 12, 4 and 5, I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more.

I'll show you whom you should fear. Fear him whom after killing the body has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him for his wrath is as great as the fear that is due him.

So that's whose wrath it is. It's God's wrath. Well, what is God's wrath exactly? Let me say first, it's not a bad mood that God's in.

Like you and I can get in bad moods. No, God's wrath is the consistent reaction of his holiness to sin. God's holiness means he loves with every fiber of his being if we can speak in those terms, he loves what is good and is righteous and he equally hates what is bad and unjust and unfair and evil. That's his unchanging nature. That's just who God is. All sin, therefore, is anti-God. It goes against God's nature.

[11 : 20] It strikes out against him. It offends his holiness. It offends his very nature. I wonder if you've ever rubbed the fur on a cat the wrong way.

You know, God has put it so that it lays one way and that's the way you're to rub the cat's fur. If you go the other way, you better cover your eyes.

You may have a cat in your face. It's irritating and if I could say it reverently, sin rubs God the wrong way. It goes against everything in his nature.

He's holy and so he inevitably recoils against everything that is sinful or evil.

God's wrath is a holy hatred for sin. So his wrath is a holy wrath. It's not like ours that is often ill-conceived and runs out of bounds and is expressed in wrong ways.

[12 : 28] No, God's wrath is always appropriate. It is never a wrong response. It is always exactly the right response of a holy God.

So, that's whose wrath it is and what God's wrath is. Who is God's wrath coming for? Let me read from Ephesians 5, 5 and 6.

For this you can be sure, no immoral, impure, or greedy person, such a man as an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Let no one deceive you with empty words. For because of such things, God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Who's God's wrath coming for?

It's coming for the disobedient. Colossians 3, 5 to 8. Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature, sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, which is idolatry, because of these the wrath of God is coming.

[13 : 38] You used to walk in all these ways in the life you once lived, but now you must rid yourself of all such things as these, anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language from your lips.

Why? Because of these the wrath of God is coming. So if you've never sinned, then you have nothing to fear. God's wrath is only coming for sinners.

Sin is the thing that provokes God's wrath. And God's wrath is His punishment for the sin. It's what's due God for the great offense that sin is to His holiness.

And this is something that we little realize, just how offensive our sin is to this holy God. God's wrath is coming. It's the breaking of His commands that we just recited.

It's the challenging of His authority over us. It's the dishonoring of His majesty. It's the belittling of His righteous judgment.

[14 : 44] It's the mocking of His threatened punishment. It's the provoking of His holy wrath. And so God's wrath is coming for sinners to pay them back for their offense to God.

And then fourthly, when is God's wrath coming? Notice in our text, it's in the future. 1 Thessalonians 1.10, how you are now to wait for His Son from heaven whom He raised from the dead, Jesus who rescues us from the coming wrath.

It's coming, that means it's future tense yet. And here we notice it's connected directly with the return of God's Son from heaven. So God's wrath is coming at the end of this present age when Jesus Christ returns in judgment to pay back sinners for their sins.

The Lord Jesus Christ taught very plainly that there is a hell to pay for sin. And the coming wrath is nothing less than that hell. Fear Him who after killing the body has power to throw you into hell.

So hell is the place then of God's just and holy wrath paying back the sinner for his sin. It's also the place of God vindicating His authority, vindicating His justice and righteousness that have been so belittled and treated as if it was nothing to be considered.

[16 : 20] Sin mocks God but God cannot be mocked. A man will reap whatever he sows. So hell is the place of unspeakable torments for those who do not repent of their sins.

Can you see then before we go on to the next point? How kind God is to warn us about the coming wrath. You know He didn't have to do that.

He could have just surprised us all at the end of our lives. Surprised there's hell to pay for sin. Oh but He's too kind for that.

And so He warns us of it ahead of time. Why? That we might flee the coming wrath. And what is the world doing with this kind warning from this good and gracious God?

Well most are ignoring it. And not repenting. They're trivializing God's wrath. They tell jokes and laugh about hell. They talk about the temperature being hotter than hell.

[17 : 32] Hell yes, hell no. As if it's something to be laughed at. Taken lightly without reverence and the fear of God.

And so Romans 2:5 says because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath when His righteous judgment will be revealed. Sins unrepented of are piling up wrath like waters pile up against the dam. until finally when Jesus returns in judgment that wrath will break forth and fall upon the sinner. It's a future day when His righteous judgment will be revealed. You've sinned without judgment here but in that day His righteous judgment will be revealed. He's been ever so patient with this world. God's wrath. But it will come to an end in that day, the day of God's wrath. So the Bible is not bashful about telling us about God's wrath. [18:47] This is God's own word about Himself and He's not hiding it from us, is He? Why? Because He loves us and wants us to flee this coming wrath. But now secondly, that's the wrath that's coming.

Secondly, the Bible teaches us in our text how to be rescued from the coming wrath. We need to realize right off the bat that God did not owe us a way of rescue. Not at all. We fully deserve God's coming wrath forever, every single one of us. It's altogether just and right and fair. It's the wrath of God fell on each one of us eternally. So if God has anything good to say to us at all, it's grace. It's amazing grace. And His amazing good news in the gospel is that there is a rescuer for us. In our text, Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath. The good news, notice, is a person. His name is Jesus.

[19:59] That name means savior, rescuer, deliverer. And that His name means that, means that everything about Him is perfectly suited to be the rescuer for us.

He's perfectly suited for His mission of rescuing us from the coming wrath. Who is this Jesus? He's fully God to represent God. He's fully man to stand in our place and represent us and to bring us to God.

So it's good news indeed to learn of someone qualified to rescue us from the coming wrath. But I want to say that the way in which Jesus rescues us should simply take our breath away. For in order to rescue us from the coming wrath, God in Jesus Christ came and suffered Himself the coming wrath in the place of His rebellious people.

I say it ought to take our breath away, but I know you and I have heard this message perhaps so often that it doesn't affect us and we don't realize just how radical this is.

[21:17] So let me say it again in another way. In order to rescue us from eternal damnation, Jesus came, God the eternal Son, and was damned instead of us.

This is the part of the crucifixion that the world just doesn't get. They only see what men did to Jesus, man's cruelty and unjust treatment of this good man who went about doing good. but hear me, it is not Jesus suffering the tortures and wrath of man on a Roman cross that rescues us from the coming wrath of God.

Thousands have died on Roman crosses. That does not rescue us from God's wrath. No, what saves us is the staggering thing that happened on the middle cross unseen by human eyes. When God himself brought hell to Calvary that day as he poured out his holy wrath upon his own dear son, that, dear friends, is what saves us from the coming wrath.

[22:38] He bore it in our place. that the son of God came to be the substitute curse bearing sacrifice for his people. That when the father laid on him the iniquities of us all, he became sin for us, the Bible says.

He bore our sins in his body to the tree, the place of divine punishment. And there he became a curse for us, that he might redeem us from the curse of the broken law.

And so it pleased the Lord God to crush him. He was wounded by God for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities and the punishment that brought us peace was on him.

That was God's punishment for the sins of his sinful people. And he didn't spare his son anything, but poured out upon him his pure, undiluted wrath.

Now this is the plain testimony of the Bible. That on the night before his crucifixion, Jesus comes into Gethsemane. He's deeply distressed and troubled.

[23:51] This one who had told his disciples the very night, let not your hearts be troubled, is now deeply distressed and troubled himself. And he confides in his three closest friends, Peter, James, and John, saying, my soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.

He nearly died in the garden from the sorrow of contemplating what was going to happen on the morrow. And so he says, stay here and watch with me.

And he went on a bit further and fell on his face on the ground. Since the last time you prayed with your face on the ground, this is Jesus overwhelmed in his soul with sorrow to the point of death. Father, if it be possible, let this cup be taken from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done.

You know, many martyrs have gone to their death with more composure than this. But there was no wrath in their cup.

[25 : 19] But when Jesus went to his death, there was the wrath of the Almighty in his cup. You know what this cup represented, don't you, in Gethsemane when he's contemplating it?

He's now just hours from it. The Old Testament spells it out clearly for us. What was in his cup? Isaiah 51 refers to the cup that makes men stagger, the cup, the goblet of my wrath.

God says in Jeremiah 25, take from my hand this cup filled with the wine of my wrath. Revelation 14, 10, the wine of God's fury which he's poured full strength into the cup of his wrath.

Revelation 16, 19, the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. Old Testament, New Testament, both testify alike that this cup of which Jesus was praying is the cup of God's wrath poured full strength.

into his hand. No wonder his soul was overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death as he simply contemplated suffering that the next day.

[26 : 39] So he comes back and he finds his disciples sleeping and goes away the second time and he prays, my father, if it's not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.

So what is it about this cup that's causing such a cataclysmic upheaval in his soul? He knows that in it is the full strength of God's wrath against sin. He knows this is God the Son in the flesh.

He knows better than anyone the power of his anger that his wrath is as great as the fear that is due him. He had known nothing but the smiling face of his loving heavenly father.

He had known nothing but his full approval and favor and he's now contemplating the fury of God's wrath on the cross.

It was this, not the pains of the torturous cross that caused him sorrow to the point of death. And so intense was this thought of suffering the coming wrath due to his people that Jesus pleaded if it were possible for salvation to happen in any other way that this cup might be taken from him but each time humbly submitting himself to the father's will.

[28 : 08] Luke tells us that Jesus' sorrow unto death was so intense that an angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. don't know what that was but he could have died in the garden and never made it to the cross so an angel is sent to strengthen him.

What does he do with that renewed strength? It says in being in anguish he prayed more earnestly yet again and his sweat was like great drops of blood falling to the ground.

This was the bursting of the blood vessels under the strain and stress of the envisioned cup. there was God's wrath in the cup. There was hell in the cup.

And after three times asking it to be taken from him heaven's silence made it plain. There is no other way for salvation to come to our people unless you drink it.

In other words no prophet no angel of God could save us or rescue us from the coming wrath. only the perfect God man Jesus could rescue us.

[29 : 17] Man one with us to represent us there in the place of judgment. Divine so as to give his suffering of God's wrath an infinite merit.

Not just for one sinner but for millions of sinners down through history who have trusted in the Savior. He's the God man. man. And he can suffer on the cross what would have taken eternally for a man to suffer of God's wrath and hell and never to get to the end of its payment.

So the arresting mob comes to the garden and took him from trial to trial in which he was falsely accused and finally beaten and whipped and nailed to the torturous cross to die a shameful death. death and all that could be seen by men. And often that's as deep as men's thoughts about Christ crucified go.

We had a dear older lady came among us later in life. She had gone to parochial schools in her youth and she remembered often seeing a crucifix on the wall.

[30 : 27] She said it made her cry. She didn't understand why Jesus had to die on the cross. Well she came and she heard the biblical explanation and she believed on her wrath bearing substitute Jesus and she was saved from the coming wrath.

And if we know who Jesus is and we know what Calvary was, God's damnation falling, then we want to know what is someone like him doing in a place like this.

well it's love that brought him here. It's love, it's amazing love. The Bible tells us that what was going on here is that he's now drinking that cup of God's wrath, the very thought of which nearly killed him hours earlier.

He's now given to experience it himself in our place. The wrath of God poured full strength into his cup. And so from twelve noon to three o'clock, there was this eerie darkness that covered the land as the sun refused to shine.

Don't know what that was, but it was an eerie darkness. It was an outward sign of God drawing near in judgment to pour out his wrath.

[31 : 54] Even as he did upon the Egyptians in their ninth judgment of the ninth plague, when he sent a total darkness that covered Egypt for three days, so dark that they couldn't go outside of their homes.

A darkness that could be felt, the Bible says. And so here at Calvary, God draws near to judge with his wrath.

And now it's falling on his own son as he bore the sins of his people. Not for three days, for three hours. darkness, the outer darkness, was only exceeded by the inner darkness of the Lord Jesus Christ in his own soul as God turned the light of his face away from him and poured out the full fury of his wrath for sin.

This is the one who had always basked in the light of the love and favor of his father. And he now suffers without one ray of light from his father's face.

Not one sense of his father's love for him. He felt nothing but God's holy revulsion against sin because he had become sin for us.

[33 : 13] Nothing but the full anger and wrath of God's curse because he was now being cursed and damned for us that we might be rescued from that wrath.

You know, Jesus also described hell as a place of outer darkness. Darkness. And it was that outer darkness that came to Calvary that day as Christ stood in the place of his people and received what we would have and should have for all eternity.

you know, we read of no cry from our Savior when they beat him or when they whipped him.

We read of no cry from the Savior when they drove the nails through his hands and feet. But now, when the full wrath of God was poured into his cup from 12 noon to 3 o'clock, it was then that out of the darkness came this loud cry, my God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

Why have you forsaken me? Why do I feel nothing of your love and know only your wrath? It's because that's what is due to man for his sins and he's now suffering it in our place.

[34 : 40] Hell is being forsaken by God and Jesus felt it fully as he bore our sins. And dear brothers and sisters, he experienced the wrath of God that was coming for us and endured it until he could finally say in triumph, it is finished.

He drank the cup to the dregs. There's nothing in the cup left to be drunk. That's how Christ rescues us from the coming wrath of God, by suffering it for us.

There's a biblical word for that. The New Testament calls it propitiation. Propitiation. Have you heard that word? It's not a theologian's word. It's the Holy Spirit's word. It's the word that he uses to describe what was happening there on that middle cross.

Propitiation. God presented him, Romans 3.25, presented Christ as a propitiation. 1 John 4.10, this is love. Not that we love God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.

To propitiate means to pacify God's wrath. To propitiate means to appease it, to turn it away. And so Christ's death on the cross was an atoning sacrifice that turned God's wrath away from us by bearing it himself.

[36 : 04] Wrath that was meant for us fell on him that it might no longer fall on us. There was no other way to turn the coming wrath away from us.

God's justice demands full payment of wrath for our sins. And Jesus steps in and takes it full force in our place. And since he drank the cup to the bottom for his people, what's there left for us to

drink?

Absolutely none. And so we don't look to judgment with fear. We look to judgment as we sang earlier with the confidence that we will arrive without fault because of what Jesus did for us. In living the perfect life we couldn't and dying that death under God's wrath for us. That's how he rescues us from the coming wrath.

Oh, that we would love him more. I've told this story before. I believe it's a true story. So I'll tell it again and it illustrates our point. A newlywed couple was honeymooning in Australia and snorkeling off of the Great Barrier Reef.

[37 : 16] Their entertainment soon turned into a nightmare as a shark began to circle around them. And eventually it attacked. And the man somehow managed to swim over between the shark and his bride.

and at the last minute he shoved his bride back toward the boat and he took the full force of that shark attack. He lost his life and in so doing in absorbing that attack from the shark he saved his bride's life.

Now that pictures for us what was happening on the middle cross. The wrath of God was coming for us. Every one of us. For our sins. sinners. And Jesus Christ steps between sent by the father. Amazing love that the father would say you go son and die for your people. Suffer my wrath for them. And the son doesn't say do I have to. He says here am I send me.

I was thinking the very same thing father. And he comes on that mission and he absorbs the full wrath of God that we could be rescued from it. We weren't a lovely bride.

[38 : 29] It was while we were still sinners that Christ died for us. While we were rebels. We didn't love his law. We loved our way. What amazing love.

Where do you find this kind of love? You see shame on the church and shame on us for thinking oh if we just take and hide the wrath of God well then we'll have something to offer to the world that they'll like.

And we got the love of God. It's only in the light of the wrath of God for sin that this love of God becomes something out of this world.

Where do you find this kind of love? About God being willing to become man and absorb the wrath himself for us. That's love. What kind of love is it? It's out of this world love.

Do you wonder why we love him? That's why. Do you wonder why we love to sing his praises? That's why. He's rescued us from the coming wrath.

[39 : 36] There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Oh but outside of Christ Jesus there is only condemnation. There's no wrath in Christ Jesus for those who are in Christ Jesus but outside of Jesus there is only wrath.

It's coming and it's coming for anyone outside of Christ. You are still exposed to the wrath of God outside of Jesus Christ. He's the one place where the wrath of God has already fallen and satisfied God's justice.

It's only in Christ crucified that justice smiles and asks no more. Where the wrath of God says it is enough. He has paid the full price for sin and we'll celebrate it next week that the Father raising him from the dead is heaven's amen to Christ's payment of our death in full.

God the Father saying it is enough. He's satisfied my wrath. He's satisfied my justice. My righteous requirements. He's the one safe place where God's wrath has already fallen.

Get into Christ. You get into Christ by faith. You get into Christ by turning from any other hope for heaven. By embracing the truth of Scripture that says your sins are so bad that it took the Son of God being damned in your place to make you right with God.

[41 : 11] Now if you're too proud to receive that you judge yourself unworthy of eternal life. God the Holy Spirit would use this word to humble you this morning and to bring you as a hell deserving sinner and say the wrath of God is coming for me and I'm not in Christ but I want to be in Christ.

Have mercy on me a sinner. Put all your faith in what Jesus did for sinners. He's a willing and an able Savior. John 3 36 says whoever believes in the Son has eternal life but whoever rejects the Son will not see life for God's wrath remains on him.

It remains. You see the wrath of God was on him before he heard of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The wrath of God was on him before he rejected the Son of God.

It was on him because of his sin and it remains on him for all eternity. It's only by believing in the Son and accepting him as Lord and Savior that we have one to pacify the wrath of God on our

behalf.

So I urge you to trust in such a Savior today. What more could you want in a Savior than what is found in Jesus who rescues us from the coming wrath?

[42 : 49] Well, our response to such a gospel. Hallelujah. What a Savior. Will you stand and sing it with me? It's number 175. 175.

Man of sorrows, what a name for the Son of God who came. Ruined sinners to reclaim. Hallelujah. What a Savior. Let's sing it to his praise. 175.

Let's pray. Our God, we're humbled in the presence of such a Savior. Our sin looks so ugly when we see him suffering for it.

Your love looks so out of this world when we think that you sent him to do this for us and that he came willingly and laid his life down for us. Forgive us for belittling our sins.

Forgive us for thinking so small of the gospel of Jesus and this great, so great salvation. Have mercy on these who have neglected so great a salvation.

[43 : 52] Bring them today to lay hold of this Savior. Thank you that he is in heaven. He's not on the tree anymore. He's not suffering. He has made that once for all sacrifice that has satisfied your justice forever and ever for your people.

May there be more joining the ranks today by trusting in him and entering into the joy that is ours to live with him now and with him forever.

Thank you then for the gospel. Send us on our way rejoicing in him. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.