Job's Epitaph

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You can be turning to the book of Job, chapters 18 and 19. We're going to cover those two chapters today, Job 18 and 19.

We're going to talk about Job's epitaph. Now, he doesn't die in these chapters. But it made me think about or ask the question, what do you want to be known for?

It can be an interesting thing to walk through a cemetery and look at epitaphs. Mainly, they're on old stones. But it's a very interesting thing to walk through a cemetery, see when people died, see when they lived, and see what they say about themselves or what other people say.

You know what an epitaph is. Maybe you don't. These are sayings that are on cemeteries often. Joe DiMaggio's epitaph says, grace, dignity, and elegance personify.

Now, for some of you kids, he was a baseball player a long time ago. Not real long ago, but a long time ago.

[1:28] And I don't think he said this about himself. It was what people said about him. So they put it on his tombstone. They wanted people to know that Joe DiMaggio was a person of grace, dignity, and elegance personifying.

Another old person, Dean Martin, a crooner. Somebody used to sing. People loved the way he sang. He says, everybody loves somebody sometimes.

That, of course, came from one of his famous songs. And so he was known for that. And they put it on his tombstone. Somebody a little bit older, but maybe you know even more.

Alexander the Great. He has an epitaph that says, a tomb now suffices him for whom the world was not big enough.

If you know anything about Alexander the Great, it was his desire to conquer the world. And when he had conquered the known world, he died. Kind of of a broken heart.

[2:37] Because there was nothing more to conquer. In the midst of suffering, one might say that Job already knew what his epitaph should be.

Job desires that his epitaph would be his creed. Turn with me to Job chapter 19. I know we're starting at the second of those chapters.

And I'm going to read almost at the end of the second of those chapters. So turn to Job 19. We're going to read verses 23 to 27.

These are the words of Job. As part of the answer he gives to Bildad. And we'll explain all that in just a minute. These are his words. Oh, that my words were written.

Oh, that they were inscribed in a book. Oh, that with an iron pen and lead they were engraved in the rock forever.

[3:39] For I know that my Redeemer lives. And at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed.

Yet in my flesh. I shall see God. I'm sorry. For whom I shall see for myself.

And my eyes shall behold. And not another. Of course, the last phrase actually goes with the next verse. My heart faints with me. These are the words that Job wanted to be known for

Not the words that said. Oh, that I could write them in a book. Or I could etch them on a stone. It's not those words that he wants to be known for. The words that Job wanted to be known for.

Was. I know that my Redeemer lives. And at the last day he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed. Yet in my flesh I shall see God.

[4:46] For whom I shall see. Whom I shall see. For myself. And my eyes shall behold. And not another. That's what he wanted. Everyone to look back.

And see about Job. Let's pray together. Father, I thank you for your word. I thank you for the ways it instructs us.

So thank you, Father, for how this is put together in such a way as to get us to see. Why what his words were meant. Why they meant so much. I pray that you give us wisdom as we look at your word.

Help us to see what Job saw. And what others in scripture saw. I pray that you would be with us as we look together. And continue in our journey through the book of Job.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Now, we're not quite halfway through the book. We're like two chapters from being halfway through the book.

[5:44] And we're right about, and I'll mention this later, but we're right about halfway through all these. You're this. No, you're that. And all this stuff that's going on.

And all this is because there was a day when the sons of God came and presented themselves before God. And one of them was the accuser.

We call him the devil. It is in the book of Job, the Satan, the accuser. And Satan is there presenting himself before God, giving an account. And God says to Satan, have you considered my servant Job?

Job. And Job's, God goes on to say he's an upright man. Serves me. He eschews evil.

He loves me. And Satan says, you put a fence around him. He serves you because you give him everything. You protect him from everything. And so God says, go ahead.

Take away all that he has. Just don't touch his body. And so Satan does that. And Job loses all his possessions, all his wealth, his house, and even his children.

And the story just kind of rumbles on below the scene, the real scene, up in heaven, where Satan comes again to present himself before God. And God says to Satan, have you considered my servant Job?

Look, he's kept serving me. Skin for skin, Satan says, a man will give all that he has for his life.

And so God says, go ahead. You can afflict him. Just don't take his life. And that's the setting for what we've been talking about for several times that I've preached, where now Job is in a position where he's lost all his possessions.

He's lost his health. And he's cursed the day of his birth. He's wished that conception had never taken place on his behalf. He wished he had died inside his mother.

Or he wishes that he'd been born and gone right from the womb to the tomb. Because his life is absolutely miserable now. And along come these three friends who are there to encourage him.

And they do a good job for about seven days because they kept their mouth shut. And then they begin to encourage, saying, Job, you must have sinned.

I mean, God deals with people like this all the time. You must have sinned. You just need to repent. And so three of them take their turns to say, Job, you need to repent. And all will be well. And Job says, I'm innocent.

I've not done anything worthy of this. He doesn't know what we know that what he's saying is absolutely true. I mean, he knows it because he knows what he can of his own heart.

But he doesn't know what we know where God says he's a perfect and upright man. It's someone God takes pleasure in. And so three people have paraded before him and berated him.

[9:02] And a very kind way the first time. And Job answers all of them. And his answers are desperate. His answers, sometimes we read them and we go, Job, Job, don't say such things.

Don't talk that way. And he's constantly saying, I have not sinned to deserve this. I just want to talk with God. Let me go talk to God.

And we talked a time or two ago about how he knew as a man, he could never, even if he had not done anything to deserve this, as a man as he stood before God, he knows that he's a sinner by birth.

And he couldn't stand before a holy God. And if he could bring one argument, God is infinitely wise and infinitely powerful. And not that God would be unfair, but God would be able to just shred him to pieces for what he really was.

He knows he has no way to stand before God. And so he wishes he could just be before God. And as we progress through it, we see where Job continues to grow.

[10:05] He says, oh, that there was someone who could lay his hand on God's shoulder and say, God, you need to take note of what's really going on here. And you need to stand up for this person. Someone who could take hold of God's shoulder and someone who could take hold of Job's shoulder and bring them together and say, we need to work this out because he hasn't done anything to deserve this.

God, why are you doing this? He's wishing for that, but no, that can't happen. No one can stand before God. And as we looked at last time, he comes in his continual growth. He comes to the point where he's saying, it takes God to stand before God.

And if you've remembered the scripture already, you're starting to realize that he has totally recognized what had to go on.

Because in the last rebuttal that we looked at on Job's behalf, he says, yes. Yes, there is someone. God can stand before God for me.

And God will stand before God for me. Job continues to grow through this whole process. It's an agonizing growth. I mean, his suffering is awful.

[11:18] And yet he continues. He continues to be that man who does not charge God falsely. And we've read this epitaph. But before we get back to that epitaph or that creed or that confession, now I've used the term epitaph because I likened it to how he wanted to write it.

Most people call it Job's confession or Job's creed. And you'll see why that is. And that's probably a better way of describing the verses themselves.

But how he wants them presented to people, I think the epitaph is a great thing. But before we talk about that creed, let's look at the circumstances. Now, I'm not going to again recount all that we've just recounted.

But let's look at the circumstances that led him to stating his creed. And then we're going to talk about why he needed that creed. So back to chapter 18.

And we're going to again kind of summarize because there are two full chapters here. And it's not that it wouldn't be good for us.

[12:26] It would be great for us to read it. Time is a constraint. Also, poetry is a constraint. Poetry is... I hate poetry because it's work. But I love poetry because it gives you a picture that you won't see if you just read narrative.

But we don't have time to build it all out. So I'm just going to allude to it like I usually do. So in chapter 18, if you don't listen, there's no hope.

It's kind of what's getting at here. Bildad has his second speech. Each of the three men took their turn. And in the first speech, Bildad was in the middle. And now in the second round of speeches, Eliphaz was first and Bildad is again in the middle.

And he's getting frustrated. The gloves came off. He's going at Job and he's going to hit him. And he's tired of Job not listening.

And so he rebukes Job for the way he's treating his comforters. Look, we came to help you. Why are you treating us like this? Why don't you listen?

[13:39] Is what he's getting in the first three verses. Why don't you listen? Think about what we say. And we have granted that we've granted all along that what they've said is not untrue.

It just doesn't apply all the time. We spent some time last time talking about the wisdom of Proverbs and how they're not promises, they're statements of truth.

But Bildad didn't see it that way. Think about what we say. Do you think we're stupid? Do you think we're cattle? I mean, we're not just here for our own sake. We're here to help you.

And if you'd listen, things would get better. He goes on in chapter 4 to basically say, will everything change just because you throw a fit?

Now he talks about rocks moving and all this. And that's what he's getting at. Job, you've gotten all this. You've expressed all this. It's not blunder. Anyway, bluster.

[14:43] That's the word I'm looking for. Bluster. You've expressed all this bluster. And you've made this big deal. I'm not guilty. I'm not guilty. I'm not guilty. Do you think the world's going to change because of you?

He's saying the principles that God has laid down are principles that are true. And they are true. But they don't always apply. And we know that to be true because we know the book of Job. We've seen the beginning of it.

Bildad sees Job's insistence that God has brought this upon him. When he has done nothing to deserve it, he just sees that as Job throwing a fit. And so Bildad expresses that God won't change the proper order of life.

The fact that sinful people suffer just because Job doesn't like it. He goes on in chapter 18. Bildad describes the outcome of the wicked.

And so in several verses, Bildad is going on to say, Well, this is what the wicked do. This is what goes on with the wicked.

[15:51] And so he goes on to describe that. He says his light is put out. Verses 5 and 6.

God puts out the light of the wicked. God snuffs out his light. So he's going along and he's describing what's going on. And I don't usually spend much time on the accuser's argument.

But I'm going to a little bit today because Bildad builds up this scenario. And Job's response is the exact answer to it.

Now, it hasn't always been that way in these speeches. But so Bildad's building this argument. And it's good for us to see it.

So he says his light is put out. The wicked man's light is put out. God puts it out. In verses 7 through 10, Bildad is saying all sinners walk into their own trap.

[16:52] They're in their situation by their own doing. They walk into their own undoing. So you just got to expect what you're doing.

You brought it upon yourself. In verse 11, troubles terrify and chase him.

And so Bildad is saying, you know all the things you're so afraid of? Well, that's just what happens to people who are wicked. They terrify and chase you.

In verses 12 through 14, Bildad basically argues the wicked man is going to waste away until he's destroyed.

God will use suffering to consume him. And in this section, Bildad uses reference to two mythological or false god creatures that were described as people who would consume the wicked.

One of them is the servants of hell. I don't remember what the other one is. But he uses those things to describe how God will waste him away until he's absolutely consumed.

And Jobab, Bildad, it's confusing two names here. Bildad has done this before.

And Eliphaz did it last time sharper than before. Bildad is getting even sharper. And he uses some of the events, particularly his children, to jab at Job to get him to be shocked into waking up and listening to him.

In verses 15 through 20, Bildad basically says, concerning wicked people, the memory of them perish. And there's no hope of resurrection.

Christopher Ashe in his very good book on the book of Job speaks about how this passage, Bildad uses a lot of the typical, a lot of typological things that point to what hell is like.

[19:11] Saying, basically, Job, you're going to endure things that take you to hell. And then you're going to see the results of a person who is in hell.

In these five verses from 15 to 20, Bildad says, you'll be destroyed out of your tent. Your dwelling place will be consumed.

You will have no posterity. That's the jab at the kids. Kids are gone. It's because you sinned. Because they sinned. Because both of you sinned.

You will have no posterity. He goes on using the example of a tree being cut down and the roots. You know, if you cut a tree down and leave the roots in a sufficiently moist place, a lot of times little sprigs will come off from that.

And the tree will sort of grow again. He says, no, Job, you're like a tree that gets cut down and they yank the roots out and lay on the ground. No dirt on it at all.

[20:15] There's just not going to be anything left of you. Now, will you not have posterity? He says, you'll be totally forgotten and never seen again.

Didn't work. All the world speaks of Job. But he says, that's what happens to sinners like you. And again, his thinking is, you are suffering so much.

The principle of retributive justice is so true. Your great suffering equals your great sin. We can't see it, but it's got to be there because retributive justice always says, your great suffering points to your great sin.

And therefore, since you have such great sin, you're going to be swallowed into hell. You won't have any posterity. And no one will ever remember you ever again. That's just the wicked sinner of the earth.

He's trying to shock him into repentance. Well, maybe not shock him into repentance. Yeah, probably shock him into repentance. But just make him feel bad for the wicked sinner he is.

[21:22] And he goes on in verses 15 to 20. All people will be appalled at your destruction.

They're going to look at it and say, wow, what did he do? And Bill Dodd sums it up by saying, such is the place of him who knows not God.

Well, how? What a thing to say. But he's convinced that much suffering means that he cannot be a Christian. He cannot be a truster in God.

He must have sinned so badly that he's going to be dragged to the depths of hell and never see anyone again, not even God. The unrighteous and all who do not know God can expect this exact kind of treatment.

And again, Bill Dodd claims to know this will happen to Job because his suffering shows that Job is unrighteous. So kind of in a summation of what Job is saying, or Bill Dodd is saying, he's saying, you brought this on yourself.

[22:40] You're casting yourself into your own judgment, hell, and you'll never be seen on this earth again. Now, put yourself in Job's shoes.

Imagine what it's like to be discouraged. And someone comes along and says, you're such a rotten sinner that you're going to die in rotten hell and not one person's ever going to remember you again and they're going to be amazed at how greatly God destroyed you.

How's that for a pick-me-up? God's got a wonderful plan for your life. What's wrong with Bill Dodd's speech?

Just quickly, because some of these things we've touched on, there are some of the things that the Bible teaches that will happen to the wicked. Bill Dodd hasn't totally misrepresented the principles of God's word.

He's misrepresented God and God's work. God says, and we know this as Bible fact, God says that Job is not wicked, but upright and just.

[24:01] And thank God, it is not just at the beginning of the story we know that. At the end of the story we know that. Now, Job has never heard those words.

He's never heard those words. But we have. And so we can learn these principles as it goes on in the book of Job from what Job has suffered.

And so all that Bill Dodd has done has not encouraged Job, has not helped him. It's not helped him in the way that it should.

We know that from the book of James, and we'll deal with this more later as we get close to the end of it, but we know from the book of James that we're to consider trials as a good thing.

Not that we should go, yippee! But that we should be glad God is doing something. And I think, as we are going through the book of Job, it's becoming more and more evident.

[25:07] God is doing something amazing in Job. Now, the seed of it was there. But God is putting him through some of the worst suffering that most any human has ever known.

And praise God, in the midst of that, his servant is coming out looking like gold. Not only is he looking like gold, he's establishing a creed.

It's probably been established, but it's becoming solid as rock that will get him through the rest of what he's going through.

But it's really the foundation of where his heart stays. Where his heart's been all along. And so, as we go on, what to rest on.

That's chapter 19. So again, we'll summarize some of what Job says here. He starts out by rebuking his friends.

[26:13] Not just Bildad, all three of them again. Because they're all doing the same thing. They're all building off of each other and helping each other. Job says, How long will you torment me?

Your words are breaking me into pieces. You've come at me ten times with your reproach and casting it upon me. Now, was it literally ten times?

I don't know. It's the idea of you're continually multiplied coming to me. You're unceasing. You're wearing me down with your words. You're tormenting your words.

And as he goes on in those first six verses, he goes on to say, Can't you see how God has put me in the wrong? Now, on the face of it, that's a bold statement.

It's not saying that God was wrong. It's not saying that God is doing wrong. It's saying God has put him in a situation that's wrong. Christians suffer.

[27:14] Is that a right situation? No, it's not a right situation. But it is a situation that God allows for their good. God has put me in the wrong.

He says, Can't you see God has put me in the wrong? He's treating me as if I had grievously sinned. I'm innocent before him.

Is he admitting that he has sinned? No. He's saying I'm innocent. Is he saying that God is doing wrong? No. He's not saying God is doing wrong.

He's saying I'm being treated as if I had done wrong. And it's so interesting. He says that God has fenced me into my troubles.

Do you remember what Satan said? Satan accused God of putting a fence around Job to keep troubles out. Job says, It appears God has taken that fence down, gathered all the troubles to me, and then put the fence back up.

[28 : 27] Because it seems like my troubles, they don't just wander off. They don't just disappear. They're kept here. My kids are still gone. I still don't have any possessions.

I still am mocked. And we're going to go on to some of these things. He's fenced my troubles in. And so, that's the way Job feels.

And he's asking, or he's first of all, rebuking his friends, saying, Can't you see the situation? And so, I think in verses 7 through 20, Job then describes the troubles God has fenced him about with.

Verses 7 through 12, God does not answer when I call and works against me. And through all the chapters we've seen, Job has certainly been a person.

Now, before all this happened, he was a person who called on God all the time. And now that this has happened, he has not ceased to be a person who calls on God. His cry goes out to God continually.

[29:36] He expresses the deep desires of his heart. He wants peace. He wants things to be righted. More than anything, he wants to be vindicated because he's not suffering for his sin.

But it seems that God won't at all answer his cry for help or his cry for justice. Sometimes the book of Job is hard that way because you really don't see God answering his cry for justice and help until the end of the book.

But God is still there. God will not answer and works against me. He won't answer my cry for help and justice. He won't let me out of my troubles.

He stripped me of my glory. I mean, he was the one that everybody looked at and said, wow, if I could be anybody, I'd be the book, I'd be, I'd be the book of Job. I'd be Job.

I mean, look what he owns. Look what he does. Look how important he is. But his glory has been stripped away. God has sent suffering from every direction.

[30:51] We can see that as we saw the things come at his possessions and his children. You know, it just came, this group comes from here and that group comes from here and this group comes from here. From every direction.

And still, even with these friends, it comes from every direction. And it leaves him hopeless. He says, God seems to count me as his adversary.

It's like God is looking at me and saying, I'm going to get him. I'm going to make him pay. And that's what Job feels like. He goes on to say, it seems like he's working against me as with a siege.

And you know what a siege is, don't you? It's where they take a city and they encircle it and they won't let anyone come in or go out. No trash pickup. No public sewer.

No public water. No food delivery. No burying of the dead. It's pretty awful. He says, that's what it's beginning to feel like.

[31:54] It feels like God's encircled me and he's killing me slowly with all these trials and troubles and I have no way out. And then he goes on in verses 13 to 20.

Not only are all these coming against me, he says, he's allowed me no comforters. I've not gotten anybody to help me. Brothers and those who knew me estranged me.

Now some have had problems with this and because of the phraseology of thought he's talking about his children but he's not talking about his children. I think he's talking about his siblings. His siblings. None of them even come by.

His best friends. I mean, beside these three. None of them come by. No one comes by and says, Oh, Job, I feel for you. I'm praying for you. I'm here for you, buddy.

I brought a meal. Nobody. Not a one. Relatives and close friends have forgotten me. It's like they just put Job out of their minds.

[33:02] Never swing by. Never say anything. Says the servants don't heed. The people who used to jump when he said, come and did exactly what he said.

He says, now I call to them and they look at me and I say, will you help me? And they just and go on. He says, I can beg.

Please. I know you are my servant. I need your help. Won't you be merciful? Didn't I treat? Won't help. None of the servants have anything to do with him. One of the most interesting verses in the Bible here in the book of Job is it says, my breath is offensive to my wife.

All of us have been there. But what it's talking about is his life, his situation stinks so bad she can't stand to be in his presence anymore.

You know, you've leaned in for that real kiss and garlic beyond measure meets you a foot away and you go, oh, so much worse than that.

[34:12] It's like she just can't stand to be there. My siblings can't stand to be around me. Guests and maids look at me as a stranger.

Young children despise me. Now, in our culture, we'd say, that's normal. But in that culture, no. An elder was treated with great respect. You never lipped.

Speak back. For you guys who don't know what lipped, but my dad used to say, don't give me any lip. And it wasn't me and I was going, eh. It meant that I, you know, I wasn't to talk back to him.

I wasn't to say things rudely or disrespectfully. These children would never have given Job lip and now they mock him. Make fun of him.

As my intimate friends abhor me. Those I loved have turned from me. I'm barely alive because talking about skin and bones.

[35:11] Wasting away. Barely alive. And then, he pleads in verses 21 to 23, he pleads with his three friends.

Which just, I find amazing. I would think his next words would be, get out of here. But his next words to his friends are, have mercy.

mercy on me. I need somebody to comfort me. I want someone in my corner. He goes on to say, why do you pursue me just like God does?

Why can't you look at my situation and say, you know, he's been through so much. We're just going to stand with him. No, none of that happens.

the next thing Job says you would not expect. We've already talked, I've already mentioned that you would think he would say, go away.

[36:22] The next thing he says you wouldn't expect. Bildad had said that Job's suffering was so bad that he must indeed be a wicked, unrepentant sinner whose doom is to die and be consumed in hell, never to be seen again.

One might expect that Job would return at this point to some of his earlier statements where he desired to die or wish that he'd ever born but instead Job answers Bildad's speech with a confession.

Job 19, 23 to 27 again. Oh, that my words were written. Oh, that they were inscribed in a book.

Oh, that with an iron pen and lead they were engraved in the rock forever. For I know that my Redeemer lives and at the last he will stand upon the earth.

Now my thing is not working. Anyway, let me just read it. And after my skin has been thus destroyed yet in my flesh I shall see God whom I shall see for myself and my eyes shall behold and not another.

[37:38] What is it? It's a statement of faith. Job is saying regardless of what you think of me and Bildad has just told him what he thinks of him you're such a rotten sinner I think you ought to be in hell and never be seen again.

Regardless of what Job or Bildad or anyone else says of him regardless of how he struggles for answers he says I want everyone to know this about me.

I want my bedrock belief to be etched in stone for all to know. Job says I know that my redeemer lives from just after the fall a promise was made of a redeemer to come that redeemer I'm speaking from the perspective of Job here just after the fall promised redeemer was to come that redeemer is my redeemer Job is trusting in his redeemer and he says my redeemer lives remember last time we talked about God would have to stand before God God would have to lay his hand on God and on man and reconcile them a God man and he's saying I know that redeemer lives he has lived he is living he will always live I know that my redeemer will redeem me I know that at the last he will stand on the earth he's seeing so far in the future and he's setting up an understanding because Bildad has said you're going to be destroyed and never seen from again never remembered again your flesh is going to be gone he says my redeemer lives and will stand on the earth nothing will keep him from living he will be victorious and after I have died and decayed in my flesh

I shall see God he's saying I will live again no no not just in spirit form this body will live again no matter what happens to me now or as it lies in the earth until he resurrects me I know I will see my redeemer in my body my redeemer will provide a way for me for me to see God with my own eyes what a sweet and helpful exhortation or creed he in the midst of all his troubles he doesn't understand but in the midst of his troubles he has to turn back to the true truth and state the true truth and say no matter what anyone says about me this is what I want people to know when they walk through the grave where it says Job lived from whenever

I want them to see that it says I know that my redeemer lives and at the last day he shall stand on the earth and I'll stand with him he's standing on that hope Job ends this response of the warning he's warning his friends now look if that's true you're in dangerous territory to be continuing to pursue me to assume that I suffer for some sin I have created and so he warns them to be careful after Job had made this confession his suffering didn't all of a sudden disappear as I mentioned earlier we're only halfway through the discussions Job had with his friends his situation didn't change it wasn't that once he made this confession half his body healed of sores not at all he probably continued in this condition for months his situation doesn't change but it looks like

Job changed he still wants to talk with God about his suffering but his tone changes as we go through the rest of the book you're going to see that his tone changes he still says some words that I go whoo I don't know if I'd say that but there's obvious hope no matter what he goes through he says I know my redeemer lives and I'm going to stand with him someday because of his redeemer's work I'll be in his presence like Asaph in Psalm 73 his perspective changed when he was able to get the truth before his spiritual eye before his eyes in a spiritual way Asaph changed his tune Job changed his tune we know in the garden that Jesus dreaded the cross but he endured the cross for the joy that was set before him the writer of the book of Hebrews exhorts us to take the same path as

Job Asaph and especially Christ Hebrews 12 1 and 2 therefore since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses people who have seen the same thing as Job let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us looking to Jesus the founder and perfecter of our faith who for the joy that was set before him despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God in whatever we endure let's keep looking to Jesus our redeemer he endured the cross to provide a way that we might stand before him in these very bodies and be able to see our redeemer with our own eyes he endures in victory for all eternity so as we go through our struggles that's where we're to put our eyes just like

Job had to deal with Bildad but deal with himself and say this is what's true that's what I'm looking at let's pray thank you father for your word thank you for these pictures I pray that you would use it in our hearts you would draw yourself I pray your blessing on your word in Jesus name amen day MY BEL within the yaz