

Hope: How We Endure Suffering

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[0:00] Well, good morning. It's good to be with you all again. If you remember from two weeks ago, we looked at 1 Peter chapter 1, we looked at the first! 9 verses, and we saw how they formed the foundation of all that's to follow in the letter. And we summarized these 9 verses in one sentence or one big idea, and it was this. The resurrection of Jesus Christ kindles fresh hope in a world of despair. Now, today we're going to look at another passage in 1 Peter. It's in chapter 3, and I hope that we'll see how it ties back to chapter 1 and how this forms unity in the letter. I hope we'll see more fully how exactly Jesus kindles this fresh hope and also what it looks like to live out this hope in this world of despair. So if you haven't already turned to 1 Peter chapter 3, let's turn there together, and we will be reading starting in verse 8. We'll actually read through the end of the chapter. So 1 Peter chapter 3, beginning in verse 8. Finally, all of you have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless. For to this you are called, that you may obtain a blessing. For whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good. Let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for the reason for the hope that is in you. Yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God with angels, authorities, and powers, having been subjected to him. So here's the big idea for for this passage of scripture, for this lengthy passage of scripture. Because Jesus Christ suffered and was exalted, we too ought to suffer, knowing we will be blessed. Because Jesus Christ suffered and was exalted, we too ought to suffer, knowing we will be blessed. If Jesus suffered and received a reward, so too can we take heart when we suffer, for we have assurance that we also will receive a reward. And this big idea can kind of be broken down into two points. The first point, which covers verses 8 to 17, is this.

Our endurance and suffering is rooted in our future triumphant blessing. So let's look at verses 8 to 17 to see just exactly how our endurance and suffering is rooted in our future triumphant blessing. So we see the first word here, finally. And this actually holds some significance, because it helps us see that Peter is drawing a conclusion. But that necessarily begs the question, what is he concluding? Well, in the preceding sections of the letter, Peter has been making some very specific exhortations as to how the believing community was to live out their Christian faith in the very hostile society of Asia Minor. There's actually five passages in particular I'd like to highlight to help us see how Peter calls us, and he called the believers then, to live out this living hope that we studied two weeks ago. So look with me at chapter 2, and you see in verses 11 and 12, Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your souls. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you

as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of his visitation. So how are we to live in the midst of an unbelieving society? We are to abstain from the passions of the flesh. We are to keep our conduct among the Gentiles honorable. How about verses 13 to 15 in the same chapter, chapter 2?

[5:08] Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme or to governors, as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.

When we live in submission to the governing authorities, Peter says that we put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. In speaking specifically to servants who suffer at the hand of their masters, Peter looks to Jesus as the example for them later on in chapter 2. He says in verse 23, when he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. In speaking specifically to wives in chapter 3, beginning in verse 1 and into verse 2, Peter calls them to be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives when they see your respectful and pure conduct. So after reading these verses, we should ask ourselves, how would God have us to live in our unbelieving society? How would God have us to live as Christians in Bremen, Indiana? But not just what does it look like to be a Christian in general in Bremen, Indiana, but what does it look like to be a Christian who suffers well in Bremen, Indiana? What does it look like to be a Christian who suffers in the face of persecution in Bremen, Indiana? What does it look like to be a Christian who abstains from the passions of the flesh? To be a Christian who keeps his or her conduct among the Gentiles honorable? To be a Christian who, when reviled, does not revile in return? When suffered, does not threaten in return? What does it look like to be a Christian whose conduct could even win his or her spouse to Christ? What does it look like to be a Christian who suffers well in the face of persecution in Bremen, Indiana? That question, it should be at the forefront of our minds as we study 1 Peter today. For the entire letter of 1 Peter is written through this lens of alienation, hostility, and oppression. Peter is writing to believers who are suffering due to persecution for their righteous behavior. So when Peter makes exhortations, when he calls the believers to live a certain way, it is in light of the suffering that they're enduring at the hands of unbelievers. It's in light of their being persecuted, being maligned, being ridiculed for the name of Christ. In short, Peter isn't just saying, as Christians in general, this is how you are to live.

He's saying, as Christians who suffer, this is how you are to live. So there's a context that colors his commands. In other words, Peter calls us to live a certain way in light of the afflictions of others, or in response to those who persecute us. When we see this, when we see that Peter's calling us to not just live as Christians in general, but as Christians who suffer, as Christians who face persecution, I think we're reminded of something. We're reminded that we have no excuse for responding with anything less than grace when confronted with the hateful words of men. I mean, it's one thing to behave in a virtuous manner when we're treated well by others. It's another thing to behave in a virtuous manner when we're treated poorly by others.

It's one thing to be kind to people when they're kind to you. It's another thing to be kind to people when they hate you. Let's turn to Luke chapter 6, because I think Peter draws from the words of Jesus in Luke 6. We're going to begin in verse 27. Luke 6, 27.

But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also. And from one who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods, do not demand them back. And as you wish that others would do good to you, or as you wish others would do to you, do so to them. If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners to get back the same amount. But love your enemies and do good and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.

[9:49] Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. Jesus doesn't just command us to love our enemies and then move on. He actually pauses to give us the motivation for loving our enemies.

We ought to love our enemies not just to receive a reward in heaven, but because in loving those who hate us, we're reflecting the character of our God. We are, as sons of the Most High, imitating our Heavenly Father.

As he is kind to those who are hateful towards him, so too should we be kind to those who are hateful towards us. As he is merciful, so too should we be merciful if we are imitating our Heavenly Father.

When we love our enemies, that's powerful. It's counter-cultural. The world doesn't know what it means to love their enemies. That doesn't make sense. It's illogical. And that's what makes it so powerful when we do this.

And Peter has the same idea in mind. In fact, he likely draws from these words of Jesus. Peter calls us to live counter-cultural lives, to respond in seemingly illogical ways to those who persecute us.

[10:55] For in doing so, we will receive a future blessing, and God will be glorified. Our love toward the world shouldn't be the only cause for unbelievers to scratch their heads, but so should our love for one another.

They should look at us and see how we treat each other and also be somewhat mystified. And so when we go back to 1 Peter, we see that he continues in chapter 8 by actually calling us to a certain way in which we are to live among one another in the body.

He calls us to have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind in verse 8. So these qualities, they should describe what it looks like to live in relationship with one another.

And they serve as a refreshing contrast to the way that Peter describes the world. The world hates us, maligns us, mistreats us, and oppresses us.

But when we come together as the body of Christ, our experience together should look completely different. One commentator puts it this way, the Christian community is to be an alternate society where believers should not have to face the same kinds of insult and hostility that come from those outside the church.

[12:08] And so Peter calls us to be like-minded. He calls us to be sympathetic. He calls us to love one another, to be compassionate. For our actions toward one another ought to be the very opposite of how the world would treat us.

Rather than tearing one another down, we should be building one another up. Sadly, as Christians, we often treat one another in the same way that the world would treat us. And Paul talks about that in Galatians.

He talks about how we ought not to bite and devour one another. That is the behavior that Peter would attribute to the world in his letter. So how much more then should we not treat one another in that fashion?

Well, as we come to verse 9, Peter returns to his description of how believers are to interact with their hostile, unbelieving world. And there are two imperatives that are embedded in this text.

The first is in the negative, and it is a call to not repay. He says in verse 9, do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary.

[13:04] So he starts off by saying, do not do these things. Peter exhorts us as believers to not retaliate when persecuted. When sinned against, we are not to sin in return.

But on the contrary, we are to respond in a distinctively Christian manner. We are to respond in a manner contrary to that which the unbelieving and hostile society would expect. Because when we are sinned against, society expects us to react in a similarly sinful fashion.

But as believers, redeemed by Christ and indwelt with his spirit, we are called to a different manner of living. And Peter says that here in verse 9. He says, repay evil with blessing. And so this leads us to the second imperative.

Not only are we to refrain from repaying evil with evil, but Peter calls us to repay evil with blessing. Bless those who do evil to us or who insult us. Return evil with blessing.

I think another commentator also summarizes this well. He says, given the tendency of human nature to retaliate, coupled with the social expectations to do so, the Christian who refrains from verbal retaliation and instead offers blessing would give unbelievers pause.

[14:11] It's good for us to be exhorted as suffering Christians because all too often we make excuses for responding poorly to blessing. I mean to persecution. We don't bless when we're persecuted.

We reason, so and so was a jerk. He deserved it. Or, I was just defending myself. Or, I can't help it when people treat me like that. When they say things to me like that, I just have to get even.

But here we see from Peter that we're to respond with this grace. we're to live and behave contrary to the world's expectations. We are to repay evil with blessing. In the same way that Jesus did not revile when he was reviled, so too are we to repay evil with blessing.

Peter then provides the reason or the incentive or the motivation for which we are to do this as he continues. He says that we are to bless those who persecute us because to this you are called so that you may inherit a blessing.

There are two points that we should probably highlight in this passage or in this phrase. First, our motivation for blessing those who persecute us. It ought to flow initially from our calling. We see this actually is rooted back even in chapter 2, verse 9 where Peter writes, but you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness and into his marvelous light.

[15:37] So we're to declare the praises of God who called us out of darkness. God has called us to something. But not only does he call us to himself, but after he calls us to himself, he calls us to then reflect his character.

He calls us to be like him. In the same way in which God, when he took on flesh, did not persecute those who had persecuted him, so too are we not to malign those who malign us.

In the same way in which God blessed those who persecuted him, so too are we to bless those who persecute us, for we are called to reflect God's character. And then I think the second point we should see is, in this kind of concluding phrase of verse 9, is that as we live out our calling and thereby reflect God's character, we may look forward to and anticipate our eternal inheritance.

And we have been called to repay evil with blessing in order that we too may receive a blessing.

And this ought to remind us of two weeks ago when we studied 1 Peter chapter 1.

In verse 4, Peter discussed this inheritance in heaven that awaits us. And now here in chapter 3, he reminds us once again of that inheritance. So let's kind of summarize what we have here in verse 9.

[16:49] As we endure persecution by blessing those who do evil to us, we live out our calling, which necessarily involves the charge to reflect God's character. And as we live out our calling and reflect God's character, we may look forward to and anticipate that day in which we will inherit God's heavenly blessing.

Now as we turn to verses 10 to 12, we come upon this quote taken from Psalm 34. And Peter's actually using the Old Testament, he's actually using this text written by David to support his preceding point in verse 9.

So he's using this Old Testament passage as proof that God indeed pours out his blessing on his people when they live righteously and pursue that which is good. Peter's words in verse 9 then summarize David's words in Psalm 34.

As David says that we must keep our tongues from evil and our lips from deceitful speech, so too does Peter call us to refrain from repaying evil with evil or reviling with reviling.

And as David says that we are to turn from evil and do good seeking peace and pursuing it, Peter similarly says and expresses that we are to repay evil with blessing. But mainly here let's look at verse 10 at the first phrase this whoever desires to love life and see good days because I think there's great significance there.

[18:10] We have to understand this phrase in what we might term an eschatological sense coming from the Greek word eschatos which means end or last. So it just means that this phrase in verse 10 here it should be understood as having a future reference to the end times when Christ returns to establish the new heavens and new earth.

It shouldn't be surprising that Peter's using this verse in a future sense because as we saw a few weeks back Peter likes to talk about even our future aspect of salvation. And so he's taking this verse and he's using it to look towards our heavenly inheritance.

And we should almost expect Peter to use the Old Testament in that fashion just as he has done before. Because think about the context in which Peter is writing. Think about the mood of the atmosphere of this letter.

He's writing to believers who are being persecuted. Believers who are suffering in this present life. Peter bases the content of his letter on the premise that God's people will inevitably suffer in this life with the sheer hope and expectation of blessing and eternity.

There's no promise of life and good days in this world. We see the effects of sin all around us. But there is assurance of life and good days in heaven. Therefore, when we do evil or when we do good and when we continue to experience suffering and persecution, when we keep our tongues from evil and our lips from deceitful speech, when we turn from evil and do good, when we seek and pursue peace and yet continue to experience revilement and insult, we should not question the promise of this psalm, but we should understand it within its entire eschatological context of 1 Peter. [19 : 47] There's a time when we will inherit a new heavenly home in which we will experience life and good days. But that is a future blessing that awaits us in the new heavens and new earth. And yet this anticipation of life and good days and eternity, it has implications for how we live now.

It should affect the way that we live. It should cause us to live, according to verses 13 and 14 here, without fear of man. Look with me at verse 14.

Peter says in this verse, But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled. Now, when we read this, he says that we will be blessed. I think we can see that that's a theme that Peter likes to use, this blessedness, this idea that God has something for us, a reward for us to come. And this mention of blessedness it ought to point us back to verse 9, in which Peter says, Repay evil with blessing, because to this you are called, so that you may inherit a blessing.

And as we've already seen, verse 9 points us back to chapter 1, verse 4, where we read of our eternal inheritance, and that's a blessing that we will receive. And then we can look and we can see that Peter concludes this verse with actually a reference to Isaiah 8, 12 to 13, when he exhorts us to neither fear nor be distressed by our society.

[21 : 12] And the Old Testament passage from Isaiah that he cites, it says something like this, Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear nor be in dread, but the Lord of hosts, him you shall honor as holy.

So in the same way that Isaiah was to trust in the Lord in the midst of his unbelieving society, so too now Peter calls us to trust in the Lord in our unbelieving society. Rather than fearing the hostile society of unbelievers, Peter calls us to revere Christ and to fear him.

And this passage is also significant because we see that the passage in Isaiah says to fear the Lord and to revere him. And now Peter says to fear Christ and revere him.

And so we see that Peter is saying in the same, is showing that Jesus is God because he uses the Old Testament to solidify or to substitute even Christ into the passage to say that Christ is God. He is the one and the same with Yahweh. And now we come to a verse that is often remembered and that's in verse 15.

[22 : 21] As we honor Christ as holy, people will see the way in which we live and they'll question our hope. And we must be ready then in the midst of suffering persecution to proclaim the gospel.

Peter says, always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for the reason for the hope that is in you. So we should see that Peter is repeating this theme of hope that we saw in chapter 1.

That we need to be prepared to make a defense or to give a reason for the hope that is in us. Remember chapter 1 verse 3 where Peter says, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to his great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope.

And now here in verse 15 of chapter 3 we're reminded of that hope. So we must naturally ask ourselves are we prepared? The last time we were given an opportunity were we ready?

Could we give the reason for the hope within us? Could we point others to Christ as our only hope of salvation? Or maybe a better question would be with what attitude should we share the hope of Christ?

[23 : 29] Was it an attitude of defensiveness stemming from a heart that desired to prove the unbeliever wrong more so than to see God bring a sinner to salvation? Peter calls us to an attitude that is anything but self-centered and full of malice for the unbeliever.

He calls us to make a defense here in verse 15 with gentleness and respect. This is the manner in which God calls us to give the reason for our hope when unbelievers question us.

The defense of the gospel even when made in the face of persecution ought to be done in this selfless humble manner. And this parallels Peter's exhortation in chapter 2 verse 12 to keep our conduct among unbelievers honorable.

Another commentator had this to say if offense is to be taken it should be over the content of the gospel message not because the message was offered in a manner that invalidates Christ's love. And there's also a reason that Peter gives in verse 16 as to why we are to present this gospel and this defense of the gospel with gentleness and respect. He says in verse 16 so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

[24 : 43] So the purpose for speaking the gospel message in gentleness and respect is that so unbelievers have no excuse. Those who oppose Christ will be put to shame for their unbelief by the believer's good or virtuous conduct.

And this parallels chapter 2 verse 15. If we read there it says for this is the will of God that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.

We should recognize that this idea of being put to shame is not so much a reference to emotion the feeling of shame as it is to standing. In particular it's talking about the fact that unbelievers are going to be found in the wrong and rightly judged by God when they stand before him at the final judgment and that will vindicate believers who have been wrongly accused and shamed in this life. But it's not so much that Peter's again talking about this feeling of shame but he's more concerned with God rightly judging that God is shown to be the victor because only the righteous can stand. And we must remember that it's not because of our righteousness that we will stand on the day of judgment because of the righteousness of Christ and that should lead us all the more to speaking it with gentleness and respect.

[25 : 55] It's not because we've done anything special or we've somehow earned our salvation but because Christ earned it for us and we want to see unbelievers come to that same saving knowledge. So this brings us to our second main point in the text.

We've looked here at the first verses 18 to 17 and we've seen that our endurance and suffering is rooted in our future triumphant blessing. That was our first point. There's a blessed inheritance that awaits us after we have endured persecution.

Our endurance and suffering is rooted in our future triumphant blessing. Now in verses 18 to 22 we see our second point that Christ's endurance and suffering resulted in his future triumphant exaltation.

So these two points can kind of be summarized into our main idea showing this relationship between our suffering and the suffering of Christ. Because Jesus Christ suffered and was exalted we too ought to suffer knowing that we will be blessed.

blessed. Because Jesus Christ suffered and exalted we too ought to suffer knowing we will be blessed. So let's look at verse 18. And it says that Christ suffered once for sins the righteous for the unrighteous.

[27 : 11] So beginning in verse 18 we come now to the motivation for our endurance. Who or what should spur us on to endure suffering to endure persecution to endure opposition from the hostile society in which we live.

Well ultimately Peter says Christ. Christ is our motivation. Christ is the one who should spur us on. We ought to be willing to suffer unjustly for the sake of Christ because Christ was willing to suffer unjustly for our sake.

He suffered in order that we might be brought to God. In other words he suffered that we might be redeemed. That we who are unrighteous might be redeemed from our bondage to sin and reconciled to God by imparting his righteousness to us.

Peter then describes the manner in which he suffered and purchased our redemption. He says he was put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit. The word here that's translated flesh it describes the literal bodily death of Christ and the word translated spirit refers to his resurrection by the power of the Holy Spirit.

And so though Jesus was put to death death did not have the final word. Rather through the power of the Holy Spirit Jesus was raised from the dead and thereby his resurrection it trumped his crucifixion.

[28 : 28] Death simply could not hold him. Now as we look here at verses 19 to 22 we ought to take note that these are very difficult verses to interpret and a lot of people have come to them and come to very different conclusions.

But we're going to look at three basic ways that they've been interpreted and two of which are valid in the sense that there's valid evidence in support of either of those but one of them we'll see it

contradicts scripture and is not a good view.

So the first possible view is that Christ was preaching to the people of Noah's day through Noah. So Christ in the spirit proclaimed the gospel in the days of Noah through Noah but the people of Noah's day referred to by Peter here as the spirits who are now in prison were disobedient and they now suffer eternal damnation.

And we actually see a really good parallel there in the same way that Noah being persecuted and being in the minority preached to the unbelieving world so too does Peter exhort us as Christians in the persecuted minority to preach to the unbelieving world.

And this idea that we have of Noah preaching actually we see in 2 Peter chapter 2 verse 5 it says but Noah persevered a herald of righteousness.

[29:47] And so one possible explanation is that Christ was actually through Noah preaching to the unbelieving world. A second interpretation sees these verses not necessarily as a reference to Christ preaching salvation through Noah to the unrepentant human population of Noah's day but Christ actually making proclamation at his ascension of his victory over all evil including the falling angels of Noah's day described in Genesis 6 who are now imprisoned in hell according to God's judgment.

And according to this interpretation proponents would argue that there is some parallel structure to verses 19 and verse 22 as both would be describing Jesus' triumphant ascension and the subjugation of all things under his rule.

The third view here regarding these verses can't hold any weight so we're not going to spend too much time on it but some actually believe that Jesus went to hell and preached the gospel a second time to the souls of the humans who had lived during Noah's day but as scripture clearly teaches this isn't true because after man dies there is judgment he only dies once and we see that in Hebrews 9.27 we see that in Jesus' parable or Jesus' story of Lazarus and the rich man in Luke 16 that there's a great chasm between them and so that can't be a possible explanation.

But whether you hold to the first interpretation or to the second I don't want us to get bogged down in that but I want us to see that our main point for these verses remains unchanged. Christ's endurance and suffering resulted in his future triumphant exaltation and this is evidenced in the logical progression from verse 18 to verse 22.

Jesus suffered. He died. He rose from the dead and he ascended into heaven. As Peter calls us to suffer well we're not left we are left with the most perfect example.

[31:37] He presents us with our savior. He presents us with Jesus who suffered for our sins to bring us to God. What greater motivation could we have than Jesus himself?

And as we see what his suffering resulted in we can take heart. Jesus ascended into heaven and now sits at the right hand of the father with all things in subjection to him. Just as our Lord and savior received a reward so too Peter promises we will be rewarded by God.

Because Jesus Christ suffered and was exalted we too ought to suffer knowing we will be blessed. In summary I hope that we've seen how this passage ties together the suffering of Christ with our own suffering.

Jesus has endured our suffering in the punishment for our sins upon the cross and just as he suffered at the hands of sinners we too should not be surprised when we suffer at the hands of sinners as well.

And yet the suffering of Christ did not end in defeat. We see here in 1 Peter that Christ was victorious through the resurrection and he now has ascended into heaven where he sits at the right hand of the father with all things in subjection to him.

[32:44] We ought to be encouraged therefore knowing that we too will receive a future triumphant blessing the inheritance spoken of throughout 1 Peter that awaits us in the new heavens and new earth.

Let's end in prayer. Heavenly Father we thank you that you've brought us together again today. We thank you for your word and that you have revealed yourself through it.

God help us to be encouraged and to take heart in what we have even read today as we have seen in 1 Peter that you have triumphed. God I ask that that would be our motivation and what would spur us on to endurance even in this life.

God we thank you for the blessing that you have promised to us in our eternal inheritance. God help us to live in such a way that we anticipate and long and evidence the fact of our inheritance to a unbelieving world.

God we pray even now for the salvation of unbelievers and it is in your name we pray. Amen.
Amen. Amen.