

God's Plan For Forgiveness

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[0:00] Reading from the book of Philemon. Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy, our brother.! To Philemon, our dear friend and fellow worker.

! To Aphia, our sister. To Archippus, our fellow soldier. And to the church that meets in your home. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers. Because I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus. And your love for all the saints.

I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith. So that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ. Your love has given me great joy and encouragement.

Because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the saints. Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do.

[1:05] Yet I appeal to you on the basis of love. I then, as Paul, an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus, I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains.

Formerly, he was useless to you. But now he has become useful both to you and to me. I am sending him, who is my very heart, back to you.

I would have liked to keep him with me so that he could take care, so that he could take your place in helping me while I am in chains for the gospel.

But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favor you do would be spontaneous and not forced. Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back for good, no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother.

He is very dear to me, but even dearer to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord. So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me.

[2:34] If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me. I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back, not to mention that you owe me your very self.

I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ.

Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask. And one more thing, and one thing more.

Prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers.

Epaphras, my fellow prisoner for Christ Jesus, sends you greeting.

And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

[3:39] Ben Franklin was into virtue. As a lot of the founding fathers were, he committed himself to a personal improvement program that consisted of living 13 virtues.

One, temperance. Eat not to dullness, drink not to elevation. Two, silence. Speak not, but what may benefit others or yourself.

Three, order. Let all your things have their places. Let each part of your business have its time.

Four, resolution. Resolve to perform what you ought.

Perform without fail what you resolve. Five, frugality. Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself. Six, industry.

Lose no time. Be always employed in something useful. Seven, sincerity. Use no hurtful deceit.

Eight, justice. Wrong none by doing injuries or omitting the benefits that are your duty.

[4:45] Nine, moderation. Avoid extremes. Ten, cleanliness. Tolerate no uncleanness in body, clothes, or habitation. He hadn't lived with a two-year-old yet when he wrote this.

Eleven, tranquility. Be not disturbed at trifles. Twelve, chastity. Rarely use venery but for health or offspring. Thirteen, humility. Imitate Jesus and Socrates.

Franklin had a little notebook with a chart for each day and each virtue. And at the end of the day, he would put a little mark wherever he had transgressed.

And he counted himself to be virtuous if at the end of 13 weeks, there were no marks in his little notebook. But there were times, as you can imagine, when his notebook was filled with little black marks.

So what do you do then? Well, he had an ingenious plan. He took an eraser and he erased those black marks.

[5:51] And they were no more. And over the years, he erased and he erased until he wore holes in his paper. Well, that's a problem. What do you do now?

Well, you get a different kind of paper. And so he took thin sheets of ivory. It was like paper. And that's what he used to keep track. So it wouldn't fall apart from his constant erasing.

It's funny that in all of his virtues, forgiveness didn't have a place. Even though he himself gave himself plenty of forgiveness.

He gladly erased his faults. But forgiveness wasn't something that he gave to others. In 1731, he had an illegitimate child, William.

And Franklin, it seems, was as good of a father as you could imagine, you can expect. He sent him to England to be trained as a lawyer. And in 1763, William moved back to become the royal governor of New Jersey.

[6:53] And that's what he was for several years. Ben, no doubt, secured him that position using his influence in England and here. But in the revolution, the parting of the ways happened.

It wasn't just in the Civil War where brother and brother fought. William sided with the royalty, with England. And that all but destroyed their relationship.

And at the end of the war, William moved back to England. And Franklin then left William out of his will, out of his autobiography, out of his life.

For all of Ben's virtue, forgiveness didn't have a place. And it's no surprise, really, because you become like what you worship.

And Franklin was a deist. So he had a God that created the world and then walked away. He was distant, foreign, unconcerned, impersonal, detached.

[7:58] He didn't have a God that cared about relationships. And he didn't have a God that forgave him of his sins. But you do. You do.

And that makes all the difference. Ken Sandy wrote, To forgive someone means to release him or her from liability to suffer punishment or penalty.

To release someone from their liability of suffering punishment or penalty. And that's exactly what God did at the cross of Jesus Christ.

So let me ask you. Do you need forgiveness? Do you need forgiveness? I think in the middle of the night sometime, or when all is quiet, you know that everything is not right between you and God.

Most of the time you can crowd it out, but there are times when, like an arrow or like a knife, it pierces into you and you realize it's not all right. And I am not doing as well as I put on.

[9:04] So do you feel the weight of sin? An eraser that can't, there's no eraser that can remove those spots. And you know that. But God can.

That's the gospel. God can actually take that journal and not just erase the black marks. He can tear out all the pages and throw them away, burn them into oblivion. And so they're no more gone completely.

How does he do that? Well, it's not just by saying, let it be, or now you see it, now you don't. It's not a magic trick. And it's not just by saying, let's pretend that you didn't do anything.

Your conscience is too fierce for that, isn't it? You would like it to be that way, but you know in the end, and your conscience won't let you believe it, that in the end, it's just that simple. I'll just pretend like it's gone away.

No, our consciences demand justice because they're a reflection of God's court. And God demands justice. And God is too just to just say, now you see it, now you don't.

[10:07] No, he forgives by punishing sin. Do you know that? He forgives not just by saying it doesn't exist. He deals with it by punishing it, by getting his wrath out on it.

And that's what the cross is about. Jesus Christ was set forth as a sacrifice of atonement, as propitiation. And those are words that just mean simply this, that his sacrifice is a sacrifice that absorbs wrath.

It absorbs God's wrath. That's the heart of the gospel message. And that is the heart of the gospel promise. God's not going to say, poof, it's gone.

God, instead, he puts his son in the place of punishment and punishes son for the sins of his people. He died to absorb God's wrath.

And that's what was happening on the cross. So God could forgive you. And that's God's promise to you. The gospel promise is simply, if you believe in Christ and what he did, if you trust him, you lean upon him, you take him at his word.

[11:22] Simply take him at his word. You'll be forgiven. God's just that good. So do you need forgiveness?

Let me ask you another question. Do you have trouble forgiving? Do you have trouble forgiving?

Here's the good news that we see in Philemon today, that God heals relationships.

God is not distant. He is involved and he cares and he's concerned about our relationship. He goes before us. He's here to help us. He gets right down in the mud with us in this dirty and hard business of forgiving, of doing relationships.

And that's what we see in Philemon, verses 8 through 17. God heals relationships. And it's because of everything that God has done, Paul calls us to forgive.

He calls Philemon to forgive. And because it's everything of what God has done, we can forgive those who have sinned against us. And so if you're having trouble forgiving someone today, you need to take into mind, into your mind, what Philemon, or what Paul says to Philemon here.

[12:36] Now you remember what happened. You remember what happened. Onesimus was Philemon's slave. And he had ran out on Philemon and on his way out, he had stolen a bunch of Philemon stuff or taken money or something to that effect.

And he took off for Rome. And we're not exactly sure what happened, but I think putting together the evidence and what probably happened, he was probably having a good time.

He was probably doing all right until the money ran out. And then the money ran out. And he started thinking, what am I doing?

What have I done? They love me back there. They care for me back there. And I threw that all away. I threw it all away.

And he came to his senses. And I think when he came to his senses, he went and found Paul, who was in prison in Rome at the time. And Paul shared the gospel and Onesimus was converted.

[13:44] And so now Paul is sending Onesimus back to Philemon. And verse 17 says, and this is the heart, the center of Philemon, verse 17, so if you consider me a partner, Philemon, if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me.

Forgive him. Welcome him. Throw your arms around him. Shout for joy that he's here. What was lost has been found.

But that's easier said than done. That's hard. And Paul knows that. And so before he gets to verse 17, he says, Philemon, you've got to know what God has been up to.

You have to see what God has been doing in this situation. He's been going before you. He's been down in the mud, fixing Onesimus, preparing him, saving him, working in this situation so that you could forgive him.

Now, we see God's work in three ways this morning. Three ways from verses 8 through 17. First, God creates a community of love.

[14:55] He creates a community of love. Two, God converts the hearts of men. That means he changes them. Three, God commands providence.

He commands providence. So we have community, conversion, and providence. And it's those three things that are going to help Philemon to forgive Onesimus.

And it's going to be those three things that help us to forgive those who've wronged us. So first, God creates a community of love. Paul says, Philemon, welcome him.

Welcome him just like he would welcome me. But before he does that, he builds an argument. And so in verse 8, he says, therefore, and we looked at this last week, therefore, he points back to everything that he said in the first seven verses.

And we saw this last week. The gospel community is a family. It's a family. We're brothers and sisters. And it's a shared life.

[16:00] That's verse 6. Out of all that we share in Christ, we experience these good things. And we're called to live with open hearts and love toward each other. We saw how Paul loved Philemon and Philemon loved the saints there.

There was this open heartedness. And so therefore, though I could be bold to tell you what you ought to do, Paul is saying, I do have this ace in my pocket. I could tell you what to do because I'm an apostle.

But I'm not going to do that. I'm going to rather, I appeal to you on the basis of love. And he says pretty much the same thing in verse 14. I didn't want to do anything without your consent so that any favor you would do would be spontaneous and not forced.

He's looking for Philemon's heart to well up in love and out of that love to forgive and welcome Onesimus. And so for love's sake, welcome Onesimus back.

Now, whose love is he talking about here? Because there's these strands going around through this whole, in this entire book about different people loving different people.

[17:05] So this passage talks about Philemon's love for Paul. Philemon's love for Paul. Paul assumes Philemon loves him. And that's why he says, I then, Paul, an old man and also a prisoner of Christ, I appeal to you.

Paul assumes that his old age and the fact that he's in prison will move Philemon to compassion. So if you love me, welcome Onesimus back.

But then he also talks about Philemon's love for all the saints. That's what comes before in verses 4 and 7. I hear about your love for all the saints and you've encouraged my heart and you've refreshed the hearts of the saints.

Philemon, you're loving all the saints. You're loving me. So out of that love, love Onesimus. Welcome Onesimus back.

But I think most of all, you see Paul's love and affection for Onesimus. In verse 10, he said, he's my son.

[18:18] He's as precious to me as a son is to a father. In verse 12, he says, he's my very heart. Philemon, I'm sending you my heart.

What are you going to do with my heart? If you love me, welcome him. And so there's these cords of love weaving in and out of this entire book.

And in all these relationships, Philemon loves Paul and Philemon loves the saints and Paul loves Onesimus. And so Paul says, for love's sake, welcome Onesimus. What is strong enough?

What is powerful enough of a principle, of a force in someone's life to move them to love and to forgive and welcome someone who sinned against them? Well, it's love.

And there's this whole community of love here. They're sharing together in love in Christ. Now, where did that come from?

[19:16] Because that sounds very normal to us. We're not surprised at all. But out in the world, there's not a community of love like that. So where did the city on a hill that shines into the dark, where did it come from?

Well, not man. Because men don't know love like this. They don't know agape love or chesed love. That's the steadfast love that just keeps on loving even in the face of sin. That kind of love only exists where God lives in man.

Where the life of God is in the soul of a man. And God produces that in our lives by sending his spirit. And so we've been given one spirit to drink.

We've been baptized into the Lord by the spirit. And the spirit has worked that into our hearts. And that's how you can know if you're saved or not. Do you love the brethren?

[20:17] Do you love? That's what the Apostle John says. God is love. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God.

And God in him. There's that God in us. And John isn't talking about just a big cloud of warm fuzzy feelings where we all sit around the fire and sing kumbaya.

He's saying whoever loves his brother. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light. We know we pass from death to life because we love our brothers.

If we love one another God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. So this love isn't a cloud. It's not a big warm fuzzy feelings. It has sharp edges. It has definition.

It has faces. Last week we said the instruments of God's holiness are sitting around us. Well the object of our affection and our love are the people that are sitting around us.

[21:14] It's no good saying oh I love if you don't love the person behind you and the person beside you and the person in front of you we know we pass from death to life if we love those people.

Now as you look around you realize that those people around you and this person up here they're not perfect people are they? They're sinful people. And they're people that we don't have much in common with.

Really. You do one thing I do another you like this I like that and yet here we are drawn together in love. We love people who aren't easiest to love and that's God's work.

Praise God if there is an ounce of love at Grace Fellowship Church because that's his work his spirit in us. So Paul has this or Philemon has this hard hard job ahead of him but God has created this community of love where where love lives and God lives and again and again in those passages John says God lives here.

He lives in this community of love. He's in us. He's here. His address is in this community and Philemon's mailbox is there and Paul lives there and look who just moved in down the street.

[22:30] Philemon? It's Onesimus. He's now here. So will you love him too? Paul says welcome him for love's sake.

Second God converts. God changes hearts. So this is a community Grace Fellowship is a community where love lives but it's also a community of changed hearts.

One real roadblock that makes reconciliation difficult and impossible is a lack of real change.

There's a lack of real change in one or both parties. parties. So if your son or your daughter steals from you and they leave town and they're buying drugs and they're living that lifestyle so they're out there doing their own thing in rebellion how can there be reconciliation until there's real change?

It's impossible. The prodigal son has to come to his senses. He has to come to his senses. He has to want to come back. And so we can be willing all we want.

[23:42] But if there's no change of heart then reconciliation is impossible. That's how it was between us and God wasn't it? The fleshly man is enmity with God.

He opposes God. He will not submit. He cannot submit to God's law. We can never be reconciled to God until we changed.

Until our hearts were changed. And sin is buried so deep and it has such an enslaving power that it really is impossible for us to change on our own.

Now, you can turn over a new leaf. You turn over a new leaf. But under that new leaf you're going to find the same old selfishness.

That same old rotten pride and ego that puts you at the center. See, you can go from being bad to being good. I'm not talking about changing your manners here.

[24:45] I'm not talking about being a bad sinner and then now you're just a good person. Because no matter what you do, you can't go from pride to humility.

That's a change that's too drastic for any sinner to take. The rebellion is still there. The desire to be God is still there.

The desire to justify yourself and to be your own righteousness and to have it your way and to have it on your own terms. You're still number one. Change is impossible with man.

But what is impossible with man is possible with God. So look at verses 10 and 11. I appeal to you for my son Onesimus who became my son while I was in chains.

Formally, here's the change, formerly he was useless to you. But now he's become useful both to you and to me. So what happened in prison?

[25:42] Onesimus was born again. He became a new man, a new creation. See, Paul didn't change Onesimus. Paul was God's instrument, but he was useless before and now he's useful.

And for the first time he actually lived up to his name. Useful. That's Onesimus. That's what it means. And he became so useful that Paul says, I'm tearing out my own heart to give him, to send him back to you.

He's become so useful to me. He could take your place, Philemon. How's that for humbling? That slave is just as useful to me as he ever was to you.

And he's just as useful to me as you'll ever be to me. So Philemon, can you believe it? Can you believe it that that's happened? When we live in this community, when we live in this fellowship, we

have to believe that people can change.

We have to believe that people who are once useless can be now useful to God's kingdom. You just gotta wonder what happened that day in prison.

[26:52] Someday maybe we'll ask. Somehow or other, Onesimus showed up and he told Paul all about what had happened. I took the money.

I made such a big mess of things. I don't know how I'm ever gonna get right with Philemon. I don't know what I'm gonna do.

Paul must have said, you know, Onesimus, your biggest problem isn't Philemon. Your biggest problem is God. Your biggest problem isn't you've been running from Philemon.

Your biggest problem is you've been running from God. Onesimus, it's time to come home. And Onesimus believed.

He believed what Paul said. And God changed his heart. This wasn't a change of manners. It wasn't a change of being bad and now he's good.

[28:01] It wasn't just he changed the siding on the house. He gutted the house. He tore down the walls. He tore out the foundation and he put an entirely new house in its place.

And Onesimus said, that's it. I'm done. I'm done running. I'm done bumming around, only thinking about myself. It's not about me anymore. It has to be about Jesus.

So how do you want to use me, Paul? Young people, young Christians, immediate usefulness is possible. Once you're converted, you have the gifts and the graces that you need to be immediately useful.

Yes, you grow in those things, but Onesimus was saved and he was useful. Now, that's what conversion is. It's not about me anymore.

It's about Jesus. And when that happens, when that great change happens, when my center gets off of me and gets put on Jesus, that's conversion.

[29:03] And that's the glory of Christianity. I think some of you think that this is just one choice among many and you have mistaken what Christianity is about.

Every other religion, every other worldview, every other philosophy, every other way of looking at this world and putting things in order and organizing it, it either leaves you in pride or despair.

Pride, I don't need to change or despair. I can't change. And if you aren't coming to Christ, you're not coming for one of those two reasons.

You either think you don't need it, you don't need to change, you don't need Jesus, or maybe you've made such a mess of things. You say, there's no hope for me.

You can't change. And either way, the gospel says you're wrong. It's not pride or despair. You need change, but you're dead in your sins.

[30:06] You're dead. You're enslaved in your sins. A dead person is beyond hope. A dead person is beyond change. A dead person only rots.

So, is everything hopeless? Well, if you're just looking at yourself, yes, it is absolutely hopeless. hopeless. But there is hope because there's a God who has supernatural power, who can reach into the grave of a man's soul and bring him to newness of life.

So, God can change you. He changed Onesimus. And now, let's bring that back to the relationship. Now, there's hope for Onesimus and Philemon.

Because that great roadblock that was going to stand in their way to being reconciled of Onesimus' selfishness, it's gone. God has taken it out of the way.

And so, Onesimus is coming back to you, Philemon. He's not the old guy you used to know. He's a new man. So, welcome him. Forgive him. He's not who he used to be. Look at what God's done, Philemon.

[31:22] And finally, so we've seen conversion. We've seen community of love. And now, finally, God in his providence heals relationships.

Providence. That means God's control of all of his creatures and all of their actions. He's the Lord. And in every situation, he is Lord. There's not a moment, there's not any situation too small or too big where the Lord is not present as the Lord.

That's providence. He's controlling and uplifting and upholding all of his creatures. And you see God's providence in verse 15 and 16. And this is something that you can just read it and miss it.

So, look at it. perhaps the reason he was separated for you for a little while was that you might have him back for good.

No longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. Now, verse 15, Paul says perhaps he's going to peer into God's providence and he's going to say, finally, I think I know what's going on here.

[32 : 36] Here's the great reason that the two of you were separated for a time. Now, it's interesting. Verse 15 is in the passive voice. Someone is doing the separating.

Perhaps the reason he was separated. So, who's doing the action in the verse? Who's doing the separating? Well, not Onesimus and not Philemon.

Paul uses what's called the divine passive. He does it all the time, where he says, this happened to someone, and really, what he's saying is God did that.

Yes, Onesimus ran away, but God was working. God was separating the two of you for a time. Why? Why? Parents, listen to me.

Listen to me, parents. Because Onesimus had a date with Paul. Onesimus had to leave Philemon and go find Paul in a prison before he was converted.

[33 : 40] That was God's plan. That was what was planned from the foundations of the earth. And now, he had to leave so that he could come back, not a slave anymore, but as a brother.

Now, that is encouraging. That is so encouraging if you think about it. Where would it have seemed more likely for Onesimus to have been saved?

In Philemon's house. Philemon was there and he loved him and Ephraim is there and soldier boy Archippus is there. The whole church is meeting there.

Can you imagine? They probably got together and they had prayer meetings and someone said, do we have any prayer requests? Philemon raises his hand and says, can we pray for my slave Onesimus?

He could be so much more than what he is. He's just not what he could be. He's running from God.

[34 : 40] Let's pray that God would break into his heart. And Onesimus probably sat in on the preaching. He heard the gospel.

He heard the gospel and yet he didn't believe. And then he was gone. Then he skipped out. Left town.

And the people probably said, what hope is there now? We prayed. We had hoped. We had hoped that God would do something. But were they right?

God moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform, plants his footsteps in the sea, and rides upon the storm.

Onesimus left an ideal situation, and he was saved in a very unideal place. Isn't that encouraging moms and dads?

[35 : 45] Don't give up on your children. children. As long as God is God, there is hope. As long as God is omnipresent, omnipotent, as long as God loves to show surprising grace, he's the kind of God that ambushes people with grace.

You can have hope. So does everything look dark? Does providence look dark? Is it the frowning face of providence that we sing of? Does it look like it's against you and your children?

Well, look behind the way things seem. Look behind the way things look. And I know that is hard. I know that's difficult.

But look up to your God. I mean this reverently. He's a wild one. He's not tame. He doesn't have to explain what he's doing to you.

And he doesn't ask you for advice. He's God. He's good. And his grace is greater than any rebellion.

[37 : 01] When he puts it on a man, he can change the rebel's heart. He can win his heart. So God in his providence took Onesimus far away. God is back.

He's a new man. And Paul says he's back now not as a slave, but as a brother. Philemon, God's been at work.

God's been at work, Philemon. So be reconciled. Look at everything God's been doing. Now, beloved, we don't have Ben Franklin's God.

We don't have a God far away and detached. He doesn't care about our relationships. He's a God that created us to be relational because he's relational.

He's a God that cares about our relationships because our relationships reflect his relationship with us and with Christ and the church. We don't have a God that doesn't care.

[38:04] He goes to great lengths to heal relationships. Now, if that is your God, he's that concerned, he's that compassionate, what should you do?

Lean on him. Lean on him and go and do and have those personal dealings that you need to have. God have. I don't want to give it any more detail than that. I'll leave it in the general. Go and have those personal dealings that you need to have.

Lean on him. Trust him and forgive that person who sinned against you. Philemon was going to have to trust the Lord to forgive Onesimus.

And I'm calling you to do the same thing. God has told you to forgive your brothers as they come to you. But he hasn't left you to make bricks without straw. He's down there in the mud with you.

[39:11] He's done the hard work. He's changing hearts. And then are you still outside of Jesus? Still unbelieving?

God without mercy and not without pity.

he's not willing that any should be lost. And he takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. And so he's welcoming sinners back.

And in order to welcome sinners back, he has set up Jesus Christ as a mediator, as a go-between. Now sometimes you need that. Onesimus needed Paul to be a mediator between he and Philemon. And Jesus Christ is our Paul.

[40:32] He's the only mediator between God and man because he is God and he is man. He's well qualified to bring both parties together. And he is able to be the mediator because he came to earth once.

We sang of it this morning and he came to provide purification for sins. And he did that. And he did that and now he sits at the majesty, at the right hand of the majesty on high.

And he sits there and we sang that, I think we prayed it, on a throne of grace to welcome sinners back. He rules to bring sinners into the kingdom of God to welcome sinners.

sinners. He's done it all. And so what I'm saying is take him at his word. Take him at his word. God has said this is the kind of God that I am.

You have a problem. You have sin. You have guilt. You're estranged. You're running away. I'm welcoming sinners back. All who come to Jesus. I welcome them.

[41:37] Lean on him. Be reconciled today. In the battle, you can have peace today. So put your trust in him.

Put your trust in him. Even as we sing our closing hymn. It's number 393. 393 in our Trinity hymnals. 393.

Let's stand as we sing and you see these words. Come ye sinners, poor and wretched, weak and wounded, sick and sore. Jesus ready stands to save you.

Now that's not saying much about sinners, is it? Weak, wretched, poor, wounded, sick, sore. If you don't like those, then you're not ready to come to Jesus.

But if you say, you know what, that's what I am. Look at the next line. Jesus stands ready to save you. Full of pity, joined with power. He is able, He is able, He is willing, doubt no more.

[42:46] Hymn 393. Let's pray. O our great God and our Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, we thank you that you are such a mighty refuge for sinners like us.

We thank you that the Lord Jesus is that rock that was struck and now living water flows out of Him. Thank you that you are the kind of God that cares about our relationships, you're the kind of God that cares about sinners even though they are running away.

Thank you that you track down men and women and with surprising shocking grace you save.

Holy Spirit come in power into a sinner's heart to many sinners' hearts this morning. Break through their confidence, their pride, lay open their sin, their need.

Oh Lord, break them down so that you can build them up in Christ. Break them down so that they can flee to Jesus and find in Him everything they need.

[44:18] Help us then together with those who are coming to glorify your free bounty in the way that we live, the way that we feel, the things that we do.

Thank you for your help. Please help us to not just be hearers but to be doers of the word. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.