

Augustine (part 2)

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[0 : 00] I'd like to mention a couple of things before we begin this morning. First of all, in case you might find it useful at any point, I do have and will have transcripts of all of these lessons that I can provide to you.

I know many of you take notes already, but if it would be helpful to you to go back and read the names and dates and places and all of that, just let me know. I'll send them to you. Second, I don't know whether you are familiar with ChristianAudio.com, but every month they give away a free audio book.

A lot of them probably aren't worth your time, but they also give away a lot of classics, and I just happened to notice this week that their free book of the month is Augustine's Confessions. It's not the most modern translation of it, but it's free, and if you're interested in that, you can go to ChristianAudio.com slash free, and you can check that page out every month and you'll find a new book.

Let's recite our memory verse together, which is Romans 8.35. It begins, who shall separate us? Say it with me. Romans 8.35.

[1 : 19] Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

While our verse this week doesn't provide the answer, I trust we know the answer to these rhetorical questions. Absolutely nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. Let's pray.

Our Heavenly Father, we cannot be separated from your grace, from your mercy, from your favor. Thanks to Christ, your Son, we are safe and secure in your love forever.

We have no reason to fear anything. Trouble, hardship, persecution, nothing can separate us from your love. Lord, I humbly ask that you bless our study this morning.

Please give me clarity as I teach and please bless our worship to come after. In Christ, I pray.

Amen. So today we continue our study of notable figures in church history, which I guess I've unofficially titled, They Still Speak.

[2 : 31] Hebrews 12 tells us we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses. These so-called witnesses help us to run with endurance the race that is set before us.

In context, the author of Hebrews is referring to those men and women of the past who have already run their portion of the race and they did so faithfully to the end. It's implied that we can study their lives and find a great deal of encouragement for our own portion of the race.

Last week, we began looking at the life of Augustine and we made it up to the time of his conversion. And I suspect many of us can relate to his experiences and the thoughts that he shared in his confessions as God slowly but surely drew Augustine to himself.

I'll begin this morning with a brief overview. Augustine was born in Africa in A.D. 354 to an unbelieving father and a Christian mother.

His mother, unsurprisingly, prayed that he would grow up to know the Lord and be saved. While his father wanted nothing more than to give his son the best education possible in rhetoric, public speaking.

[3 : 48] He begins his education at the age of 11 and at the age of 17, he moves to Carthage to complete his education. As Augustine will later describe in his confessions, Carthage was a hissing cauldron of lust.

That was his perspective. It was in Carthage that Augustine says he swelled with pride and conceit in his own rhetorical abilities.

It was there he found himself unable to resist the temptation of women, which appears to have been his bigger problem. He began an extramarital affair with a concubine, which would continue for the

next 15 years.

In fact, even after he decided to send her away in an effort to reform himself, he couldn't resist his impulse and he quickly found himself another girlfriend. Meanwhile, Augustine develops an interest in God.

He reads Cicero, who was not a Christian, and becomes infatuated with some very unbiblical ideas about God. But he's interested in God nonetheless.

[4 : 59] He's interested in morality. He's interested in discovering eternal truth. Eventually, he moves on to other unbiblical ideas about God, but his interest in God is growing.

And he's also becoming increasingly discontent with his chosen lifestyle. In other words, he's becoming convicted by his sin, specifically lust, but he can't bring himself to overcome it.

He can't bring himself to let it go. Then, Augustine moves to Milan, Italy, where he meets the great Bishop Ambrose. And Ambrose confronts him with the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us.

You see, Augustine had come to believe that God is impersonal and unknowable. But Ambrose is preaching something else altogether about God.

According to Ambrose, God is personal. He's so personal and so knowable, in fact, that he became a human being and walked this earth only 300 years before.

[6 : 08] Augustine was captivated by Ambrose's preaching. He later writes the following prayer to God, Unknown to me, it was you who led me to Ambrose so that I might unknowingly be led by him to you.

While Ambrose is certainly pointing Augustine to the true God of the Bible, Augustine, or Ambrose, is also leading him into what he'll describe as a madness that leads to sanity and a death that leads to life.

How so? As Augustine moves closer and closer to God, his conviction of sin gets stronger and stronger. And as his guilt is growing weightier, he tries harder and harder to put that sin away. Like Christian in the pilgrim's progress, he's desperately trying to figure out how to remove this burden on his back. But he fails over and over again.

As I said, he finally ends the relationship with his concubine only to quickly get another. He's trying, but he's failing. He can't break himself free from his own sin. I read this passage last time, but let me read it once more.

[7 : 28] Augustine writes, The dilemma is that he's learned enough about God to know he should love God.

I think more than that, he wants to love God, but he doesn't know how to love God. Specifically, he doesn't know how to love God more than his sin.

He says, I did not persist in enjoyment of my God. I could not continue in it. Every time he tried, he failed. And he seems to be painfully aware of what the Bible teaches.

If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. What is he supposed to do? This was the madness he experienced.

He's trying to love God through sheer willpower and self-determination, but he fails every time and he soon returns to his sin. So what was the answer?

[8 : 52] Augustine writes, I began to search for a means of gaining the strength I needed to enjoy you, speaking to God. But I could not find this means until I embraced the mediator between God and men, Jesus Christ.

In other words, he would never find the answer in himself or by his own efforts. It wasn't until he finally gave up this vain attempt to overcome his own sin that he found the cure.

He stopped looking to himself, in other words, for salvation. And he turned to Christ alone. Let me read one of my favorite passages from Augustine's Confessions.

I don't remember whether I read this last time or not, but he writes, How sweet all it was for me to be rid of those fruitless joys which I had once feared to lose.

You drove them from me, you who are the true, the sovereign joy. You drove them from me and took their place, you who are sweeter than all pleasure, though not to flesh and blood.

[10 : 05] You who outshine all light, yet are hidden deeper than any secret in our hearts. You who surpass all honor, though not in the eyes of men who see all honor in themselves. Oh Lord my God, my light, my wealth, and my salvation.

I remember having a late night conversation with a friend when I was pretty young, maybe 11, 12 years old. And I remember asking him, How do you know whether you're saved? And my friend responded, Well, I think I heard my dad say once that if you love God, you must be saved. And I remember replying to my friend saying, Well, that's good, because I love God. But the truth is, I really struggled with that answer. And I struggled with that answer for years. And I think what was the basis of my struggle was, I thought he was right. It made sense to me, and I struggled because if it is right, I had serious, well-founded doubts about my love for God.

[11 : 15] When I was honest with myself, I knew that I loved many other things much more than God. And that was Augustine's dilemma. He says, How sweet all at once it was for me to be rid of those fruitless joys which I had once feared to lose.

Why wasn't he converted sooner? He enjoyed his sin. He enjoyed his sin more than God, and feared that by leaving his sin behind, he would also leave his greatest joys behind.

I'm certain many unbelievers share Augustine's perspective. Just a few weeks ago, I preached the funeral of a long-time alcoholic. He had been an alcoholic for decades, and he basically drank himself to death.

By God's grace, however, he did not die with alcohol in his system. About a year before his death, a friend invited him to church.

He went regularly. He repented of his sin. He threw himself at the mercy of God. He professed his wholehearted trust in the Savior, became a Christian, and from that day forward, never touched a drop of alcohol again.

[12 : 33] He quit, just like that. But the damage was already done to his body. At his funeral, an old friend of his stood up to speak near the end of the service.

And here's what she said. She said, I've heard a lot said today about this new godly Randy, but I never knew that Randy.

And I don't think I would want to know that Randy, because the old Randy was a blast. Here's what I heard her say. I would rather my friend drink himself to death than become a boring Christian.

In her mind, to become a Christian is to sacrifice joy. And why would anyone ever want to do that? But according to Augustine, that kind of fear is unfounded.

He could look back and say, thank God I can be rid of those fruitless joys I once feared to lose.

Fruitless joys. On the other side of the cross, if you will, he discovered those things that once brought him pleasure could not compare with the joy he found in Christ.

[13 : 44] He thoroughly and emphatically enjoyed God through Christ. How did this happen? Here we come to the cornerstone of Augustine's theology.

And at the heart of Augustine's theology is the heart. In John 14, Jesus tells his disciples, if you love me, you will keep my commandments.

Now, when many of us read that statement, we hear, if you want to love Christ, you must keep his commandments. Keeping his commandments is loving him.

And there's some truth to that, but Augustine hears something a little different in that verse. He hears, if you love me, you will keep my commandments. And someone responds, of course, that's what he hears.

That's precisely what the text says. Listen closely. If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

[14 : 50] Obedience does not become love. Love becomes obedience. Similarly, the apostle John writes, for this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome.

Notice that the one who loves God not only keeps his commandments, but also finds them relatively easy. They are not burdensome to him. He loves God.

He loves God and delights in pleasing him. He wants to keep the commandments. He desires to. His heart is bent Godward, and that is where he finds his greatest joy. For Augustine, the heart of sound theology, particularly sound soteriology, the doctrines of salvation, is the heart.

It's the heart. It's a matter of joy. It's a matter of affection. What separates the believer from the unbeliever, according to Augustine, is not that one goes to church while the other doesn't.

[16 : 01] It's not that one prays and the other doesn't. It's not that one does good deeds and the other doesn't. It's that one truly enjoys God more than the world, while the other enjoys the world more than God.

In his confessions, Augustine writes, Without exception, we all long for happiness. All agree that they want to be happy. They may all search for it in different ways, but all try their hardest to reach the same goal, that is, joy.

We all want to be happy. The pursuit of happiness is what drives each of us. Typically, we don't voluntarily make decisions that are going to lead us into misery.

We all want to be happy, so we try our best to move in the direction of increased happiness. Of course, Augustine discovered the greatest joy of all is found in Christ and only in Christ.

Again, he says, How sweet! All at once it was for me to be rid of those fruitless joys which I had once feared to lose. You drove them from me, you who are the true, the sovereign joy.

[17:19] You drove them from me and took their place, you who are sweeter than all pleasure. Notice that phrase, sovereign joy.

That tells us a lot about Augustine's theology, particularly regarding salvation. Most of us are quite familiar with references to God's sovereign grace.

But what is sovereign joy? For Augustine, sovereign grace and sovereign joy, though there is a distinction to be made between these two terms, are essentially one and the same.

You can't be the recipient of God's sovereign grace without also being the recipient of his sovereign joy. In other words, to be saved by grace is to be saved to enjoy God, to find joy in him.

Again, the heart is at the heart of Augustine's theology. One of the greatest miracles of salvation is that God gives us joy in him that triumphs over all of those fruitless joys we had in sin.

[18:32] We should keep in mind, though, Augustine was very clear about this joy being a sovereign joy. It is sovereign in that God gives it without us earning it or persuading him to give it.

He doesn't need outside counsel for this. It's also sovereign in that it reigns supreme in our hearts. Believers may still face temptations and fall into sin at times, but the prevailing force in our lives will always be the love of God.

From the moment of our conversion, as Roman 5 says, God's love has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. Augustine's understanding of the sinner's depravity and God's sovereignty was clear, but it took time to develop.

Not long after his conversion, he wrote a book titled *On the Freedom of the Will*, *On the Freedom of the Will*, which was later used by some of his theological opponents to discredit some of his later arguments, which were much clearer.

His book, *Confessions*, was written ten years later, after he had time to mature and develop a much fuller understanding of the human condition and salvation itself.

[19:56] Well, Augustine's best-known dissenter was a British monk by the name of Pelagius. Pelagius picked up a copy of Augustine's *Confessions* and was shocked to read the following passage.

Augustine writes, Give me the grace, O Lord, to do as you command, and command me to do what you will. O holy God, when your commands are obeyed, it is from you that we receive the power to obey them.

Now, I trust that most of us do not detect any problems with that statement. If we turn back to the Old Testament, we find that man's natural inability to obey God is a core feature behind the new covenant and all of the promises that are given.

For example, the prophet Ezekiel writes, I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness. And from all your idols I will cleanse you.

And I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

[21:20] I've always thought of that passage as being God's way of saying, if you want something done right, you've got to do it yourself. God's people of the Old Testament failed to keep his commandments over and over again, generation after generation.

You know the story. They would fall into sin. God would punish them. They would repent. God would renew his covenant with them. And then they would fall into sin all over again. Time and time again, they proved they could not keep his law.

The promise of the new covenant was God saying, you can't keep my law. Not apart from my divine work in your heart.

So I will remove the heart of stone and I will give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you and what? Cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

He will effectively accomplish our obedience himself. The apostle Paul echoes this promise in Ephesians 2 when he writes, for by grace, you have been saved through faith.

[22 : 36] And this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God, not a result of works so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Again, Augustine writes, give me the grace, O Lord, to do as you command. When your commands are obeyed, it is from you that we receive the power to obey them.

As far as I'm concerned, that's entirely biblical. But Pelagius, Pelagius is offended. He is a well-disciplined teacher of morality who believes, and he firmly believes, in the goodness and the freedom of humanity.

Pelagius argues that if God gives us commands, then we must be able to obey them. He reasons that it would be illogical, it would be unfair for God to demand something of someone that he or she isn't capable of doing.

And when you read his writings, you realize that he frequently extols the virtue of man. He talks about our inherent ability to do God's will.

[23 : 59] He once said, as often as I have to speak about moral improvement and the leading of a holy life, I am accustomed first to set forth the power and quality of human nature and to show what it can accomplish.

I don't know about you, but that doesn't seem to fit my experiences at all. According to Pelagius, man has the absolutely equal ability at every moment to do good or evil.

his slogan became, whatever I ought to do, I can do. Whatever I ought to do, I can do. Now just compare that mantra with what we've heard from Augustine.

Give me the grace, O Lord, to do as you command, Augustine says. So Augustine is bowed before the throne of God, humbly begging to receive just the ability to do good, while Pelagius seems to be thumping his chest shouting, I can do it all.

I guess if he sets his mind to it. Now if you feel maybe I'm exaggerating Pelagius' position, Pelagius actually believes it is at least theoretically possible for someone to be perfect.

[25 : 22] Jesus said, be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect. Since Pelagius assumes, command implies ability, it must be possible for us to become perfect because Jesus commands us to be perfect.

Pelagius denies original sin. He believes Adam's sin affected Adam and only Adam. The rest of us, I guess, are born morally neutral.

We aren't born sinners. We merely choose to sin. And if someone wants to be righteous, all he has to do is beat himself into submission, pull himself up by his bootstraps and become righteous.

Yes, we maybe need God's grace, but everyone already has a measure of that. Now you won't be surprised to learn that Augustine passionately disagreed.

even if the Bible had not taught him about original sin and the depravity of man, his own experiences told him more than enough. He writes, who has it in his power to have such a motive present to his mind that his will will be influenced to believe?

[26 : 38] Who can welcome in his mind something which does not give him delight? Who has it in his power to ensure that something that will delight him will turn up?

Or that he will take delight in what turns up? If those things delight us which serve our advancement towards God that is due not to our own whim or industry or meritorious work but to the inspiration of God and to the grace which he bestows.

Again, a core part of Augustine's theology is the heart. He's asking, how can you make yourself love something you don't love? It's like telling a man to pursue a woman he's not attracted to.

It's like telling him to love that woman, he doesn't love and expecting him to love her sincerely. Man may have free will but that will is always going to be bound by a couple of things.

First, our will is bound by ability. We cannot accomplish something we're not able to accomplish. I can want, I can will to fly but I'm certain if I flap my arms I will not leave the ground.

[27 : 55] second, our will is bound by desire. We will inevitably pursue what we love, what we enjoy, right?

Augustine says, a man's free will indeed avails for nothing except to sin. If he knows not the way of truth, that is. And even after his duty and his proper aim shall begin to become known to him unless he also take delight in and feel a love for it, he neither does his duty nor sets about it nor lives rightly.

Now in order that such a course may engage our affections, God's love is shed abroad in our hearts not through the free will which arises from ourselves, but through the Holy Ghost which is given to us.

Now to be clear, to some degree, depending on how we define these terms, both men, both Augustine and Pelagius, they believe in free will. They believe man has freedom of will. Both men believe in moral accountability. Both men believe in what we might call Christian freedom. For Augustine though, true freedom is not struggling with a perpetual choice between good and evil. [29 : 18] In his estimation, true freedom is the ability to enjoy God and enjoy him so much so that sin becomes contemptible to us.

In his estimation, the struggle of choice between good and evil, that only exists in a fallen world. That's not some ideal. In other words, God's grace doesn't merely grant us the potential to do good. It gives us a strong, unyielding affection for good. It causes us to hunger and thirst for God. It is sovereign joy, which does not remove our ability to sin, but it fundamentally transforms the desires of our hearts.

as Romans 3 says, none is righteous, no, not one. No one understands, no one seeks for God. All have turned aside, together they have become worthless. No one does good, not even one. Their throat is an open grave, they use their tongues to deceive.

[30 : 33] The venom of asps is under their lips, their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. In their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known.

There is no fear of God before their eyes. God says, Genesis 6 says of humanity, in the days of Noah, the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thought of his heart was only evil continually.

This is anthropology 101. You want to understand mankind in his natural state, this is it. it's not a pretty picture, but it's a true picture.

As the Baptist Confession states, humanity, by falling into a state of sin, has completely lost all ability to choose any spiritual good that accompanies salvation.

Thus, people in their natural state are absolutely opposed to spiritual good and dead in sin, so that they cannot convert themselves by their own strength or prepare themselves for conversion.

[31 : 56] The next paragraph says, when God converts sinners and transforms them into the state of grace, he frees them from their natural bondage to sin, and by his grace alone enables them, listen to this, to will and to do freely what is spiritually good.

What did Paul write? It is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Here's the problem as Augustine saw it.

He says, the soul of men shall hope under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be made drunk with the fullness of thy house, and of the torrents of thy pleasures, thou will give them to drink.

For in thee is the fountain of life, and in thy light shall we see the light? Give me a man in love, he knows what I mean. Give me one who yearns, give me one who is hungry, give me one far away in this desert who is thirsty and sighs for the springs of the eternal country.

Give me that sort of man, he knows what I mean. But, if I speak to a cold man, he just does not know what I'm talking about.

[33 : 16] Why doesn't he know? He hasn't felt it. His heart isn't yet changed. And how do you change this man's heart?

Does he do it by his own free will and effort? No. Paul says, and you were dead in trespasses and sins in which you once walked following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, you know, pursuing what we love, and were by nature the children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

But God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, has made us alive together with Christ.

By grace, you have been saved. From death to life, right? From carrying out the desires of the body and the mind to what Augustine calls sovereign joy.

We were dead in our trespasses, but God made us alive, starting with the heart, made us alive together with Christ. Now, neither Augustine nor Pelagius ever budged in this debate.

[34 : 50] In AD 427, just three years before his death, Augustine writes to a friend and says, I have tried hard to maintain the free choice of the human will, but the grace of God prevailed.

By his own admission, Augustine combated more than 80 heresies throughout his life. He actually has a book titled, On Heresies. But somehow, this fight against Pelagianism always remained a priority for him.

He always came back to it. He was the loudest about it. When asked why he spent so much of his time and energy on this subject, he replied, first and foremost, because no subject but grace gives me greater pleasure.

For what ought to be more attractive to us, sick men, than grace, grace by which we are healed. For us lazy men, then grace, grace by which we are stirred up.

For us men longing to act, then grace by which we are helped. In other words, what else would he spend his time on? Pelagius remained equally stubborn, though his motivations were certainly different.

[36 : 04] He blamed so-called Augustinian teaching for the lack of the holiness he saw in people, the complacency he saw in people when he traveled. He thought Augustine's doctrine of sovereign joy made people lazy, made them complacent.

But as we've just heard from Augustine, what's better than God's grace at stirring men up and giving them the means to act in the first place? Apart from grace, all we have are empty works. Apart from grace, there can be no sincere love for God. God. There's nothing but religious ritual. In AD 417, Pelagius was excluded from the church for heresy.

Pelagianism was then condemned by the Council of Carthage a year later. In fact, it was condemned a few more times over the years because it continued to make a comeback in some form or another.

Even today, we find traces of it all over the place. R.C. Sproul once said, the church today is very largely in Pelagian captivity. He went on to summarize Pelagianism as the teaching that though grace may facilitate the achieving of righteousness, it is not necessary to that end.

[37 : 26] That's Pelagianism. Now, obviously, the antidote to Pelagianism is Augustine's sovereign joy. Now, the question is, where do these ideas about sovereign joy come from?

Everything that Augustine had to say about the depravity of man and the inability of man despite having his own will, the sovereignty of God, where do these ideas come from?

In short, they came from the Bible. I've noticed a stark difference between the arguments of Pelagius and Augustine. As you read through them, you will discover that Augustine is thoroughly biblical.

His writings are saturated with references to Scripture, both direct references and many allusions where he doesn't necessarily cite a passage in particular.

Pelagius, on the other hand, his arguments always begin with an idea and as logical as that idea may seem to be, he doesn't even bother in most cases to provide any proof from God's word at all.

[38 : 38] It must be this way. It makes sense this way. I'll never forget the story of a preacher who was visited by a Jehovah's witness. The man knocked on the preacher's door and began his usual spiel and the preacher interrupts and says, one second, he runs back into the house, he grabs his Bible, he comes back out.

It doesn't take the Jehovah's witness long to realize this man knows the Bible, and so he tries to quickly flee the scene, but the preacher actually follows him down the sidewalk, keeps talking. After a block or so, the Jehovah's witness gets tired of hearing what this preacher has to say and he turns around and he says to him, you see, that's your problem. You can't understand that book in your hand unless one of our qualified elders teaches it to you.

And the preacher's reply was beautiful. He said, no, that's your problem. You would not believe many of the things you do unless someone had told you to believe them.

If you had relied entirely on Scripture, your understanding would be quite different. We can learn a lot from a man like Augustine.

[39 : 53] we learn to rely on Scripture alone rather than leaning on our own understanding of things. We learn to depend entirely upon God and His grace because there is no other means to be saved.

There is no other means to righteousness. We learn that it is in Christ alone that we are saved. That we come to this point of conversion and living a holy life. We learn from him the power of prayer. I didn't mention it before but Augustine was eternally grateful for the prayers of his mother. He wholeheartedly believed Jesus when Jesus said, ask and you will receive that your joy may be full. He talks quite a bit about his mother's prayers and how thankful he was for them. Perhaps more than anything, Augustine teaches us that Christianity is more than traditions. It's more than doctrines. It's more than good works.

[41 : 04] While God certainly redeems us to believe the right things and do the right things, we believe the right things and we do the right things because of his sovereign joy.

He doesn't merely turn our steps in a new direction. He turns our heart. He gives us a new heart. He frees us from those fruitless joys that we once feared to lose.

The only joys we could have known when we were dead in our sin. And he frees us to enjoy him and to enjoy him forever.

forever. That's Augustine's theology. That's what he went to his grave, believing, preaching, and defending. And that's probably what he's best known for, at least on the Protestant side of the divide.

As we'll likely see next week, his influence reaches pretty far. And it's in some ways hard to imagine a reformation without Augustine preceding it.

[42 : 15] Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, you most certainly are our sovereign joy.

We are so thankful because for a little of our lives or much of our lives in some cases, each of us have thoroughly enjoyed the things of this world.

And we thought there could be nothing better than those often materials, sinful things that we craved and we clung to, but you rescued us.

Not because we earned it, not because we deserved it, not because we willed it, not because we could make it happen, but by your sovereign grace, by your sovereign joy, we have been set free from those fruitless things.

And now we can enjoy you, which is most certainly the greatest joy of all, the supreme joy that trumps all other pleasures in this life.

[43 : 19] And the best part is, Lord, we know that we get to enjoy you forever. This is not a temporary gift. So for all of that and so much more, we thank you and we praise you as we move into our worship service this morning.

May this joy be in our hearts as we sing and pray and preach. In Christ's name I pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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