

A beseeching apostle (Rom. 12)

Part 1

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[00:00:00] All things, that thou, Lord Jesus, mightest be glorified, that each one of our hearts might be blessed, instructed, encouraged, and helped. Give thee thanks, O God, for this occasion. We commend ourselves to thee, and we ask for a blessing. In the name of the Lord Jesus, Amen. I want to read six very short scriptures in the New Testament. The first one is in the twelfth chapter of Romans.

Romans, chapter 12, I'm just going to read the first verse.

Romans 12, verse 1, I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

[00:01:10] Turn over to the first epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, chapter 1.

First Corinthians, chapter 1, verse 10.

Now I'll read verse 9 as well.

God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

And now the second epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, chapter 10.

[00:02:09] Read a few verses here, commencing at verse 1. Now I, Paul, myself, beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence and base among you, but being absent and bold towards you. But I beseech you that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself [00:03:05] against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ, and having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. The fourth chapter of Ephesians, let's turn over a few more pages,

Ephesians chapter 4, verses 1 and 2.

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

[00:04:05] Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians, verse 1, chapter 2, sorry.

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Deceive you by any means, for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition. [00:05:04] Finally, in the little letter to Philemon, two pages on, comes just before Hebrews. Obviously, chapter 1, verse 7, for we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother. Wherefore, though I might be bold much in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ, I beseech thee, for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds, which in time past was to thee unprofitable, [00:06:03] but now profitable to thee and me, whom I have sent again, thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels, whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel, but without thy mind would I do nothing, that thy benefit should not be, as it were, of necessity, but willingly. For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him forever, not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved specially to me, but now much more unto thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord, if thou can't be therefore a partner, receive him as myself.

Now I'm sure you will have noticed that in those six verses of Scripture, [00:07:05] all from the writings of the Apostle Paul, we have the word beseech. I want to speak for a few moments about a beseeching Apostle or servant.

Before I do that I want to read a couple of verses in the Old Testament which may seem completely out of context. The last few verses of Psalm 78 concerning David. Verse 70 of Psalm 78, you needn't turn to it, I'll read it.

He chose David also his servant and took him from the sheepfolds. From following the ewes great with young, he brought him to feed Jacob his people and Israel his inheritance. So he led them according to the integrity of his heart and guided them by [00:08:04] the skillfulness of his hands. I don't suppose we would normally think of turning to the Apostle Paul as an illustration of a shepherd. We would probably, when we think of the shepherds of the New Testament, I would think instinctively, think perhaps of Peter on account of the fact the Lord Jesus said to him, shepherd my sheep. But there's no doubt about it that amongst the saints of God today there is a great need of shepherds. If we read the whole of Scripture, we of course will find that there are numerous qualifications necessary for a shepherd. If we think first of all of the words of the Lord Jesus in John chapter 10, we find perhaps [00:09:06] that which is fundamental. I am the good shepherd who giveth his life for the sheep.

If we just for a moment digest that statement, we come to the conclusion that the good shepherd valued the sheep more than his own life. I suppose that when we think of the credentials of a

shepherd, that one is the one that would put us all up for the start as to whether we are prepared because of what the Lord Jesus has done for us in that he gave his life for the likes of me and you, his sheep, as to whether, as learning from him, we are prepared in New [00:10:11] Testament language to lay down our lives for the brethren. Of course there are other things, care is another so necessary credential, wisdom, guidance, integrity, skill, and that is why I just read those verses at the end of Psalm 78 because out of the Old Testament shepherds, and there were numerous, Abraham, Moses, Joseph, David, all shepherds, and yet amongst them all perhaps David is the one that the Old Testament tells us most about. I think would be right to say [00:11:01] that probably David amongst all the characters of the Old Testament fills out probably the largest portion of historical scripture. The reason being, I believe, is because we are told concerning David, he was a man after God's own heart, a good shepherd, a man whose heart beat in time with God. That was what David was like, he made many many mistakes, there's no doubt about it. We all make mistakes and I trust we learn from them as he did. But at the end of this Psalm, two things are said about him. The first thing that is ever said about David in scripture concerning himself was, he keepeth his father's sheep. He didn't lose any, he kept them. In the face of a [00:12:04] bear, in the face of a lion, he kept his father's sheep, he was a good shepherd. But later on in his life, of course, he looked after different sort of sheep, two-legged sheep, God's people.

And in that capacity he was indeed the shepherd king. And this Psalm credits him with two things that are necessary for a shepherd. It says he fed them out of the integrity of his heart and he guided them with the skillfulness of his hands. And when I think of those two things, I just want to suggest to you that in the verses that we have read together from the writings of the Apostle Paul, we see one who in regard to the Lord's people had that integrity of heart in knowing [00:13:12] how to feed them with the truth of God. But not only so, he had that wisdom that was so necessary, whether it was a matter of feeding, guiding, carrying the young, encouraging, caring, or correcting. Because sheep, you know, are very wayward. That is why the scripture says, all we like sheep have gone astray. We have all turned to our own way. Sheep are very wayward creatures. And that is, you know, why Old Testament shepherds had a crook, big long stick with a hook on the [00:14:01] end. There must have been many an occasion when the shepherd had to reach out and perhaps pull a wayward sheep back into the right path. They didn't have sheepdogs in Old Testament days. The shepherds led from the front. I trust therefore I've painted a picture for you of what a good scriptural shepherd is like. Now, in measure, it is behoved that we all, we may not all be shepherds, but we should all take on the features of shepherds. We should all be marked by these things that shepherds are marked by. Now what I want you just to consider in these scriptures that I've read together, of the way that six times, I'm not certain they're all the [00:15:02] times, they may be, that the Apostle speaks to his hearers or readers and appeals to them. The idea behind the word beseech is that you present something to somebody with a view to his responding to it. I want you to notice that not only does he use the word beseech six times, but each time he puts something alongside of it to, as it were, enhance what he is saying. And if you examine those six different scriptures, you will find that they are perfectly in keeping with what he was beseeching might be corrected. Now to do that, we need skillfulness, we need wisdom from God. And [00:16:09] Paul paramountly comes out as an example of a man who, in his heart, there was integrity.

Integrity towards God, faithfulness to God, but integrity towards God's people, faithfulness to God's people, right thinking. Again, remember that little expression of David, concerning David, a man after God's own heart. It's perfectly evident, isn't it, that David was quite prepared when he put his life in jeopardy for the sheep and took on the bear and then the lion and then Goliath. And he was prepared to put his own life in jeopardy for the sake of the sheep or God's [00:17:13] people. And of course, we

wouldn't have to go far through the writings of Paul to find that he was that sort of man. In fact, not only do we conclude that he did lay down his life for the Lord Jesus, but there's no doubt about it also that he laid down his life for the saints of God. As a result of that, we've got this marvellous volume of truth, of exhortation, of correction, and encouragement that would guide and lead us in a right path through this world. Let's just consider these. Very quickly, I've been exalted not to go over the time, so I have to try and do it. Romans chapter 12 [00:18:05] perhaps is the right place to start. It's purely coincidental that these six come one after the other through the New Testament, but it's significant that the first one that we've read is Romans chapter 12. You'll notice what he says, I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God. That's the words that he adds to his beseeching. He wants to draw our attention to something, but before he does so, he focuses our minds upon the mercies of God. That's the thing that he is moving out from, and going to use as a lever to get a response from you and I. Now what are the mercies of God? Well read the preceding 11 chapters and you'll find a wonderful outline, more than an [00:19:13] outline, detail of the mercies of God. I'm not going into them in depth, I'll just give you one brief thing to think about which we've all heard before and found helpful. Chapter one, man's ruin, man's ruin. Chapters three and five, God's remedy. Chapter eight, the result of God's remedy being taken in by faith. And then we come to chapter 12, the response that that demands from my heart and my life. What is the Apostle beseeching? That ye present your bodies a living [00:20:02] sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable or intelligent service. So whilst the Apostle, in the skillfulness of his hands, says to these dear believers, and he says the same thing to you and I, that it's just a reasonable and intelligent thing that we should yield our bodies, which once were instruments unto sin, and according to chapter one, so unholy. But now because of the work of Christ, the work of the gospel, the work of faith, in the heart of a believer given of God, and the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, these bodies of ours that were once so sinful, this verse tells us are now holy. Because God is holy. You and I cannot present to God [00:21:10] anything that is not according to what God is, in his nature, and his being. God is holy. And so if I am to lay down something and give it to God, that must be of that character. What is it that makes the body, or the life, or the person of a believer acceptable to God? Not only holy, but acceptable. It's the mercies of God that have superabounded towards us in the opening chapters of this epistle. Paul at this point, we can almost picture him, can't we, down on his knees as he wrote this letter. He says, I beseech brethren. I think every time he says the word beseech, [00:22:07] he follows it or precedes it with brethren. The flock, the body, the church, that's who he is addressing. Every believer in this world at the moment, these words come home to them. He says, I beseech you brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. I think you would agree with me, wouldn't you, that there was God-given skillfulness in the way the Apostle approached and appealed to the affections of these Roman believers, that there should be a response in [00:23:01] their lives, this living sacrifice. Not all of us, perhaps none of us, will ever be called to lay down our lives for God. Paul did, Peter did, all the Apostles did. But we are called upon here to present our bodies to God. Do it once and for all and have done with it and continue in that state. Present ourselves living in this world and living for God. Turn over to Corinthians. Now of course the Corinthian letters are vastly different from the Roman letters to the Romans. Particularly the first letter of Corinthians is a corrective epistle. Here were sheep that were going astray, that were going down wrong avenues. And as a result of that, the flock was getting split up. [00:24:09] If you just imagine, you know, in Eastern countries, you know, brethren in this hall that will know this far better than me, they've probably seen it. That one of the things that a shepherd has to do is to keep his flock together. Because there he can see them all, he can hear them, they can hear him. And there is safety in the flock being kept together. But at Corinth, the sheep were all going off in different directions. They weren't all following the shepherd. They were following other people. And as a consequence, there was a lot of things that went wrong at Corinth.

Despite the fact they were very intelligent people and they had a great deal [00:25:04] of gift. And the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians is to correct what was happening at Corinth. We'll leave it this afternoon. Largely it was a matter of divisions. But that of course led to dreadful sin coming in amongst the people of God that again he deals with. Now bearing this in mind, he first of all says to these believers, God is faithful. Now there is a rock to put your foot down on. There is something to grasp by faith, something that will never change. God is faithful. By whom you were called into the fellowship of his son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now that is a wonderful verse because it tells us about the work of God who has called us into a [00:26:06] fellowship that is characterized by the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord. The most dignified fellowship that there can be in this world. The most dignified company that there can be in this world. Those who have been called by God into a fellowship with his Son. I want you to remember that. I think the Corinthians had forgotten it. That's probably where they started all going wrong. Let us exhort ourselves today dear brethren and remind ourselves of the great dignity that we as believers on the Lord Jesus have been brought into by God himself in that we have been brought [00:27:07] into a fellowship with his beloved Son. Now he says I beseech you brethren by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. What I'm going to say concerning that is he invokes what he is going to beseech from the highest authority. Whilst it is Paul that is beseeching he directs the hearts and consciences of these Corinthians to the supreme authority. The name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So whilst this might be a beseeching I'm not absolutely certain that the way we use the [00:28:05] word beseech in English today is the same as in the original but it doesn't matter. But this beseeching demanded an answer because it was a beseeching that was aligned with the highest authority. God has called us, he's faithful, into a fellowship concerning and with his Son and in that fellowship there is an authority and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. You'll notice how it says, Paul says our Lord bringing home to us that he is Lord of every one of us and he is Lord in the assembly. He's not Lord of the assembly, he's head of the church but he is Lord in the assembly and [00:29:05] we must ever recognize that and that is the basis that Paul worked from to put right the things that were going wrong at Corinth. So he says immediately I beseech you brethren again that you all speak the same thing that there be no divisions among you and that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. I doubt whether we could find a better verse than this to describe what should be the condition amongst the saints of God, unity in thought and mind. Speaking together the same things, that doesn't mean to say that we're all like parrots and say exactly the same words, doesn't mean that at all. It means that the [00:30:04] object and subject of what we speak about is the same, the Lord Jesus Christ, his person in his work and that he be perfectly joined together. Now that must mean practical doesn't it because it couldn't refer to us as forming part of the body of church, of the church or the body of Christ because every member has been perfectly joined together in that and it is impossible for it to be otherwise because it is God that has done it. But here the Apostle is looking for a practical expression amongst the saints of God of what God has done in Christ. Joined together perfectly, same mind, same judgment. Now chapter, the second letter to Corinthians which is of a [00:31:07] different character. I think Paul wrote the second letter because he was concerned about the effect of his first letter and of course he received word, I think it was from Timothy and then he is encouraged and he writes this second epistle. Here at the end of it he is still a beseeching but it's not so much a corrective beseeching. He is seeking to instruct the Corinthians in the manner of life that should character them, characterize them. Yes there's a warfare going on and we're all part of that warfare but you notice I read those verses where he said the [00:32:03] weapons of our warfare are not carnal or fleshly but he says they are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. Makes you think of the walls of Jericho doesn't it? Makes you think of Goliath. Think of the rest of

this, casting down imaginations or reasonings, arguments, every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. Tremendous forces there are in this world today that are exalting themselves against the knowledge of God. They're affecting men, women, boys and girls throughout this land and throughout this world. But the power of the gospel and the [00:33:01] power of the love of God and the power of the Holy Spirit is capable of bringing such powers into subjection to Christ. In the world to come that is the thousand years reign of Christ that will take place after you and I have been caught up out of this world, everything will be brought into subjection to Christ. Something that should thrill all our hearts. That moment in this world when Jesus will be supreme, everything will be under his feet. But this is referring to what is happening now. Now in this warfare of which we're all part, the Apostle here is instructing or beseeching the way we should conduct ourselves. We might think from a human standpoint they're not much like soldiers. No they're not. They're like shepherds. Shepherds in a warfare, the two things [00:34:10] don't seem compatible, do they? But I think the way Paul addresses himself to these Corinthians shows very very clearly that what is paramount in his mind still is the character of a shepherd. So he says now, I Paul myself, he says that first. I don't know that I or anybody in this room would dare to say this, but when we speak to the saints of God, present ourselves as an example of what we are going to beseech. I couldn't do that. Paul could and Paul did. He could say follow me as I follow Christ. Now I Paul myself beseech you, but then look what he says, by the meekness and [00:35:12] gentleness of Christ. What a beautiful verse, isn't it? Paul perhaps of necessity has to present himself as the servant of the Lord that they perhaps at Corinth had abused and neglected. But preeminently he directs their hearts to the perfect example in this warfare. And he refers to the meekness, the gentleness of Christ. Now instinctively, isn't it, those of us who read our Bibles think of the Lord's own words in Matthew chapter 12. Learn from me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and [00:36:05] ye shall find rest unto your soul. For I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your soul. Paul, as it were, had cottoned on to that way of presenting things, hadn't it? Oh dear brethren, if only we could learn this lesson. In the battles and in the warfare, in the difficulties and the problems, how necessary it is that we know something about, in our communications one to another, concerning things that are necessary because of the warfare that we are on. Fighting against the person of Christ, fighting against the truth of God, this, that, and the other thing, all these assembled enemies of Christ were all caught up in it. The Corinthians were caught up [00:37:08] in it. Paul was caught up in it. How do we speak to one another? How do we exhort one another? How do we speak, beseech one another in this warfare? Paul says, with the meekness and the gentleness of Christ. When you've got sheep that are injured, or ill, or young ones, you need meekness and gentleness, lest that which is weary is turned out of the way. And here this skillful apostle, as a shepherd here, exhorts these Corinthians, intelligent men that they were. They had [00:38:05] somewhat despised him, but he didn't react in kind, did he? He didn't answer them according to their folly. He appealed to their hearts according to the meekness and gentleness of Christ. And I no doubt his beseeching was successful. Ephesians chapter 4. This same apostle, in this marvellous epistle of Ephesians, which brings us into the height of the blessings of Christianity, the first three chapters. But the last three chapters, starting at chapter 4, are all practical. God presents the best, and he gives it to you, and he says, now walk like this. [00:39:03] God has brought you into this wonderful vocation. The highest blessings brought nigh to God, accepted in his beloved Son. Holy and without blame, before him in love. What a vocation. Now Paul wants us to walk worthy of it. How does he address this matter? He says, I therefore the prisoner of the Lord. It should be, I believe, the prisoner in the Lord. The prisoner in the Lord. Because of his faithfulness to Christ, he was in prison. Walk worthy, and the word walk there means our whole life. I think it's the word where we get our English word peripatetic from. To walk around. It's the whole Christian life. Whatever we do, [00:40:09] whatever we say, wherever we are, this is what Paul is speaking about. He says, walk worthy of the vocation, wherewith ye are called. Again, similarly, he talks about with all loneliness, and meekness,

and long-suffering, forbearing one another in love. You see, when we think about the height of blessing that God has brought us into, we often say that every privilege carries with it a responsibility. And that is a very, very true statement. The opening chapters of the Ephesians are the highest privilege, and they call forth the most urgent, [00:41:01] responsible answer to it. And so if I am to walk worthy of this vocation, I've got to be characterized by loneliness, meekness, and long-suffering, and forbearing, and love. I'll say no more. Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Endeavoring, he said, something that you must never give up on. You've got to constantly go on with this matter of endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit of God, in a practical way, amongst the saints of God, in peace. So he says, there is one body, one spirit, as ye are called, into one hope of your calling. So again, I trust you see the skillfulness with which the Apostle [00:42:03] brings about this matter of this responsible answer to the blessings of God, in the way that we should walk in this world, and in relation to one another, and every believer. Thessalonians. Some of us believe that this, well the first letter of Thessalonians anyway, is probably the first letter that Paul wrote. He wasn't with the Thessalonians very long, may have only been 22 days, may have been longer, but he taught them a great deal. He told them about the coming of the Lord. And after Paul left them, or before Paul left them, no probably after Paul had left them, some of their company had died. And the believers had got worried about this, the coming of the Lord, [00:43:11] the kingdom, and all its blessing. But some of our company have died. So Paul in the first epistle talks to them about what we call the rapture, that moment when the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, the dead in Christ shall rise first. We which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them to be with the Lord forever. If anybody tells you there's no such thing as the rapture in scripture, read those verses. The moment that is coming, and it could happen any split second, the voice of the Lord Jesus that will call you and I and every believer in this world away and out of it. And the [00:44:07] grave shall give up those that have died in Christ or been put to sleep in Jesus. We shall be forever with the Lord. But in the second letter, some nasty people had tried to subvert things, even to the extent of imitating letters and saying that they were from Paul. In other words, causing trouble. There's always somebody that will cause trouble amongst the Christians. Satan knows who to attack, who he's most concerned with are Christians in this world, the saints of God, those that belong to Christ. If he can do anything to disturb them, upset them, divert them, he does so. And so the Apostle, he beseeches these dear brethren and he says, [00:45:02] by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, that very fact that he had taught them about and written to them about, the moment when the Lord Jesus will come and our gathering together to him. That's what he presents to these Thessalonian believers who are getting troubled and dismayed and in difficulties. He presents to them that glorious moment that we've just spoken of, when the Lord Jesus shall come. And all the saints of God, whether raised or changed, will be caught up into his presence. What a thing to have before you. The Apostle wants to appeal to them. So what does he do? He directs their hearts to the coming of the Lord. And he says that he be not soon shaken. I'm not going into the details of all these verses, the time is nearly gone. You don't give up, you don't get disturbed, you don't get diverted, you don't go [00:46:07] away, you keep going on. Why? Because the Lord is coming. And this is the masterful way that the Apostle here appeals and beseeches these young Christians. He says keep going on, keep going on, don't let anything shake you, don't let anything disturb you, don't let any man deceive you. Because that dreadful day of the Lord shall not come until, first of all, we are caught up and then there be a complete apostasy in this world of the man of sin. It stabilises the soul, it gives encouragement, it gives help and it enables us to go on. That's why we should read our Bibles. Finally, in Philemon, [00:47:10] a lovely little book, A Letter of Courtesy. You read it when you get a few moments, it won't take you very long, you can probably read it in about four minutes. The letter from Paul, who was still in prison, to this man Philemon, who lived at Colossae. He had a wife called Apphia and a son called Archippus. And it appears the meeting was held in his house. And the

character of Philemon was well-known, well-loved, a man that had been effective amongst the saints of God. So many had [00:48:04] been consoled, so many had been refreshed by him. That's the person Paul was writing to. You don't have to say hard words to a man like that, do you? So Paul doesn't. Now what had happened? Just in case you don't know, that man had a slave called Onesimus. And it would appear that he robbed from his master because he wasn't a Christian then, he wasn't a believer, and he ran away. He ran a long way. He ran right to Rome. We're not told how, but he came into contact with the Apostle Paul, who was in prison, and he got saved. Couldn't have a better result of running away, could you? Never mind, he [00:49:01] got saved. And Paul speaks of that young new believer in a way of endearment, of in love, of appreciation. Paul says, I would love to have retained him with you, with me, because he has refreshed me and he's helped me. Isn't that remarkable? The great Apostle Paul, speaking about a freshly converted young person in such a way. What is it that does that? That will bring together what we might say the greatest with the lowest and put them together in one fellowship, where Christ is the centre. That's what does it. That great leveller, where Christ is everything in the centre. And so this old man, because he was an old man here, Paul, not far from the end of his death, and this young convert that had been saved, and yet he'd run away and done something that warranted the death [00:50:09] penalty. Paul says, in effect, well there's something that has to be done here, because one thing that must be characteristic of the relationships amongst the saints of God is righteousness. Paul says in this letter, I would have loved to have retained him with me, but it belongs to you. He doesn't belong to me, he belongs to you. He's your slave. And so what did he do?

Well it would appear that Tychicus was returning to Rome, leaving Rome, to take Paul's letter to Colossians. And so he sends this young man, Onesimus, back with him. But he didn't just do [00:51:03] that, he gave him a letter. Gave him a letter of commendation. And he said to him, when you see your master, Philemon, give him this letter. In that letter, Paul uses these words, in verse 8 he says, wherefore though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, Paul had been instrumental in the salvation of Philemon, it would appear. And on that account, Philemon was in debt to Paul. Paul, as it were, could have used that as a lever for Philemon using this young man leniently. But he didn't. He didn't. He used a more powerful lever. It wasn't [00:52:09] a matter of what Philemon owed to Paul. It was a matter of what Philemon owed to Christ. So he says, for love's sake, I rather beseech thee. I beseech thee for my son Onesimus whom I have begotten in my bonds. Just look at this for a moment. Run your finger down these, verse 12. He says, receive him. Verse 15, he says, receive him forever. And in verse 17, he says, receive him as myself. What a wonderful exhortation. And this is the way that Paul presents this young runaway slave, sending him back to his master. And he says, for love's sake, receive him in this [00:53:07] manner. Again, dear beloved brethren, we can see in Paul a perfect delineation of the Christian life. He truly was a shepherd. Let us learn from these scriptures that we read together. That in some way, you and I might be used of the Lord to encourage and to shepherd and to care for the saints of God. May it be so for his name's sake.