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ROMANS 15:7-16

Romans Series: How God Changes People

[PRAYER] We've chosen this morning for worship. We believe in God who's our Father. We believe in Jesus Christ and because Jesus Christ lives, we're alive. We have that faith in the truth of who you are. When we enlighten our lives with that truth, good things happen in our hearts. So Lord, I'm asking right now that as we open your word that you would teach us, that you would inspire us, and you would give us hope, and sort out some of our thinking in regards to our task here on earth as we live in this world that is rather conflicted. Give us a peace inside of our hearts that allows us to be at peace, even in the midst of chaos. Give us a joy that we could have in the midst of the challenge that we face. Give us a love that we can pass on to others that they desperately need. Give us a message that we can share that would help others to come to know you personally. We share that with our words, our actions. We're asking that you would be the one who would speak through us and reveal to others who you are in our lives. Give us a greater glimpse today of what that looks like in each of our hearts. In Jesus' name, amen.

Would you please open your Bibles to Romans 15:7. We're going to go through verse 16, so verses 7-16. You're going to need your Bible for part of the time. I'll throw some verses up there for the first couple of verses, but then we're going to rely on you looking at your own Bible for the remainder of the verses as we continue on.

If we open to Romans 15:7, it says this: *Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.*

Let's take this verse apart for just a moment. The word *accept* there means to receive or to take in as a friend. Now if we look at the context of the passage, we see that it was given during a time when the Christian church had some differences. They disagreed about things, some really important things.

They disagreed about whether they should worship on Saturday or Sunday. After all, the Sabbath was the day that they had worshiped. All of the Jews had worshiped on Saturday and that was their sacred day, set apart as a special day. Now it seems like the practice is that they are worshiping on Sunday because Jesus rose from the dead on Sunday, so now they have this debate going on within the church which day should we worship on? Should we worship on Saturday? What's the role of the Sabbath now? And so on. So there's some disagreement, and people felt strongly about it, as you might imagine. They felt strongly that you should either worship on Saturday or you should worship on Sunday. There were some differences, so what Paul is saying is *accept one another*.

Another difference that they had was whether they should eat meat because this meat in particular was offered to idols. The Jewish people in particular didn't want to have anything to do with idols because in their history they knew the damage that created their culture through the idols. Idol worship was so terrible that they don't want to have anything to do with it. So we don't even want to eat the meat that was offered to those idols. Some of the newer believers, some of the Gentiles were saying, "Well you know what, we know that idols are nothing. They're just make-believe, they're not even true. We can get meat cheap that way. So we're going to buy the meat that was offered to idols that is sold in the marketplace and we're going to eat that and that's not a problem for us. We don't make a big deal out of it. It doesn't hurt us any. We're not worshipping idols. We're just eating the meat and getting a good deal." So there was this debate and argument within the church about this.

There was another issue that they were working on that had to do with circumcision because Christianity was a Jewish sect at first. It was the Jews who became Christians first. Of course Jews were circumcised. Gentiles, of course, were not circumcised. So now Gentiles start to come into the church and they're asking the question, "Well should they be circumcised?" So there's this debate about the value of circumcision for the early church. What should they do? So Paul is saying *accept one another*.

Now what he's saying is you need to accept one another in non-crucial issues. The Bible has clear instruction about certain things and when the Bible speaks clearly we do not start getting wishy-washy about those things. However, there are some things the Bible is not clear about. So we need to accept each other in the midst of that. That's what he's saying in this passage.

As they start working on these differences, they had a challenge because they couldn't go to the church next door and say, "Well we don't believe what you're believing. We're going to go over here to the next church." There was only one Christian church in the town. They didn't have denominations, although there are some early references to some segregation that may have led to denominations. In 1 Corinthians, Paul says – *What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another (these are the most spiritual ones) say, "I follow Christ."* So we see some early formation of differences that start to form groups and maybe from that the idea of denominations came.

We have similar issues today. We've got Baptist churches who believe that every person who's a Christian is a priesthood before God. They're a priest before God, so we have equal merit before God. Therefore every person in a Baptist church who's a member of that church should be able to vote the polity in that church. It's a great idea.

There's the Presbyterian church that views things differently. They view that the presbytery or the elders in the church are the ones who are making decisions for the church, listening to the ideas that come out of the body. That's also a good idea.

Which one of them is right? The Bible does not tell us what kind of church polity to have. Both of them are acceptable before God. They are differences that exist.

A lady came to me eighteen years ago before we started Calvary Chapel Mercer County. There was a group of people from Princeton that were going to do a church plant at the same time we were doing a church plant. They said, "We would like to join you if you will do this one thing." I said, "Well what is it?" They said, "If you'll just sing hymns and not contemporary songs." There's nothing wrong with just singing hymns. Some churches only sing hymns. There's nothing wrong with that. Hymns are great! I didn't want to do that. I wanted to be part of a church that had contemporary worship songs and also hymns. So I said no and so those people decided they didn't want to come. That's okay.

The point is how do we treat each other in the midst of that. The point is we are all Christians and we may attend churches, but we are on the same side. We are not the enemy. There should not be fighting between these churches. The point is that on the crucial things we agree. Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins. We must accept Him through faith into our lives and we want to welcome each other as friends in our relationships with each other. That is what Paul is saying here as he says *accept one another*.

There are a lot of good churches in our area. GraceWay Bible Church is a good church in our area. In fact this church, Calvary Chapel Living Hope, is going to partner with GraceWay Bible Church this fall, in September, to do a parenting seminar as an outreach to the community. They've contracted with the National Center for Biblical Parenting and I've agreed that our church is going to support them. So you'll hear more about that coming up. Great church, GraceWay Bible Church.

I had lunch the other day with two of the other church plants that are going on. Living Tree Church, Daniel is the pastor there. And Josh is the pastor of 217 Church. We had lunch together. These are godly men, serving the Lord in some great ways.

Princeton Alliance. Boyd Hannold is the pastor there. Great church.

We're not competing with these people. We are all on the same side. We are on a mission to share Jesus Christ with the world. That's what we're trying to do. We unite with them any way we can to do that because we're looking for points of agreement in that regard. We're accomplishing what the verse says. *Accept one another* is what Paul is saying in this passage.

Here's what the passage is saying. It's saying as followers of Jesus, God calls us to promote tolerance among Christians on disputable matters. So we're not arguing with each other about these things. We're accepting one another. The same thing is true in a family. There are crucial things that are important for our family, but there's a lot of stuff we bicker about that we don't need to be bickering about. The point is we need to accept one another. That acceptance is what Paul is talking about here in this particular passage.

But now I want to use this opportunity to talk about the world. Because the world uses this idea of acceptance and tolerance differently than we use it. So they talk about tolerance in a completely different way.

Not long ago, the word ‘tolerance’ meant something like this – bearing or putting up with someone or something that you don’t especially like. That’s tolerating them. But in our contemporary society, the word ‘tolerate’ has taken more of the idea of acceptance. That’s what’s being said. That all values, all beliefs, all lifestyles, all truth claims are equal. Denying this means that you’re intolerant and you’re worthy of contempt. So I want to address the idea of tolerance as the world describes it today to understand what we’re looking at and how do we address that in particular.

People who teach tolerance, especially when it comes to religious beliefs are often people who oppose Christianity. They can’t tolerate Christians who say there’s a right and there’s a wrong, that there’s an absolute truth here, that God said it and so it’s final, we don’t argue about it. They can’t tolerate that belief that we have. In essence they’re being intolerant of the absolutes of Christianity. That’s scary because we then become the enemy as Christians when we make a statement that we say there’s right and there’s wrong. This fact that the world is intolerant of Christianity and they become more hostile to Christianity is dangerous. It’s even possible that at some point Christianity will be outlawed.

The world uses the word ‘tolerance’ to describe this idea of acceptance. It essentially means this: every person’s viewpoint is worthwhile and must be treated as on par with others. It would be wrong for any person to judge another person’s viewpoint. This is what is the current culture and this is what’s happening in many of our situations. People are grasping this idea.

Now I want to talk about the difference between the way Christians approach this subject of acceptance and the way the world talks about tolerance. I just think it’s important for us to understand this.

When we start talking about this, people who know a little bit about the Bible who are nonbelievers will say something like, “The Bible says *do not judge, lest you be judged.*” Which is a statement that’s true that Jesus said. Are we really being judgmental and intolerant? See, tolerance would not only have us respect the other person’s viewpoint, but to validate it as true. That’s where we get into trouble. That we will agree that their viewpoint is as valid as another, that’s the dangerous thing. Not only must we embrace the viewpoint, but we must celebrate with them about that viewpoint. If we don’t, we’re accused of being intolerant and judgmental.

I want to draw attention to two words that will help you understand this a little bit. One of the words is taste and the other is truth. Taste can be very personal. For example, if you like butter pecan ice cream versus chocolate ice cream, who am I to say that one is right or wrong. There’s no right or wrong about taste when it comes to doing that. I can’t fault you for liking a particular kind of ice cream. That has to do with taste.

But what if we’re not talking about flavors. What if we’re talking about numbers? Number like two plus two. If I say they make four, that’s a very narrow view of math. That’s a very different kind of claim than saying I like a particular type of ice cream.

Do you see the difference between taste and truth? Being tolerant of someone’s personal taste for ice cream is fine. But what about in the area of mathematics? Two plus two equals four. It seems

very narrow. Does that mean that any answers to the problem that aren't four, I can't say they're wrong? Well that seems so judgmental to say that they would be wrong.

The point is there are some instances when there is a right and a wrong based on the reality of life and how life is tied together here. It's exclusive because it's true and truth becomes very important. We should not tolerate behaviors such as murder and rape and child abuse and robbery. We're intolerant of those kinds of things. Why? They're wrong. The confusion happens when people view truth as relative. That's where we're going here. If truth is relative, whatever you believe is fine with what you believe. So truth is relative, then we have truth based on circumstances and opinions. That's the problem.

So let's go to the next verse. The next verse tells us in verse 8, *For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of (what?) God's truth.* It's founded in a particular thing and that's God's truth. It's not relative. It doesn't change all the time. *So that the promises made to the patriarchs might be confirmed.* God's truth is what we're talking about.

Truth is different than taste. When the two get confused, people don't know what to do. They get stuck. They're confused. It just works itself out into their lives and they just don't know what to do when someone has an opinion different than them. They have a hard time knowing how to handle that. So the confusion makes it difficult for them to make common decisions that they have.

The best way for me to illustrate this to you is to show you a video. I want to show you a short video and as you're watching the video, I want you to see how confused the people are that are answering the questions. They do not know how to answer the questions. Why? Because the underlying belief that they have is that whatever you believe must be okay.

Watch this video.

[Start of Video]

[Host] Are you aware of the debate happening in Washington State around the ability to access bathrooms, locker rooms, spas based on gender identity and gender expression?

[Man 1] I think people should be able to have access to the facility.

[Man 2] I think bathrooms potentially should be gender neutral because there doesn't need to be a classification for differences.

[Woman 1] I think people definitely should have the ability to go to whichever locker room they want.

[Man 3] I feel like at least public universities should to their best to accommodate for those who do not have a specific gender identity.

[Woman 2] Whether you identify as a male or a female or whether your sex at birth is matching to that, you should be able to utilize the resources.

[Host] So if I told you that I was a woman, what would your response be?

[Woman 3] Good for you. Okay. Yeah.

[Man 2] Nice to meet you.

[Man 4] Like what? Really?

[Woman 4] I don't have a problem with it.

[Man 3] I'd ask you how you came to that conclusion.

[Host] If I told you that I was Chinese, what would your response be?

[Woman 3] I mean I'd be a little surprised, but I'd say good for you! Be who you are.

[Woman 1] I would maybe think you had some Chinese ancestor.

[Man 3] I would ask you how you similarly came to that conclusion, and why you came to that conclusion.

[Woman 2] I would have a lot of questions, just because on the outside I would assume that you're a white man.

[Host] If I told you that I was seven years old, what would your response be?

[Woman 1] Umm...I wouldn't believe that immediately.

[Man 1] Uh...I probably wouldn't believe it, but it wouldn't really bother me that much to go out of my way and tell you no, you're wrong. I'd just be like oh okay. He wants to say he's seven years old.

[Woman 3] If you feel seven at heart, then so be it. Good for you.

[Host] So if I wanted to enroll in a first grade class, do you think I should be allowed to?

[Man 1] Uh probably not, I guess. Unless you haven't completed first grade up to this point and for some reason you need to do that now.

[Woman 3] If that's where you feel like mentally you should be, then I feel like there are communities that would accept you for that.

[Man 3] I would say as long as you're not hindering society and you're not causing harm to other people, I feel like that should be an okay thing.

[Host] If I told you I'm 6'5" what would you say?

[Woman 2] That I would question.

[Host] Why?

[Woman 2] Because you're not. No, I don't think you're 6'5".

[Woman 1] If you truly believed you were 6'5", I don't think it's harmful. I think it's fine if you believe that. It doesn't matter to me if you think you're taller than you are.

[Interviewer] So you'd be willing to tell me I'm wrong?

[Woman 1] I wouldn't tell you you're wrong.

[Woman 4] No, but I'd say that I don't think that you are.

[Woman 3] I feel like that's not my place as another human to say someone is wrong or to draw lines or boundaries.

[Man 1] No. I mean I wouldn't just go like oh you're wrong. That's wrong to believe. Because again, it doesn't really bother me what you want to think about height or anything.

[Host] So I can be a Chinese woman...

[Woman 2] [laughs] Umm...sure.

[Host] ...but I can't be a 6'5" Chinese woman.

[Woman 2] Yes.

[Man 3] If you thoroughly debated me or explained why you felt that you were 6'5" I feel like I would be very open to saying you were 6'5" or Chinese or a woman.

[Host] It shouldn't be hard to tell a 5'9" white guy that he's not a 6'5" Chinese woman, but clearly it is. Why? What does that say about our culture? And what does that say about our ability to answer the questions that actually are difficult?

[End of Video]

I thought that was so great.

Anyway, I want to tell you the Bible is a moral absolute. The Bible clearly teaches that there are things that are right and things that are wrong. Now you have to understand there are some Christians today, or maybe I should say some churches today, who don't even have this down well.

You might see some churches advertised in our community with these words – “open and affirming congregation.” What those words mean in their description of who they are is that they welcome practicing homosexuals into their congregation and they don't teach what the Bible says against homosexuality. They've lost the moral absolutes when it comes to teaching the Bible.

Here's the error. I want you to see what the error is. The error is this: Truth is whatever you believe. Get that, because that's what people believe today. That if I believe it, well that's all that's important. It is truth for me.

Instead we need to recognize that there is a standard of truth outside of ourselves. True Christianity starts with the premise that there's a source of truth outside of us that comes to meet us. It is objectively true. It is true regardless of how anyone feels about it. It is true in the absolute sense.

Of course this tolerant generation that we live in finds this idea distasteful. People prefer seeking truth within themselves. Even within the church.

Even as you're in a home fellowship or you're in a Bible study, you may hear these statements from someone that kind of creep into our thinking. “Well let me tell you what this passage means to me.” Frankly, I don't care what it means to you. I want to know what God meant when He wrote it. That's the most important thing. Now if we're using that statement “here's what the Bible means to me” to refer to application, then I'm taking this truth and I'm applying it to my life. That's different. But if we're using the interpretation of scripture to say it can mean anything to anybody, depending on how they read it, we're missing something very important. The scriptures are objective and the true meaning of the passage is determined by God, not by an individual. It's not something that can be shaped according to preference or individual hearers.

The word ‘tolerant’ is a good word, it's just been stretched over too great of an area of life. We've applied it too often where it does not belong. Tolerance in one sense involves the

compromise of one's convictions, a yielding of ground upon important issues, hence over tolerance in moral issues has made us soft, flabby, and devoid of conviction. We've become tolerant of freedom of choice. We've become tolerant of sexual preferences. We've become tolerant of immorality. We've become tolerant of crime. We've become tolerant of even unbelief, that that is somehow acceptable.

The Bible teaches that there is a narrow way, it's exclusive, there's specific things, and it's objective. It's not something we can determine on our own.

The sciences are very narrow-minded. In the laboratory there is not a lot of room for maneuvering. Water boils at sea level at 212 degrees. Not at 200, not at 220. Water freezes at 32 degrees. Not 31, not 23. That's very intolerant, but that's what happens in science.

Objects that are heavier than air move toward the center of the earth. That's called gravity. It's what we call the law of gravity.

Geometry. We describe a line as the shortest distance between two points. That's very narrow. It's not very broadminded. It's dogmatic. But geometry is intolerant.

A compass will always point to magnetic north. It seems that it's a very narrow view. A compass is not very broadminded. If it was, all ships at sea and all planes would be in danger.

If you asked a person, "How do I get to New York City?" and the person said, "Any road will get you there," you would either think they're crazy or you would think they are lying and not being truthful. Yet somehow the idea of how do you get to heaven, the answer has become like that. Any road will get you there. Just be honest. Just be good. Or my favorite is just be sincere. If you're sincere and really believe, then that's what's going to get you to heaven.

I've got to tell you, that's not what the Bible says. Jesus Christ who journeyed from heaven to earth came with a message. I just want to show you what that message looks like because this isn't a very tolerant message of other people's viewpoints.

He says in Matthew 7 – *Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.* That's Matthew 7:13-14.

Christ plainly pointed out that there are two roads in life. The broad one, which is lacking in faith and convictions and morals. It's easy, it's popular, and it's the way of the crowd, and a lot of people are on it, the majority is there. It's the way of the world. But what Jesus is warning us about is that that path leads to destruction. Loving, compassionate intolerance says enter through the narrow gate. By all the world's standards, Christ was intolerant. He said there's only one way to get to heaven.

Christ was so intolerant that He recognized that there was a sin problem that God could not tolerate, so a solution was developed by God for us so that we could have salvation. Jesus Christ left heaven, came to earth, He suffered under the hands of wicked men, He died as a sacrifice for

our sins so that we could have eternal life. He rescued us from our sin. That's not very broadminded. It's very narrow.

In fact Jesus says these words – *Whoever is not with me is against me*. That's a very narrow view in Matthew 12:30. He also says – *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him*. Those are very narrow.

Jesus talked about two roads, two kingdoms, two masters, two rewards, two eternities. Now we have the power to choose, but there's this passionate plea that goes out to the world, goes out to you and me that says trust in Christ. Because Christ is the only road home. One of the sins of this age is broadmindedness. It is not biblical and it's a problem. We need more people who are going to take a stand and say, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the way," or to say about my family, "*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord,*" as Joshua said.

Jesus Himself affirmed utter exclusivity of Christianity. He's the one who said, "*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*" That's pretty exclusive. There's one way. It's not being tolerant of other people's viewpoints.

So how do we deal with all of this? Let's read the rest of our passage there. So look with me at verse 9. It starts this way – *and, moreover, that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy*. The Gentiles embrace this truth. They become Christians and, wow, they become aware of God's mercy. So several passages here now that Paul is using, quoting from the Old Testament are drawing attention to the grace that the Gentiles have because they changed their viewpoint.

"Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing the praises of your name." Again, it says, "Rejoice, you Gentiles, with his people." And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles; let all the peoples extol him." And again, Isaiah says, "The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; in him the Gentiles will hope."

Verse 13 says this: *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you (do something) trust in him*. There is a way that God has designed that is true, that's trusting in Him, *so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit*.

Verse 14: *I myself am convinced, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with knowledge and competent to instruct one another. Yet I have written you quite boldly on some points to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me*. In other words, if you're going to instruct people and teach each other, like we do in our fellowship, we need to be reminded and Paul is reminding them very strongly that you need to stay in the line. You need the right thing. You need to be talking about the right things as you're teaching.

Verse 16: *to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. He gave me the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit*.

So what we need to do is humbly pursue truth. That's what we want to do. I think it's difficult to proclaim truth in today's society. But the point is, Jesus said these words. He says *you will know*

the truth, and the truth will set you free. There's something very freeing about knowing there's a truth outside of ourselves.

Just think about it for a moment. If you believe that everything is true is based on your perception of that truth, then there's a lot of weight on you to make sure that your opinions are correct. But if you recognize that there's something outside of you that's a pillar, a rock, that is true, there is something tremendously freeing about that. I just need to align myself with that and good things can happen.

We need to pursue truth and we also need to pursue love. Both of those things are very important. So we need to teach our children to embrace all people. All people. We embrace everyone, no matter who they are, what they believe, no matter what they practice. We embrace all people. We don't embrace all beliefs. We're teaching our children how to listen and learn from anyone. You can learn and listen from anyone in life without necessarily agreeing with them. It means helping our children know how to speak courageously and boldly about the truth. Even if it makes them the object of scorn. Because there is a truth. On the one hand we need to value truth, but we also need to aggressively practice love.

Love is very important, and I would suggest that this tolerance that people have is so wishy-washy that it isn't even loving because it's denying the truth that exists.

I would suggest that it looks like this. Tolerance says you must approve of what I do. But love is more difficult and says I will love you, even when your behavior is wrong. Tolerance says you must agree with me. Love is more difficult and says I will tell you the truth because I am convinced the truth will set you free. Tolerance says you must allow me to have my way. Love is more difficult and says I will plead with you to follow the right way because I believe you are worth the risk.

We need to have these two hands out. One hand out in love and one hand out with the truth and both become very important. There's this refreshing nature that we have of just knowing that there's some absolute truth there.

I want to tell you today, there is truth that's outside of your opinions. So it's not sufficient to say I believe in something, therefore it's true. We want to swap that around and we want to say what is true. We are truth seekers today. We want to know what is truth and that is what I'm going to believe in. So many people will go on a pilgrimage to try to understand and try to find out what is truth and they come and recognize that God's word is true, that Jesus Christ is the truth, and therefore they change their ways to conform to the truth. That's what we're talking about here. God has done something that is quite amazing for us.

The truth is a light that pierces through us. That's the beauty of this light being outside of us and not in us. The truth exists out there and then it pierces us, it helps us to be the people that God wants us to be. The truth isn't about us; it's about God. When we understand the love that God has given to us, along it with that truth, the two of them together, love and truth, produces grace and God wants to provide us with that. That's what grace is. We call it grace, but it's this internal thing that God does for us that takes the truth and the love and brings them together in our lives.

We want to be gracious people. We want to be passing that message on to others so that others can grasp that understanding and get it. We're not about making sure everybody's happy in life. Our goal is to help people know the truth because it's the truth that sets them free and that's what produces the joy and the peace and the love that God would have for them. I trust that that's where you are today.

If you've never accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, I want you to make that decision today. There's a truth outside of yourself and you want to get connected to it. God has sent Jesus Christ to die on the cross so that you could have eternal life. That life is outside of yourself, but you can welcome it inside and it generates something new inside that is so powerful that God wants to change us and conform us to His image. It's just a beautiful thing that takes place.

If God is speaking to your heart today and you'd like to accept Jesus Christ into your life, I want to invite you to do that today. Come before the Lord and say, "God, I want you to come into my life. I know I'm a sinner, I know I've got weaknesses. I'm not adequate to solve the problems of the world or my opinions are not the most important thing. I know the word is true. I know I need a Savior outside of myself to redeem me. I'm asking you to be that Savior in my life." And Christ will come into your heart. He will do that in your life.

Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Our heavenly Father, we love the people around us, but many of us know and are friends with people who are in a lifestyle that we know is not right. We know and are friends with people who don't believe in the gospel, and we know that they are at danger and at risk. Lord, I pray that you would give us such a passion for those people, that we would be able to love them and also share with them the truth. God, we need wisdom to know how to do that. That's such a hard thing sometimes. Thank you for straightening us out, for giving us the truth that gives us a rock, a standard that we can live by. We're very grateful for it. And thank you for providing that love and that truth together, and we call that grace. We're grateful for that as well. In Jesus' name, amen.