Philemon 4-6

I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers, 5 hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints, 6 that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.

This is definitely the Apostle Paul’s shortest New Testament letter and its the most personal. Writing to a man by the epistle’s name, the apostle states his love for his disciple whom he had led to the Lord. But Philemon was more than just a convert of Paul’s; he was also a friend. Not only that but he was an elder whose church met in his house, “to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house” (Philemon 1:2).

The reason for the brief letter to Philemon is because of a slave named Onesimus. Philemon had a slave who had run away and in the providence of God, crossed paths with the Roman prisoner, the Apostle Paul. Paul was, at the time, imprisoned in Rome and he led Onesimus, the run away slave, to Jesus. He says in verse 10 “I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten while in my chains.”

He wrote this epistle and gave it to Onesimus to take to Philemon, explaining that he is sending Onesimus back, not as a slave but as a brother in the Lord. He asked Philemon to receive him back, and even offered to pay Philemon whatever Onesimus owed him. So the letter is meant to reconcile two brothers.

But it is in the first few verses of this little letter that I find our text and theme: every good thing.

Before we delve into our theme we have to deal with some translation differences.

I. Translation Differences

If all of you were reading out of the New King James Version I wouldn’t have to take time to explain. There are other translations and if I didn’t deal with them you would be spending your time trying to understand why I’m not interpreting the verse like your translation does, so we have to address it.

The New King James translates this verse similar to how the Holman Christian Standard Version does.
I pray that your participation in the faith may become effective through knowing every good thing that is in us for the glory of Christ. (Philemon 1:6 HCSB)

The New American Standard Bible reads very similar.

and I pray that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ's sake. (Philemon 1:6 NASB)

The New King James Version and these other two translations renders this verse for us to understand that Paul is praying for Philemon that the more he understands and acknowledges the good things God has given him in Christ the more effective the demonstration of his faith will be. That's how these verses are translated. But there's another way this verse has been translated.

and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. (Philemon 1:6 ESV)

The NIV says something very similar.

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. (Philemon 1:6 NIV)

Do you see the difference? One says, “I'm praying that you will know every good thing that is in you in Christ so that your faith will be demonstrated more effectively.” Whereas the latter two translations are just the opposite. “I'm praying that you will share your faith more and more so you will know more and more of God's goodness to you.” That's a huge difference.

I'm not going to bore you with the Greek and all that will glaze you and your eyes over because we don't need to do that. If we just simply look at the context of this letter and the general tenor of Scripture we can come to one conclusion: the Bible nowhere puts the emphasis upon you but rather upon God Himself. This is what distinguishes Christianity from all other world religions.

There are some who believe that all religions are basically the same and will lead to the same end but that is simply a false statement, one of absolute ignorance. Not all religions are exactly alike. In fact, you could say that all religions are alike except the Christian faith for one distinct reason. All other religions put the onus, the responsibility, of you achieving some sense of virtue or morality in order to reach some state of perfection or peace or nirvana.

But the Christian faith is the absolute opposite. The Christian faith says there's nothing you can do. We're all under the condemnation of God. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And, if you are to know peace and perfection and eternal life, God has to rescue you. God has to intervene. God has to apply grace to your rebellious and unregenerate heart.
In light of that I believe the New King James has properly and rightly translated this verse. Paul is praying Philemon would better understand the grace of God, the work of God in his own life, so that his faith will be greatly demonstrated. There's a huge difference here. This begins with God and God's activity in your life. So, my friend, if your faith is being poorly demonstrated and you feel your faith is feeble, weak at this moment, the answer is not for you to grit your teeth and try harder. The answer is not to commit yourself to more Christian service. The answer is for you to look to God to show you His great love for you. This is the answer.

As we move to discern what the Apostle Paul is saying to Philemon we will discover Paul is encouraging Philemon to live life in the overflow.

## II. Life in the Overflow

This is where you and I as Christians are to live. We are not to live out of sheer determination to serve Jesus, we're to live out of the overflow of our personal vibrant relationship with Jesus daily.

Paul acknowledges Philemon’s generosity, which is a demonstration of Philemon’s faith. Paul isn’t even dealing with Philemon’s evangelism. That’s not what this is saying although the ESV and NIV takes that approach. Let me show you why I don’t think that’s what he’s meaning. Look at verse five.

> …hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints,

Does Jesus need you to witness to Him? The context says that Paul recognizes Philemon’s love for Christ and the saints. Do the saints need evangelizing? Not in the sense that they don’t know Jesus already. We all need the Gospel but we all don’t need evangelizing. What he means here in the demonstration of his love to the Lord and the saints is something that is visible. I suggest that it’s his generosity. How does Paul, who is in a Roman cell, know that Philemon is loving the brotherhood and Jesus? Is it because Philemon says to every believer he meets, “Hey, I love you in Jesus’ name!”

We already know by the witness of Scripture that won’t work. You can tell people you love them all day long but it’s your actions of love that speaks to whether you actually love that person. If that brother and sister is having a rough patch and you say, “You know I love you and I’ll pray for you,” when you have within your ability the means to alleviate their suffering, you could tell them all day long that you love them but you really don’t.

I believe what Philemon has demonstrated his love by his generosity. So Paul prays that Philemon’s giving would increase by Philemon understanding more of what Christ has given him. That’s the principle. That’s the power of your Christian life. It’s not that you’ve developed ministry techniques and gifts of service; that will avail to nothing profitable in the kingdom. What you and I need to focus on right now is every good thing that has been given to us in Christ Jesus. That sounds very selfish. That’s not selfish at all! It’s focused on Jesus who is the great Giver—He is the Gift Himself.
Have you caught a repeated theme this morning? “What can we ask of God, what should He have given us? Nothing but His wrath and judgment, yet He’s given exactly the opposite. He’s given us every good thing in Christ.”

The result is that Paul prays for Philemon that he will be equipped to encourage and love the saints more as he himself is brought to a place of deeper understanding of every spiritual blessing he has in Christ. Out of the overflow of his own life and relationship with Jesus, Philemon will minister to others. That's exactly how you and I are to minister to one another. Out of the overflow of a personal, real, dynamic relationship with Jesus.

A. What is the Overflow?

It is the superabundance of God's love and goodness. I use the word *superabundance* on purpose. God doesn’t just meet your needs. He doesn’t adequately get the job done and then stop. That’s not the way of God. God is a superabundant God and that's the way He performs for His children. He doesn’t give you what you need, He gives you more than you need. He always does. This is His way.

To live out of the overflow is not to just get by in the Christian life, like so many of us are doing. It's to live out of the superabundance that Jesus is.

“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10)

Let’s deal with the first half of this verse. That’s the task of Satan. His job is always to steal, kill, and destroy and he does that. He does that not in one cataclysmic event in your life, he does it slowly. Satan works in peoples’ lives under the radar, incognito. He does it in a way that you’re not wise to his efforts.

Have you not heard of the metaphor of the frog in the kettle? You know, the frog is boiled to death? How does that happen without the frog knowing and jumping out before it’s too late? You put the frog in room temperature water and he swims around and is enjoying himself and then you turn the burner on low. Slowly the water temperature rises and he doesn’t pay attention because every moment his body is acclimating to the temperature until it’s too late.

That’s the way of the enemy. He steals, takes, robs, ravages, and you don’t even know it’s happening. This is the sad thing. The people who are not the followers of Jesus don’t know they’re being plundered, they’re being robbed, they’re being destroyed moment by moment, slowly, like a poison without alarm, it’s just happening below the radar. And that’s what happens to believers who do not live out of the overflow.

But Jesus said, “I’ve come not to give you life,” although He could have said just that. That would have been a true statement. But He said, “I’ve come that you may have life,” then He adds an addendum, “and have it more abundantly.”
The words *more abundantly* are beautiful words, they literally mean *superabundant (in quantity); excessive, superfluous, over and above, more than is necessary*. This is the way of God. He gives you more than is necessary. In John 7:38, Jesus says,

“He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”

If you really trust Jesus with you, He says out of your heart will flow rivers (plural) of living water. Why didn’t He say *river*? Why does He always have to speak in hyperbole and exaggerate to make the point? Friends, this is no hyperbole. He could have said *river*. If you look at the Ohio River or the Mississippi River, you’ll see mighty rivers. But Jesus wants you to know there is more to the Christian life than just being forgiven of your sins. There’s an overflow. There’s more than necessary. There is a superabundance. There are many rivers. This is not just the testimony of Jesus. This is the testimony of all believers, summed up in one of my favorite verses, 2 Corinthians 9:8

“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.”

That’s God’s way. He doesn’t just get the job done and then quit, He goes beyond. When there is not that overflow in the believer’s life, where there is little to no experiencing of the spiritual blessing we have in Christ, then we will have nothing with which to minister to others. Let me be clear: If you’re not experiencing Jesus and the knowledge of every good thing He’s invested in you, then you don’t have anything to give anyone else. Your knowledge of the Scriptures is not sufficient. You can become a great theologian and your theology will not help me in my heart’s dilemma. When I’m in that place of a heart dilemma, a heart problem, when I’m not in the overflow or in vibrant relationship with Jesus, I need a brother or sister who is walking close to God so that when I’m close to them I’m close to Jesus because Jesus is just flowing out of them and onto me.

We become dried up and then we begin to doubt more and more of God’s love for us, His trustworthiness, and His grace. Such are some of you. You’ve been living out of your knowledge of the Bible, out of the facts of the Bible, you’ve been living based upon past experiences with Jesus and that might work for a while but sooner or later that dries up. It’s a stream that has no chance of perpetuating itself. It will collapse and there’s no chance of anything but dehydration, deprivation, and desertion. You need the overflow.

What happens when you get to the place where you have no overflow? You begin to doubt that God loves you. Then the thief that comes to steal, kill, and destroy, begins to say, “When’s the last time God’s answered your prayer? It’s been a long time, hasn’t it? See, God doesn’t really love you. It’s been a mirage. It’s been a psychological trick. You’ve just convinced yourself of certain fantasies and now you’re seeing they aren’t real.” And now you’re doubting God’s trustworthiness and His grace for you.

**B. The Overflow is the Result of Participation in the Life of Christ.**
Christianity is much larger and broader than forgiveness or heaven when you die; it is the literal participation in the very life of Christ Jesus. He is not a figure in history alone, He is my friend, my kinsman Redeemer, my Deliverer, my God, my Lord, and He is with me. He is always there to interact with. This is the overflow.

And from my acknowledgement of all His love and goodness to me I am energized more and more.

In the last part of this message I want to deal with how we experience the overflow.

III. How to Experience the Overflow

“that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.” (Philemon 6)

You will have more than enough to share your faith and demonstrate it to all, if you learn how to acknowledge every good thing God has done in you and for you in Christ Jesus. This is how faith always works.

Faith is always dependent upon truth. Faith comes by the word of God and never the other way around. You don’t have faith and then you believe truth. It’s always truth and then faith follows. God does not ask us to trust in Him without facts. This has been one of the greatest lies Satan has perpetuated about the Christian faith; that Christians’ brains and logics are out of gear. He wants people to toss aside any logic or sensibility and believe that faith is nothing more than a leap into the dark. It’s all mystical and nothing factual about it, but nothing could be further from the truth. Christianity is the most factual religion you will know. It’s all based upon the historicity of certain facts. Did they or did they not occur? And the facts are there for you to investigate. It’s there to be seen and either stand or fall under the evidence.

God could come to you and say, “I want you to believe because I said so,” and that ought to be enough. He’s God. But even He doesn’t do that. Even if He were to do that, your faith in God is based upon the fact that God is trustworthy, that what He says is true, and that He never reneges on His word. You can trust God because you know certain facts about God: He is trustworthy, dependable, and faithful to His own promises.

Paul says there are two facts we need to know by experience (not just by the intellect). This is more than knowing the facts, you need to experience these facts. You must know the truth of who we are in Christ and we must know the truth of who Christ is.

A. We Must Know the Truth of Who We Are In Christ.

If your faith is to grow in the demonstration thereof, then you need to come to know the truth of who you are in Jesus Christ. That’s what Paul says here.
You need to know some things about you. The NKJV uses the word *acknowledgment* to express a Greek word that means a more thorough participation on the part of the learner to acquire knowledge. This isn’t just reading a book and discovering something. I can go to Wikipedia and do that. I can find facts all day long, but it’s more than just knowing the facts, it’s a participation in those facts.

Most of the time in the New Testament it refers to a knowledge received by personal involvement. This is on the job training. There are just certain things you don’t learn by books; you learn by doing them. This is the word for *acknowledgement*. You’re going to learn by experience every good thing in you.

There are two ways to personally acquire this knowledge. The first one is a personal pursuit of knowledge.

We are so fortunate that God has written everything that we need to know in a book. This is a living Book because the Author is living. It’s His Word. It’s a reflection of His wisdom, knowledge, and heart. Everything you need to know about God, not everything there is to know about God, but everything you need to know about God, is here for you.

Friends, I don’t have a photographic memory. I used to joke that I did and I just sometimes forget to put the film in but we don’t use film any more so that joke is no good. When’s the last time you put film in a camera? I don’t have a photographic memory and I’m getting to a point where I’m discovering that I forget things. I have to re-learn things I learned years ago in this Book. If you don’t use it you lose it. I’m glad He wrote it down!

Therefore, I am to personally pursue the knowledge of every good thing that is in me through Christ. Not by getting into this Book and reading it but by studying it, meditating on it, mulling it over, digesting, chewing on this Word and letting it get into you until it truly develops your worldview, the way you think and approach life. That’s what you are to do—you’re to study to show yourself approved.

Secondly, this kind of knowledge comes by the Holy Spirit imparting knowledge. Otherwise, all Paul would have had to say to Philemon is, “Take my letters and study them, boy. Know them well. The sharing of your faith will be more effective this way.” But he didn’t say that, did he? He said, “I’m praying for you.” Which means that God has to be involved in your acquiring understanding of the facts. That’s what we call illumination. The Spirit of God comes and breathes, inspires, and illuminates you to give you, not just mental awareness, but spiritual awareness.

We need to pursue understanding of who we are in Christ and pray for the Holy Spirit’s illumination.
B. We Must Know the Truth of Who Christ Is.

Who you are is really who Christ is because you're in Him. "The life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." "It is not I," said Paul, "who lives, but Christ who lives in me." If every good thing is in me through Christ, I need to know who Jesus is. That's what Paul says.

"the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus."

A failure of most Christians is that we often see Jesus apart and separate from His gifts. But this is not true. He is the gift and all that He gives is an expression of Himself and His love for us. All you need is Jesus. You don't need spiritual gifts. Because with Jesus you have every good thing. Make sense?

"in Christ"

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ," (Ephesians 1:3)

Here's what I want to recommend to you. Please get this point. This is the heart of the whole message. If you get this next sentence God will help you. I don't believe He gave this to me to give to you just to waste our time or so we can say, "We did a church service. We endured another sermon." I don't believe that's why you're here.

What we have to learn to do is come to God as seen in Christ Jesus. That's so simple but it's so profound and we miss it so often. Come to God as seen in Christ Jesus. Let me tell you why this is so important. The enemy is constantly presenting God to you as harsh, vindictive, unpredictable, severe, hard to please, and difficult. Isn't he? This week you've had the thought cross your mind that God is hard to please. He's kind of stern and you've felt like you just don't make the grade. Where did that come from? You could say it came from you but it also came from an enemy. He doesn't want you to see God as He's seen in Christ. He wants to create a representation of God that will destroy your faith and confidence in God.

So how do we know what God is really like? All of those people in the Old Testament era had this same struggle. It was difficult for them to understand who God was, even though they had the Word. So God did this—He came to us in the person of Jesus, as a man. Everything you read about Jesus is God Himself. That's what God is like. What is Jesus like? Whatever Jesus is like so is the Father. There's no difference.

We're really warped in our understanding of God, aren't we? We really are. We don't see God the Father like we see God the Son, and if you don't your theology is wrong. Can I advise us, just for a few moments, to look to Jesus before we leave today? How can we do that? Let's look at the fruit of the Spirit. We don't have time to look at all nine characteristics of Jesus' personality,
because that's what those nine fruits are. They are a description of the very personality of Jesus. But let's look at a few of them.

What's the first one? If you don't know where they are or what they are, look at Galatians 5:22. There are nine things listed there that are to be forming in you and beginning to shape you and your character.

**Love.**

Each believer has the love of God in them so that they can love others in the same way God loves them—unconditionally and undeservedly. But we don't believe that because we don't believe God loves us like that. We truly have difficulty believing free, undeserving, gracious love.

A seminary is a place where people go to be trained for the ministry, and a seminary professor asked 120 of her students this question: “Do you believe that God loves you?” Out of 120 Christian students preparing for ministry, how many do you think said, “Yes?”

Two! The rest gave answers like this, “I know I’m supposed to say, ‘Yes’…” “I know the Bible says He loves me…but I don’t feel it,” or “I’m not sure I can really say I believe it.” These were the kinds of answers the seminary professor got. “I’m just not really sure.”

The love of God must be experienced and cannot be believed apart from experience. God is not just asking you to accept the facts that He loves you, He's opening His arms to love you. Jonathan Edwards said it this way, “There is a difference between having a rational judgment that honey is sweet, and having a sense of its sweetness.” How do you get the sense of honey’s sweetness? By tasting it. The Bible says, “Taste and see that the Lord is good.” God is saying, “Don’t just believe Me academically or intellectually, I want you to experience Me.” This is what salvation is. This is what a Christian is—it’s a person who is interacting with God Almighty! He’s experiencing the sweetness of God’s love. That’s what creates the overflow.

John Owen says in his most fabulous book *Communion with God*:

“So long as the Father is seen as harsh, judging and condemning, the soul is filled with fear and dread every time it comes to Him… But when God… is seen as a Father, filled with love, the soul is filled with love to God in return…”

That's what Paul is saying, “Philemon, the more you experience God and His love for you, the more you’re going to love others. That’s what I’m praying for you.”

Owen went on to say this,

“All that we learn of God will only frighten us away from Him if we do not see him as loving and merciful to us. But if your heart is taken up with the Father’s love… it cannot help but choose to be overpowered, conquered and embraced by Him.”
Some of you are scared of God. You don’t see God as He really is in Christ. Therefore the first day that you sin or don’t read your Bible or don’t pray or witness, you think God is upset with you because of your poor performance, but that is not the Bible’s explanation of the Gospel!

Owen is saying you have to be careful because some of the attributes of God are frightening. The old King James Version called Him a terrible and awesome God. He strikes fear in the heart of those who see Him in His perfection and holiness. We’re not minimizing that about God but I want you to see that Jesus absorbed all of the terrible, frightening things about God so that now God can display His lovingkindness for you always, regardless of your performance. No matter how badly you mess up, God is still the same. His love is unchanging.

That's what Owen is saying. We need to be overpowered, conquered, and embraced by the love of God. Does God love you? You better believe He does. How do I know? Look at Jesus. Look how He dealt with His apostles. To the very end they didn’t believe in Him. They believed certain facts about Him but they didn’t believe in Him. Before Jesus goes to the cross the apostles are struggling to believe. Even after the resurrection, hear Thomas, “I will not believe unless I can see Him and touch Him with my hands.” Yet what does Jesus do? He loves them. He doesn’t say, “Thomas, you don’t deserve to be in My presence, I want you out of here—don’t ever come back. You’re disqualified from ministry.” He reproves him, but in a loving way, “You want to touch Me? Here I am. Go ahead.” Man, talk about love.

The 22nd chapter of John is all about restoring a man who has fallen—Peter. Does God love you? Yes! Even when you deny Him with cursings and oaths, claiming you don’t know Him. He says, “I still love you, Peter. Do you love Me?”

Joy.

While there is a difference between joy and happiness, we are too easy to strip happiness from joy. When you say joy and happiness are not the same thing, that’s not true. There is pleasure and happiness in joy and Jesus was the happiest person you would ever meet and He still is. He is happy. “My joy I give to you.” Watch the little children come to Him. He’s no sourpuss. He’s not an angry, hard to please master. Even prostitutes and extortioners—tax cheats—liked to be around Him. There was something jubilant about Him. “The joy of the Lord is my strength.”

Is your life mission joyful? Do you experience real pleasure and happiness? If not, then Jesus is the answer to your heart’s longing.

Peace.

Jesus is tranquil, never conflicted.

Longsuffering.
I know I make Jesus suffer long. That is the meaning of the word longsuffering. It means Jesus patiently endures our sinfulness and stubbornness. Like He did with Peter. He patiently endured that. Listen to me, God loves you even when you are stubborn and you’re not showing any love or affection for Him. That’s how great His love is for you.

**Gentleness.**

Jesus is kind.

**Goodness.**

Jesus is good. I think about the prodigal son who had taken his inheritance and gone to a far country and squandered it away. When he came back, that father showed him great kindness. He didn’t give the son what he deserved. He did not disfellowship and disown his son, he covered him with his kisses. Then he was good.

Kindness is mercy, but goodness is more than being kind. Goodness is being proactive. The father called for the best robe. Where did the best robe come from? The son had already gotten all of his belongings. It came from the father’s wardrobe. How many of you would like to be covered with God’s best robe today? How many of you would like God to wrap you in His love and best gifts? That’s how God is—see it in Christ.

See it as He is bowing down in the dirt as a woman is brought before Him who was caught in the very act of adultery. I will not get any more graphic than that but I will tell you that she was kneeling on the ground wrapped in nothing more than a sheet because she was caught in the very act by religious men who wanted to have her stoned so they could prove Jesus wasn’t so kind. But after Jesus masterfully dealt with the religious hypocrites, He turned to the woman all alone and said, “Does anyone condemn you?” “Lord, no.” “Neither do I condemn you.” He is kind and He is good. That is God.

**Meekness.**

We don’t deal with this very often but God is meek. Meek and lowly. This is hard for us to grasp because we don’t think of God as being lowly but high and lifted up. But Jesus was meek. What is meekness? The only way to explain meekness is to take you back to His trial before Pilate, the Roman governor who had the power of life and death. He could either set Jesus free or crucify Him.

Pilate was intrigued by Jesus, but nothing amazed him more than Christ’s meekness. Pilate could not understand Jesus’ lack of reaction to His accusers. Here are these religious hypocrites, the same ones who had caught the women in adultery, and here they are now accusing that Jesus deserved death to the Roman governor. They made up fictional accusations but Jesus doesn’t answer any of their lies.
How would you respond? You're on a trial for your life where people are saying things about you that are not true and then the judge says, “What have you got to say?” Are you just going to stand there and say nothing? That's what Jesus did.

Pilate knew the Jewish leaders were lying. He had had enough dealings with them in the past to despise them and not trust them. He said of Jesus that He was innocent, a man in whom he could “find no fault.” Why wouldn't Jesus defend Himself?

The reason Jesus didn't defend Himself is because He didn't feel the need to do so. In other words, He took no pride in His virtue. That is what meekness is. Meekness is the amazing ability to be virtuous without feeling the necessity to prove it.

How many of you have said, “God, I would believe in You if You would just prove to me You were real.” How many times has God answered that prayer? Some of you are not followers of Jesus because He has never answered that prayer and you think, “God is not real.” No, the answer is that God is meek. He has no need to answer you or prove Himself. A meek person is a virtuous person but they don’t have to prove their virtue. They are totally consumed with pleasing God and believing that what God knows about them is enough. That's meekness.

Today God does demonstrate Himself. You just don’t see it. Are you here today hearing the Gospel? Are you hearing the Word of the Lord? There have been parts of this message that I’m sure were purely Michael Durham but I’m telling you the Gospel and here it is—God so loved you that He gave His only begotten Son that if you would believe upon Him you would not perish but have everlasting life. God killed His Son so He could receive you as His son or daughter and never, ever turn you loose.

What Paul prayed for Philemon was that Philemon would experience more of God's wealth of goodness to Philemon and that's what I'm praying for us. Experiencing God and His love for you will do more for you than any great feat of religious dedication and sacrifice. This is not about learning more Scripture, although that's good. It's not about doing this or that or having a resolute will, although we need a resolute will and discipline. But what we need more than all of that is to see Jesus as He really is, and experience what He has given us, everything we need. And we need that daily.

As I conclude, I want to invite you, if you are not yet a follower of Jesus and you want Him to demonstrate Himself to you, how can He do so? You've said to Him, as that young prodigal did to his father, “You're dead to me, God,” and you go off to a far off country to live life your way. How can God show Himself to you? You've said no to Him. And in His meekness He has honored and respected that. The only way for you to know the love of God and every good thing, this more abundant life, the overflow, is for you to come back to God and be humble to receive what God will give you in Christ Jesus. I pray you do that. In Jesus’ name, amen.