

Faith's Activities: Uniting and Purifying

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Date: 19 July 2020

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[0 : 0 0] Well, before we hear the preaching of God's word, please turn to the book of 1 John. Chapter 1. And I'm going to read the entire chapter and read into chapter 2, verse 2.

1 John.

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Christ is risen and you amen and isn't that our hope isn't that our joy that this same risen Jesus reigns for us and is living for us and interceding for us and is coming for us and is going to bring this whole world to an end and usher in the eternal age with Jesus as king and his people in a new heaven new earth the home of righteousness well we're studying four graces in the Christian life and we're going to start out then today with our memory work but it's this time without the overhead okay so put your thinking caps on and this is the way we're going to do it the north side is going to give us the grace and the south side will give us the activity the main activity of that grace so when you give us the grace pause and let them tell us what that grace does okay and then we'll go on to number two so number one the first grace the great emptier how'd we do ben okay that wasn't up there was it all right then you are doing well you're doing real well and and uh you can see we're highlighting faith we're we're moving on from humility we saw why why humility is on this list of of our top four we might call them because it's the soil in which all the other graces grow there is no faith that's not humble faith no love that's not humble love and so on so we saw why humility is on our top list there's a reason why faith is on our top list as well and the short answer is because god puts it there in the scriptures we see it repeatedly in the familiar triad of graces faith hope and love no less than seven of paul's new testament letters to christians and to churches begin with him giving thanks to god for the faith that he sees in his people let me give one text as an example colossians 1 3 and 4 we always thanks this is after he just greets them and says we always thank god the father of our lord jesus christ when we pray for you because we've heard of your faith in christ jesus and the love you have for all the saints so clearly in paul's estimation faith was one of the most important graces of the christian life and the fact that he thanks god for it demonstrates that faith is a grace of god it is a gift of god and the only reason we have it is because he works it in us by his spirit and that's why paul thanks god for these people's faith and i wonder if we shouldn't be more amazed and be more full of joy and be more full of thanksgiving when we see faith in the people of god in each other thank you god that she's trusting in you in that situation thank you that that his faith is growing more and more as paul says to the thessalonians he can thank god indeed should we not even be amazed to find this grace of faith in ourselves the hymn writer says i know not how this saving grace to me he did impart nor how believing in his word

wrought peace within my heart but he has and i have this faith what a wonderful thing it is peter too it's not just the apostle paul peter too values faith as precious he begins his second letter telling us that through the righteousness of our god and savior jesus christ we have received a faith that is as precious as his as peter's so faith is precious it's of incalculable worth and he tells us that we have received a faith well i thought faith is the great receiver and now you're telling us that peter says we have received this faith yes and yes we receive faith as a gift and then by faith we go on receiving more and more from jesus christ all the way home so faith precious indeed and peter's got nothing on us our faith is as precious as his he says i've seen him and i've seen his glory and though you've not seen him yet you believe you have faith and you love him so the value and importance of faith can hardly be overstated for it is by grace that you have been saved through faith wow isn't that precious faith to have faith by which we are saved through which we're saved this unearned salvation becomes ours through faith but without faith you're lost you're condemned you're still under god's wrath and you must pay for your sin forever and ever but god so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him whoever puts faith in him shall not perish but have everlasting life believing is receiving for as many as received him to those who believed in his name he gave the right to become children of god so faith is important because of what it does it receives christ and eternal life in him but the receiving doesn't end there it goes on all the way to our last day here and then we really graduate into receiving it really gets good as we go to live in the house of the lord forever so receiving is what we are and faith is what does the receiving now this morning i want us to appreciate just how valuable faith is in our day-to-day lives and we'll be seeing the value of faith by the things that it does its activities and in all these activities it is receiving that's the common denominator but we're going to look at different things two this morning two things that faith does for us and more lord willing next time number one of the two faith unites us to christ faith unites us to jesus christ and in doing so we receive infinite riches in jesus now before faith the bible tells us that we were without christ separate from christ far off without hope and without god in the world but the moment we place saving faith in christ we were no longer separated from him we were brought near indeed we were joined to jesus christ we are in christ is the language of scripture united to him and therefore always with him in john 15 jesus says this union is like a branch in the vine that's union

[10 : 39] that's the union of the believer in christ we were like sticks lying on the ground lifeless and good for nothing but to be gathered up and thrown into the fire oh but but when by faith we lay hold of christ and receive him we are engrafted into him we are put into him joined united to christ so that just as the branch receives the life-giving sap of the vine we receive life-giving grace from jesus christ that's union with christ we're united to him now the apostle paul's favorite phrase referring to this union with christ is just the two words in christ and he uses those two words over 150 times in his letters and and then add to that all the times that he says in him referring to christ we can see at once the great importance of this union that we have with christ and the great importance of our understanding it and living upon it it's not a minor doctrine tucked away in the footnotes of our bible it's front and center as the apostle paul is teaching the gospel and its ramifications for us to be in christ let me just give you two verses the first is very familiar second corinthians 5 17 if any man be what in christ he's what he's new creation the old it's gone and everything has become new now this verse tells us just how revolutionary and transformational union with christ is when you're joined to him the old's gone the old me is gone my old life is gone it's dead and buried and it's new life and it's a new me when i'm in christ behold all things have become new nothing remains the same in christ union with him changes everything it changes why i get up in the morning why i go to work it changes why i live how i drive how i recreate why i recreate how i do family how i do church how i do politics how i do neighbor how i view things it changes my priorities the old is gone the new has come in christ what i do with my time my money my lips my eyes my ears my hands my feet my mind all things become new in christ union with him leaves nothing the same not even death my destiny changes well that's what it means to be in christ how transformational the other verse is romans 8 and verse 1 isn't romans 8 a wonderful chapter in our bibles challenge you to memorize it meditate on it pray it think about it but it starts off with a bang having proven that outside of christ we're we're condemned to hell and romans 8 verse 1 starts but there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in christ jesus isn't that good news that's where it starts and it just gets better all the way to the end no condemnation so outside of christ we're under god's wrath and condemnation you know what the law of god has to say to us outside of christ it says damn you you are condemned you get one thing

because you've broken me you're a lawbreaker you get condemnation that's all it says to us and that's the way we were before we were in christ we were outside of christ and damned for our sins but now now there's no condemnation for those who are in christ

jesus what a what an important thing it is to be in christ it changes our standing before our judge it changes our eternal destiny and all because i am in christ you see for what he has becomes ours it's much like the union of a husband and wife in the covenant of marriage we're given another example of this union not only a branch in the vine but ephesians chapter 5 the apostle paul says that the marriage union of a husband and wife becoming one is a reflection of the the greater and more staggering union between christ and his bride the church that's the most important union of which our marriage unions are just a dim reflection it's not the other way around it's not that we have these these wonderful great marital unions and and god says well i think i'll use that as an illustration of what is between me and the church no it's it's the other way around the amazing union is that christ is united to his bride the church so let that teach us this morning why is when you stood at the marriage altar what happened maybe some of you are still asking that what happened well this is what happened you gave yourself lock stock and barrel to that man to be his wife and you took him lock stock and barrel to be your husband and he did the same thing in this covenant there's there's promises vows that were made and he gave himself and all that he had and is to you as your husband and he took you just as you are and all that you have to be his wife and the two of you became one union joined together and from that moment on the result was that whatever was his became yours and whatever was yours became his so what did you bring to the union what did he bring to the union you share it all you share it all together now that's a picture of of our covenantal union with christ that's a picture of what it means to be in christ and and we get into that union with christ by faith faith unites us to christ and that means that i married up and he married down and that means you married up and he married down when i was joined to jesus by faith he got my sin and i got his righteousness i came out ahead on that exchange i needed perfect righteousness a record of of no sins at all in order to get into that holy place where god dwells i didn't have it all i had was filthy rags righteousness that stink in the nostrils of god oh but jesus had perfect righteousness because he became a man and for 33 years he obeyed god's law perfectly even though he was tempted in every way like we are he never disobeyed so he has a righteousness to give me and when i was married to him he got my sin and he gave me his righteousness oh if i could just

have his righteousness is mine and paul says in romans 3 but now a righteousness from god apart from law keeping has been made known to which the law and the prophets testify this righteousness from god comes through faith in jesus christ to all who believe so when by faith in christ i was joined to christ my record of sin went to him and his record of righteousness came and was credited to my account but there was more he got my condemnation that's what i brought to this marriage union damnation as punishment for my sin and he took my condemnation and he gave me his reward of eternal life that's what he brought to the marriage union and i say why should i gain from his reward his perfect obedience won that reward of eternal life why should i gain from that well that's just the nature of this sweet union with jesus he takes the condemnation that we deserved and god damned him on the cross as he bore our sins and he and he gave us the eternal life as the reward that jesus had earned but there's more there's more by union of with christ not only is his righteousness and his reward of eternal life mine but also his death his burial his resurrection his newness of life and many other things and that's why we have statements in the bible that that we were crucified with christ so paul can say i'm crucified with christ when were you crucified i was crucified when jesus was crucified 2000 years ago because what christ did is counted as what i've done we share in that act and so i've been crucified with christ we died with christ to sin his death to sin was my death to sin roman 6 with wonderful consequences we were buried with him roman 6 4 we've been raised with christ to newness of life roman 6 4 colossians 3 1 we've been made alive with christ we've been seated with him in the heavenlies i'm not sure what all that means but it's with him that we've been seated he's risen and and we're united to christ even now is as he is there in heaven ruling and reigning we're co-heirs with jesus christ romans 8 17 you know what a co-heir is means everything that he inherits we inherit equal shares co-heirs why because we've come to this marriage union and what's his is mine and we will be glorified with him that's yet to come we've shared in his suffering we will share in his glory but there's more there's much more and so this husband and wife have been united in marriage and they're on their honeymoon off in australia and they go hiking one day in the wilderness and get off the trail and get lost and she's worried as night is coming on and it's getting cold she's hungry but he gather some sticks and some leaves and makes a nice little lean to and and builds a fire has some supper there some wild mushrooms and wild berries he's gathered for her and she snuggles up close and her fears are relieved and he humbly acknowledges that he was an eagle scout trained for such situations you see and in the light of

day he's able to to read the moss on the trees and and and find his way out you see and lead her out of their lost condition the next day on their honeymoon they rent a boat and go snorkeling and wouldn't you know while they're down the boat springs a lake and sinks and there's just one life preserver they're floating on top and it won't hold them both up so he gives it to her and he just starts treading water and after three hours she's impressed wow I didn't know you knew how to do that well I I guess I forgot to tell you I was a Navy SEAL and and so a couple more hours the guy they loaned the boat from didn't see them come back so he comes and he rescues them and they get back home safely but the next day the COVID counts in Australia have risen to where all flights home were canceled and she fears that she's going to be isolated in this hotel room for months but he makes a few calls and is able to rent a plane and flies her home oh I didn't tell you my dad had a plane and he taught me how to fly and the next week they go house hunting and she finds one she really likes and it's just perfect just what she's always wanted but the price is just way out of their league and so she has no hopes of of buying it but immediately the the husband says to the realtor we'll take it and i'll pay with cash and she looks and on the way home she she says I didn't know your pockets were that deep how you're going to pay for well I didn't I tell you that that dad's inheritance has come to me and it's it's ours to spend and she says I think i'm going to like being married to this guy and so it went day by day day by day she's learning more about her husband and about all that's his and that is now become hers just because she's one with him in marriage so forgive my silly illustration but I want you to know brothers and sisters it is no small thing to be joined to Jesus it is no small thing to be united to

Christ the son of God with all that is his and to be able to live upon what is his to see the fullness of grace that's in him and to draw from it to live upon it to receive it by faith and the longer and closer you live with this Jesus the better you get to know him your bridegroom Christ the more you realize just how much more there is to receive from him the riches of his grace and the more you're emptied and find yourself poor and needy the more you go to him and sure enough you receive from him all that you need and so you learn from one step to the next to to live upon him to run to him to lean on him and the more you receive the more you find there was never one so happy to give as he is to you there's no reluctance he's the lover of your soul and you are precious to him he never wearies to have you coming to him but rather delights in your coming and delights to put a smile on your face and joy in your heart he's just that good and you're united to him and even takes you into places and situations where you feel your emptiness that you might come to him poor and needy because he wants you close to him not drifting from him he's looking for opportunities to give to you he's making opportunities to teach you more of his heart Jesus I am resting in the joy of what thou art I am finding out the greatness of your loving heart that's what he's doing he's teaching us the greatness of his love all that he has for us union with Christ means I don't have to live on the poultry resources I find in myself because if the truth is known I'm often empty it's dry bottom bucket stuff I can't live without him but I'm not without him is the message of union with Christ I'm joined to him I'm in him and in him I can live abundantly upon the the fullness of grace found in him he has strength enough to empower me he has wisdom enough to guide me he has mercy enough to forgive me love enough to satisfy me joy enough to uplift me hope enough to motivate me and so once I am united to Christ I am never again to think of myself as anything but united to Christ I'm never to think of myself as separate anymore just like you husbands and wives I start seek to seek to teach this in premarital counseling that once you give yourselves to each other you should never again think of yourself without your husband your wife you're now one and so you haven't got the answer until you've talked to the other and you you haven't gotten anywhere until you've shared life together and and we must never allow the devil to to put a wall between us and Jesus so that we're thinking only of ourselves no we we must always remember that we're one with him so is that always how you think of yourself as always joined to Jesus do you think of that when you're sad do you think of that when you're glad do you think of it when you're mad when you're frustrated with this stupid virus that's been around for months and we thought we were

[29 : 07] done with it and now we're just moving back into this problem and you're weary of the long trials are you thinking of the one you're joined to thinking of what he has his resources are you drawing near to him and living off of him when you're confused and not seeing any good options out of all the options there's no good ones and you're confused and you don't know what to do when your resources are running thin blessed union with christ to know that i am his and he is mine forever and forever precious faith that unites me to this fruitful vine precious faith that unites me to this loving rich and generous husband that unites me to such a glorious savior and to see that the grace that i find in him is really for me as well so then go and fetch it by faith and go and receive it by faith from jesus he's more than enough for me we sang and that's true because his supply is infinite you know jesus is not the poor for having given but we are the richer for having received so keep going keep going well that's the first thing that faith does as we said there's two things this morning we want to see we must be very brief with the second what else does faith do it not only unites me to christ but secondly it purifies the heart some troublemakers from jerusalem had come up to antioch the church there and had told this church that had many gentiles that unless they were circumcised according to the customs taught by mooses you cannot be saved and paul and barnabas were elders in that church and they disagreed strongly and they said we're going down to jerusalem we're going to meet with the apostles and elders there and and hammer this thing out and get it cleared up and that's what they did and after there was much dialogue and debate the apostle peter stood and he addressed them brothers you know that some time ago god made a choice among you that the gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe remember when he went to cornelius and his household that gentile and he heard the gospel and believed he's telling them about that and this is what he says about that visit to the gentiles god who knows the heart showed that he accepted them by giving the holy spirit to them just as he did to us he made no distinction between us jews and they them gentiles we would say for he purified their hearts by faith there's our second thing this morning that faith does precious faith that purifies the heart we're born with polluted dirty impure hearts sinful thoughts sinful desires a sinful will that moves us to sinful words and sinful actions and pollutes us through and through to the pure all things are pure titus 1 15 and 16 but to those who are corrupted and do not believe nothing is pure in fact both our minds and consciences are corrupted they're detestable disobedient and unfit for doing anything good so so if your heart's bad everything you touch is bad it defiles everything you do and that's what unfits us for the presence of this pure and holy god revelation 21 27 says that nothing impure will ever enter into heaven and so our great need is to have our hearts purified from sin but how no amount of of our own effort to clean our hearts from sin will work jeremiah 2 22 although

you wash yourself with soda and use an abundance of soap the stain of your guilt is still before me declares the sovereign lord you see it's no outward stain that we can rub off it's something inward it's deeper far deeper the very center of our being that touches all that we do our hearts are dirty and stained with crimes of deepest dye we sing how then can we be saved how then can we be cleansed well here's the good news acts 15 9 peter says it he purified their hearts by faith and this is again bible shorthand because we know elsewhere that it says that the blood of jesus his son purifies us from all sin what can wash away my sin we say nothing but the blood of jesus dark is the stain that we cannot hide what can a veil to wash it away look there's a flowing a crimson tide whiter than snow you may be today it's the blood of jesus that cleanses that purifies from all sin so which is it the blood of jesus or faith that purifies the heart from sin well it's both rightly understood the blood of jesus is the effective cause of our cleansing and our own faith is the instrumental cause of our cleansing god by the merits of jesus blood purifies our hearts by our faith so both are involved the blood of jesus and our own faith without the shedding of blood though there's no forgiveness no remission of sin no cleansing from it so the blood of jesus refers to his substitutionary sacrifice on the cross we're in my place condemned he stood sealed my pardon with his blood it's the only way to be pardoned and cleansed from sin that dirties us before god the blood of jesus god's son purifies us from all sin but it's our faith that must look to christ and his shed blood and what he did for us there as he died and shed his blood faith must receive that cleansing for ourselves personally faith sees his death on calvary satisfying the justice of god appeasing the wrath of god and ventures on that says i i'm going to trust in that for my salvation what jesus did there and so it's the blood of jesus that accomplished our cleansing at calvary and it's our faith in his cleansing blood that applies it to us so that our hearts are indeed purified by faith by the blood of christ and received by faith so that though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow and though they be red as crimson they shall be as wool now that's the message that the apostle john gave us in john chapter one or first john chapter one the scripture reading for this morning you might just turn there in our closing moments where john tells us the message he received from jesus he spent three years with him and he heard him teach and he says this this is the message that i heard from him and i'm now passing on to you first john 1 5 god is light and in him is no darkness no none at all triple negative absolutely no impurity no evil no sin in god he's all light so verse six if we claim to have fellowship with him that's this god of of unsullied light if we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in darkness oh we lie and do not live by the truth

you see darkness cannot live with light they're mutually exclusive you walk into a pitch black room and you flip the light switch on and what happens light replaces darkness the two can't dwell together darkness can be there without the light light can be there without darkness but they can't dwell together and that's why john is saying god is light and if you're walking in darkness i'll tell you one thing you're not walking with god because he's light so you're lying and the truth's not in you you see it's just very cut and dry it isn't john so so true believers uh if we're going to walk it with god the god of light then we're going to have to walk in the light and and that's what true believers do they they abandon the old life to any man be in christ he's a new creature the old life walking in darkness walking in sin that's what he he eats and drinks his sin that's old the new life is to pursue the light holiness sanctification fellowship with god in light and so we can walk with god and have fellowship with him who is light and fellowship with one another as we walk in the light so sin and darkness is no longer our habitual lifestyle we walk in newness of life in christ and yet we do not do so perfectly do we in fact haven't you found that the closer you walk with this god of light the more that his light exposes of the darkness within you so what do we do about that how how then can we if we still have this remaining darkness and it's not what it once was it wasn't it's no longer our element that we just uh love to sit in like the the sow no we want to get out of it like the kitten and we we we jump out of the mud pile we clean our and we come but we still recognize we still sin i've not had a day in christ that i've not sinned so so what do i do with that when i'm walking with jesus and and i'm convicted of my sin well i'll tell you what we don't do is we don't deny it we don't deny it and that's what john tells us in verses 8 and 10 we we don't deny it we don't say well he did this though and and so we blame others or or we justify ourselves or we rationalize or excuse ourselves we don't deny it because if we do what what does it mean well verses 8 and 10 if we claim to be without sin we deceive ourselves we're not tricking anybody but ourselves and the truth is not in us verse 10 if we claim we've not sinned we make him out to be a liar we say god you're a liar because you say we do sin and that his word has no place in our our lives that's walking in darkness that's the old life lying and calling god a liar no we don't deny it rather we confess it verse 9 if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to do what to cleanse us to purify us from all unrighteousness and and how does he do that verse 7 tells us that the blood of jesus god's son cleanses us purifies us from all sin so there is a blood of jesus that purifies us for these

remaining sins that are still in us as we're walking the christian life and walking with god who is light and his light exposes my darkness i don't have to hide it and cover it and excuse it and deny it i i can i can walk in the light and bring it to the light and say god you're right that was that was sin what i just did what i just said what i just thought was sin that was against you i i just put myself above you i just said i want my way instead of your way i want my pleasure instead of your pleasure we agree with god that's at the very heart of this word confess to to agree with god about what we've done our sin but when we confess we're also putting faith in the way that that sin can be forgiven which is the blood of jesus god's son purifies us from all sin and so we come confessing our sin and trusting in what christ has done on the cross shedding his blood to purify us so that we can be forgiven and can be cleansed from all unrighteousness so we can walk with the god of light because the blood of jesus keeps cleansing us and i just keep confessing and i keep telling him what i am and i keep coming and looking to what jesus blood does and i keep enjoying that cleansing that i can live with this god in whom there is no darkness none at all and why wouldn't we confess our sins believing on what he's done when believers have this advocate chapter 2 verse 2 this this this one at god's right hand who pleads for us he speaks on our defense there right there with this holy god of no darkness no none at all we have an advocate there and who is he well he's jesus christ the righteous one there's only one righteous that's who's there for us the sinless one the atoning sacrifice for our sins and he's there speaking to god pleading with god and what is he pleading not our innocence oh she's really not that bad what he did wasn't so bad it's only the 10th time no he's not pleading our innocence well then what's he pleading he's not denying this the filth of our sin the darkness of it he's pleading the merits of his own blood i died for that sin father you poured out your wrath on me for that that sin father so so you be just and forgive him and you be faithful and cleanse him from all righteousness unrighteousness that's what he pleads he pleads the merits of his own blood because the blood of jesus does indeed purify us from every all sin well in the old testament the sinner brought the animal to the priest when he sinned and he brought the animal for slaughter and sacrifice and he would place his hands on the head of that animal and he would confess his sins over that animal and it was picturing the transfer of his sin onto that substitute animal and once he confessed his sins over the head of that animal from that point on the animal was treated as the sinner deserved and his throat was slit his blood was shed and his life was taken and from that moment on the sinner was treated as the animal deserved the innocent lamb and he went free and he lived and all of that was pointing

the old testament believers to the coming lamb of god who takes away the sin of the world and now we look back to that same lamb and so when we come and we confess our sins it's like we're putting our hands upon the head of the son of god the lamb of god the only lamb that takes away sin and we're transferring that's faith you see when we confess our sins we are we are looking to christ and we're saying that's where my sin was punished that's the one that stood in for me in my place condemned he stood i have no hope but him and god is just and is faithful and forgives us our sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness so as we're walking with god in light and made aware of our sins by faith we see our sin our guilt transferred to the righteous jesus who became sin for us on the cross and we see there our forgiveness what we deserved was given to him that we might live and be cleansed so do you see the preciousness of faith precious blood of jesus that purifies from all sin and precious faith that receives such a cleansing in jesus blood the old testament prophet zechariah said that a day was coming when a fountain would be opened for cleansing sin and uncleanness what kind of a fountain is that a fountain to clean sin and uncleanness where might i find it better than the fountain of youth well it's a person it's jesus christ the righteous one and him as crucified whose body was opened up with five bleeding wounds that plead for my cleansing there is a fountain filled with blood drawn from emmanuel's veins and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains the dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day and there may i as vile as he wash all my sins away are you washed in the blood in the soul cleansing blood of the lamb are your garments spotless are they white as snow are you washed in the blood of the lamb jesus welcomes you he has life for you trust in him faith in jesus will purify your heart faith in him will unite you the sinner with jesus the savior and make all that is his yours so come and welcome to jesus we're going to sing from the overhead jesus what a friend for sinners jesus lover of my soul what what more could you want in a savior than that than what is not found in in jesus christ in our savior stand and sing what a friend we have in jesus for sinners let's pray our holy father we can see why the lord jesus was your delight from all of eternity that such a son should be yours and we thank you for sending him the lord without faith he meant nothing to us we saw no glory in him that we should receive him that we should want him so thank you for this gift of faith a faith that receives this wonderful savior

[49 : 12] and everything in him oh teach me teach all of us to live more upon our lord jesus to draw from him all that is in him for us that we might be helped and he might be honored that we might love him more and enjoy him and enjoy having him even as he enjoys having us we stagger to say it we stagger in believing it help our unbelief and thank you then thank you for such a savior and we pray in his name even jesus amen amen Thank you.