

97-02-23a

As we continue our worship this morning, let's turn for our Scripture reading to Colossians chapter 1. As you know, this morning we are beginning chapter 12 of Romans, and the opening verses of that are usually quite familiar to us as believers. As Paul begins the exhortation phase of his letter to the Romans and makes application of all of the principles and the points that he has made up to that point in the letter, and he then begins by urging believers to live a life that pleases God. And we have a wonderful description of that life in Colossians chapter 1. Colossians 1, Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, and Timothy, our brother, to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colossae, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints, because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel. Notice that the hope of inheritance, the hope of reward, is a part of the gospel that Paul preaches, which has come to you as it has also in all the world and is bringing forth fruit. And this word of truth of the gospel has come to them and remains with them, and it is bringing forth fruit.

And this is not talking about new converts to Christianity, it's talking about the fruit of the healthy Christian life, as we see when we go forward in this chapter. He says it's bringing forth fruit as it is also among you, ever since the day you heard and knew the grace of God and truth, as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, who also declared to us your love in the spirit. For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all might according to his glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy, giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of his love, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins. He, Christ, is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers, all things were created through him and for him.

And he is before all things, and in him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he may have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him all the fullness should dwell." So, we see once again, as we see so often in the writings of Paul, that the key to pleasing God, the key to walking worthy and being equipped for every good work, the key to being fruitful, in short, the key to our life as believers, is being filled with the knowledge of his will in wisdom and spiritual

understanding.

Walking in the truth, receiving the truth, exposing ourselves to the teaching of the truth, and then processing it in our souls, having it become the object of our faith. This passage is great for seeing all three of the operative principles of the Christian life, faith, hope and love, which are mentioned in verses 4 and 5. And Paul prays enthusiastically for this group because he recognizes that all three of those principles are at work. He has heard of their faith in Christ Jesus, he has heard of their love for all the saints, and he knows that it's motivated by the hope that is laid up for them in heaven.

They understand what's at stake in life and are living in the light of it. So, that's our goal as we return to the study of Romans this morning, is having established the truth of what the goal of our life is, to grow in grace, to grow in knowledge, to walk a worthy walk, to live in a way that's fully pleasing to God. We know that that comes through the knowledge of the truth.

So, the question for us now is, what is that truth? What are some of those things that are to be the object of our faith? What are the life-changing priorities that we are going to set in the light of God's Word? As we return to our study in Romans, we know now through our study and through many reviews that this book addresses itself to the worthy walk. It addresses itself to the way believers should live, the way to be fully pleasing to God, and that is to walk by faith and not by sight. To look for our approval, if you want to use today's vocabulary, to look for our affirmation, to look for our sense of self-worth, to look for our sense of value, our self-esteem, whatever term you want to use for it, to have our confidence and our forward-thinking attitude based on God's approval rather than the approval of people who measure with a false standard.

The people in Paul's day who measured with that false standard were largely Jewish by religion, and they used the standard of that Jewish religion, which was a perversion of the law of Moses that they had received some 1,400 years earlier. And they said, if you perform these actions, you are worthwhile, you are valuable, you are praiseworthy. Paul has argued throughout this letter that that's not the measure, and it really never was.

And Israel, as a nation, fell on its face trying to pursue that standard. They had a zeal for God, but it wasn't according to knowledge. They thought, if I just punch the ticket, if I just behave in these ways, I will receive blessing, I will be approved, I will have a standing in the community, I will have a standing in my own eyes, and I'll have a standing in God's eyes.

And Paul has argued, going all the way back to the example of Abraham, that it has always been faith, trusting God, faith that sets aside one's own interests if necessary, as Abraham did when he went up the mountain with Isaac, as Abraham did when he waited for the promise to be fulfilled of having an heir and a son. That's what pleases God. The principle that fulfills the entire law of Moses is love, love for God and love for one another.

Christ said all the law and the prophets are summed up in those two facets of life. And what is love? Love is putting someone else's interests ahead of our own because we value them and we assign them importance that is ahead of our own. Now, this section that we have come to in the letter here, after making those points, and after pointing out how Israel missed the boat, Paul now comes in chapter 12 and he says, I beseech you therefore, on the basis of everything that we've covered up to this point, on the basis of the fact that some of you are self-righteous, you look down your nose at the unbelievers who are living to please themselves and that God has turned over to their vices and that God has turned over to their self-seeking and their self-centeredness.

God has turned them over to that and you, oh man, who look down your nose at them are guilty of doing the very same thing. Remember Romans chapter 2? And he said you're going to suffer at the judgment. You're storing up wrath for yourself when you point the finger at others who live in a self-serving manner and yet you yourself are doing the very same thing.

And then he moved forward to talk about the fact that it isn't a matter of pleasing ourselves. It isn't a matter of trying to gain standing for ourselves. It's a matter of living in a way that pleases God, trusting God, often at what the world would see as our own expense, often at the cost of a sacrifice.

Jesus said you may have to abandon your family. You may have to abandon your possessions. You have to be willing to do that.

That was the test that the rich young ruler failed. Something else was more important to him than pleasing the Lord. And he loved to go and keep the ordinances of the law.

He was proud of himself for having done so. But when it came to deciding what was most important in his life, he couldn't part with his possessions. It isn't necessary to part with one's possessions to please God, but they can stand in the way of inheriting the kingdom.

They can stand in the way of being fully pleasing to God as we've just seen in Colossians 1 because they have a higher priority. We don't love God. We don't prioritize Him above our own material benefit or our own standing in the eyes of others or our own pleasure in certain activities.

So Paul has pointed these things out and he's saying, therefore, I'm urging you to do something. And as we begin chapter 12, verse 1, in the English here, the very first words are, I beseech you. This is an interesting word because what is translated here as beseech is the Greek word parakaleo.

Parakaleo. And it may sound familiar. It may ring a bell because this is the same word that we saw in our study of the Holy Spirit that Jesus gives as a title.

The noun form of this word, paraklete or parakletos, is the noun form of parakaleo. And in John 14, verses 15 and following, when Jesus says, I'm going away, but I will send to you another

comforter, that word is paraklete or parakletos. And it's derived from this very same stem.

Parakaleo. Para-P-A-R-A is the prefix which means alongside. We get the word parallel or paralegal.

Many words in English. Paragraph. All has the idea of laying something alongside or being beside something.

Kaleo is the word to call. To call alongside. K-A-L-E-O.

Parakaleo means to call alongside. And it has the idea of coming to someone's aid in its original form. And it came to mean someone who stands beside for the purpose of rendering assistance, for the purpose of rescue, for the purpose of encouragement, for the purpose of helping you be where you need to be or helping you do what you need to do.

Helper is a good translation of the noun form. Or encourager. For example, if you look back in Acts chapter 4, right at the end of the chapter there, it talks about how believers had all things in common and those who owned property sold their fields and brought the money into the church so that they could provide for those who were less fortunate.

And it says one of the people who did this was a man named Joseph who was a Levite. Now, very few of us remember Joseph the Levite by his original name because he had been given a nickname by the apostles and his nickname was Barnabas. And Barnabas, bar, is the Aramaic for been or son of and the remainder of that word is the Aramaic or Hebrew for encouragement.

And he was the son of encouragement. This man, when he was in the room, when he was with people, was an encourager. He was the son of encouragement.

And when Luke in the book of Acts talks about Barnabas and he says he was Barnabas, he was called Barnabas, which means son of encouragement, the word for encouragement there is parakaleo, parakletos. It's the same word. He was an encourager.

He helped motivate people. And his very first appearance in the book of Acts is by selling this field and bringing the proceeds, it's an encouragement. It motivates.

It gives people a sense of enthusiasm. Here's where the important things in life really are. It's here at the church.

We're devoting our resources to this. We're devoting our time to this. This is where life really matters.

This is where life really counts is in the church. And he demonstrated that in his life and in bringing these proceeds. The interesting thing is, you remember in Acts chapter 5 what the next event that occurs is.

After Barnabas sells his field and brings in the money, Ananias and Sapphira see that and they say, boy, isn't Barnabas a great guy. Look at the kind of encouragement that he is. Look at the way people are brought to life and given a sense of encouragement and enthusiasm by people like Barnabas.

We would like to be viewed that way. We would like to have that kind of impact on the church and that kind of esteem in the eyes of people who value the things that really count. So Ananias and Sapphira, they go and sell their field and they bring part of the money into the church.

But they keep part of it back because they want the effect that Barnabas had, but they don't necessarily want to pay the price that Barnabas paid. They're not completely sacrificial, are they? They bring in some of the money and then they keep some of it back. Which would be fine.

As Peter points out, it's your field to do with as you will. You can easily give all or any part of that money to the church and just say so. Their sin was in coming and saying, we have given all.

And Peter says, you have lied to the Holy Spirit. And he says, you haven't really lied to man but to God. And what have they done? They were after the effect.

They wanted to be seen by people the same way that they saw Barnabas. They admired him and they thought, boy, what an impact. What a testimony.

What a witness Barnabas is. What an encouragement he is to people. What a spark plug he is in the church.

We would like to have that status. So we'll go do what Barnabas did or at least we will appear to have. But there was something in reserve.

There was something that was really motivating them to do that. They did the very same thing but they had a different heart and it showed in the fact that they held part of the money back. But Barnabas was the son of encouragement.

And just as an aside, when you think about Ananias and Sapphira, this is one of the dangers that we run because many times believers will have an impact in our life and we feel like go thou and do likewise. And this is a form of pressure that is often encouraged in a church or in a seminary. There's nothing quite like the experience of being at seminary during Missions Conference Week, for example, when all the missionaries come in and say we're from this mission and we're from this organization, we're from this fellowship.

We have given up our homes in the United States and we've gone to Borneo and we've gone to Thailand and we've gone this place and that place. We've gone to these far off places and eaten bugs and lived in grass shacks and done without electricity and so forth. Look at the impact that we've had.

Here's these villages where churches have been built and here's this and that and the other that we have done. There's nothing intrinsically wrong with this. When it becomes wrong is when they say now see, this is the measure of where value is in the plan of God.

Because the underlying assumption is the mission of the church is to evangelize. We're out here in the thickets and in the jungles and in the deserts and in the waste places seeking out the lost and bringing them to Christ and that's the mission of the church. You should go and do likewise.

Here's our example. Come do what we have done. Many people aren't prepared to do that.

That is God's calling for some people. Some people do have the gift of evangelism. Some people do have the opportunity to go to a foreign country and evangelize and it's a wonderful thing.

But it has to spring from a recognition on the inside that one has grown into through the knowledge of God's will and the knowledge of God's word and it is a motivation that one comes and offers their way of life and their location and their opportunities and so forth and says, I just really think that I've been equipped. I have perhaps a language proficiency because of my background or whatever and this is something that I can do. It's something I would like to do.

But it can't come by observing someone else and saying, well, this is what I have done. You should do the same. Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead for doing that.

Well, here's a man that had an impact. I'm going to try to have the same impact, but my heart's not really fully in it. And God made it clear in the very earliest days of the church, don't do that.

Why is it? There have been many more grievous errors made in the church, don't you think, than what Ananias and Sapphira did? Don't you think there have been many more falsely motivated actions? Many worse hypocrisies? Turn your TV on on Sunday mornings and look at various things that you see. I see people that if I were God would get struck dead a lot sooner than Ananias and Sapphira. Why do you think God struck them dead on the spot? It's to make us aware of His principle.

You can't try to emulate by actions alone the things that are supposed to be coming from the heart. That's the argument of Romans, isn't it? That's the reason that the Jewish view of Christianity that says, well, now that you're a Christian and now that you believe, that's great, but you need to do these things and then you'll be righteous. That's the whole point.

And so God underlined that in red ink. He underlined it in the blood of Ananias and Sapphira because He struck them dead for making out like they loved God above all else when they really didn't and that they loved the church more than all else when they really didn't. God says, don't do that.

And He struck them dead. And who were they influenced by? What was the occasion for this? It was Barnabas who was a son of encouragement. He already had that reputation.

That was his nickname. People said, there's old encourager. There's old spark plug.

There's the guy that puts the fire in. Anytime you're around him, he just warms up the room. People just get motivated around him and that was his gift.

And somebody said, well, I want to be like him instead of having the motivation that Barnabas had on the inside. But that's part of what's contained in the word parakaleo, to encourage, to create a sense of urgency, to create a sense of enthusiasm, to motivate. And that's what Paul says he is doing here in Romans 12.1. He says, I parakaleo you.

I encourage you. I urge you. I want to motivate you in the right way to do something.

Now, Paul gives many imperatives in his epistles. You can't turn a page in the epistles without running across imperatives, commands, exhortations. Let us love one another fervently from the heart.

Forsake not the encouraging of one another to love and good works and so forth. Over and over again, he says do not be drunk with wine. Be filled with the Spirit and so forth.

So, what is the difference between doing that and saying, I urge you to do this? When someone uses the word, I urge you, it's slightly different than just saying, please do this. Than just issuing a command or issuing an exhortation. They say, I urge you.

I am encouraging you. I'm asking you. I'm wanting to motivate you.

And it enters the speaker into the equation, doesn't it? He says, I'm bringing this case before you with whatever weight my status as an apostle may bear, with my background, my lifestyle before you, whatever credibility I can bring to this exhortation. I'm making myself an issue as I give you this command. Paul does this, by my count, about 22 times in his epistles.

He says, I urge you. I exhort you. I beseech you, brethren.

And this is one of those times. And he is able to do that and make himself a part of the equation because he has walked the walk. You know, they have this old saying, if you're going to talk the talk, you have to walk the walk.

And Paul has done this. And he makes an issue out of it, doesn't he? He talks about it in Corinthians. He talks about it in Thessalonians.

He talks about it in several of his epistles where he says, we have been scourged. We've been beaten. We have set aside status and material goods.

And we've been imprisoned. We've been shipwrecked. This, that, and the other.

Talking about himself and his fellow workers in the Gospel. So he can speak. And he speaks from experience.

And he says, look, you can look at my life and see that my circumstances have not all come up roses. If you look at me, I've got a criminal record. I've got scars.

I've got physical disabilities. I've got legal problems. I've got financial problems.

I've got transportation problems. I can't even get from one place to another without being shipwrecked or being bitten by an adder or being chained up and taken places I don't want to go or being confined under house arrest or being chained to praetorian guards. But Paul, the apostle, with all of those experiences, says, I'm encouraging you to this same life that I lead.

And it says something because here's somebody that's been there. That's always a great experience if you're going to go somewhere, if you're going to try to find someplace you've never been. It's great to talk to someone who's already been there.

And they say, yeah, watch for the turnoff because it sneaks up on you or be careful of this or be sure and take this route instead of that route. It's always valuable if you're getting ready to do a new thing, if you're going to paint or you're going to refinish or you're going to build or whatever it may be, you're going to go somewhere you've never gone to talk to someone who's been there. Well, here's someone that's been there who knows what he's talking about that says, I'm urging you.

I'm encouraging you. In the same way that Jesus did when He said, if anyone wants to wind up where I'm going to wind up, let him take up his cross and follow Me. Let him deny himself.

Let him put the things of God first. But Paul doesn't just rest this exhortation or this request on his credibility alone, does he? He says, I beseech you. I encourage you.

I urge you. Therefore, based on all of these things that we've talked about, on the lifestyle that pleases God through faith, by the mercies of God. This word for mercies is also very interesting.

It's not a very common word in the New Testament. It's only used a few times. You can name the times that this word comes up in the New Testament on the fingers of one hand.

It's not even very common in the Old Testament, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. This is oiktirmos, O-I-K-T-I-R-M-O-S. The more normal word for mercy is eleos, E-L-E-O-S.

And you have this all the time. In fact, the occurrences of mercy that we've found in Romans up to this point are the other word, eleos. And they're very close synonyms and they're often found together.

Mercy and compassion is the way this oiktirmos is often translated. It's almost always found in the

plural, the compassions. And what it stresses is the expressions of mercy.

Mercy is sort of a characteristic. It's a feature of the character of God, for example, to be merciful. This is how God declared Himself to Moses back in Exodus 34.

The Lord, the Lord, merciful. That's His characteristic. That's His nature.

But oiktirmos and oiktirmon, the plural of it, talks about concentrating on the expressions of that merciful nature, that merciful character, the outworking of that, the receiving of mercy. And that's what Paul calls on here. Now, where have we just seen mercy here in Romans? Well, we've seen it a couple of places.

We saw it back in chapter 9. And this may be kind of an unlikely verse to point out, but look at chapter 9, verse 15 by way of review. What shall we say then in verse 14 of Romans 9? Is there unrighteousness with God that He favors one over another, the elder shall serve the younger, Jacob I've loved, Esau I've hated? Is God unrighteous? Is He unfair? Is He wrong to do this? Is He capricious? Is He unpredictable? Certainly not. Meganeioita.

That same strong negative we've seen before. Why? Verse 15, He says to Moses, I will have mercy. Eleus.

I will have mercy on whomever I have had mercy. And I will have compassion on whomever I have had compassion. We went back and saw this in its context back in Exodus.

And it's the Old Testament equivalent of what Jesus said. To him who has, more will be given. When God holds out His hands in compassion, in grace, and in mercy, and we respond, it gives us the opportunity to receive more grace and more mercy.

If God holds out His hands in grace and in mercy and we ignore it, if we're apathetic, if we aren't too concerned about it, we've got other priorities, even that opportunity that we have may be taken away. God says, I can have more mercy on someone that I've already had mercy on because they've put themselves in the position to receive it. He makes this statement when Moses, who has been faithful to God above all those in Israel, who is an afflicted man and yet serves because that's his calling from God.

Moses, who has been face to face with God in the mountains so much so that his own face has glowed in the dark, says to God, show me Your glory. I want to see more. I want to understand more.

I want to have a better comprehension. And God says to Moses, you have been faithful. I know you by name.

I will have even more mercy on you because I have been able to have mercy on you up to this point. I will have mercy on whom I have had mercy. I will have compassion on whom I have had

compassion.

So then, it is not of him who wills or of him who runs. And we saw that these are genitives of source. The benefit and the concrete expression of that mercy isn't from the source of the one who runs.

Moses didn't earn or deserve the mercy and compassion of God. He was just willing to receive it. And because he received it, God was able to give him more.

It wasn't because Moses ran and it wasn't because Moses willed. That wasn't the source of the grace and the mercy that Moses received. That wasn't the source.

The source was God who shows mercy. Moses could have sat there and asked all day and if God was not a merciful God, he would have received nothing. But Moses put him in the place where he could respond and receive those things for himself.

The Scripture says to Pharaoh, For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show my power in you, and that my name may be declared in all the earth. And one of the things we tend to forget, we get all wrapped up in Romans 9 as we've seen, and we think, well, here's the sovereignty of God. He's just causing Pharaoh to be a hard-hearted beast here.

And He has mercy on whom He wills and whom He wills He hardens, as it says in verse 18. Well, He just hardened old Pharaoh so that Pharaoh couldn't be saved. When salvation isn't the issue at all, it is justice.

Justice for 430 years of oppression, 430 years of slavery and beatings and murders and the slaying of the firstborn, of the Hebrew children by the Egyptians without a qualm, without batting an eyelash. And God says, I'm going to raise up a Pharaoh here, not in regard to salvation. Pharaoh had already made his decision about God way back at the point that he became conscious of God.

This was a political decision. This was a policy decision that Pharaoh made. I'm not going to let the Israelites go.

Do you think that Pharaoh would have been saved if he had just right off the bat said, well, sure, go. We've got most of the bricks made anyway. Y'all go on out to the land.

We don't need you anymore. Salvation's not the issue. And the sovereignty of God relative to whether or not someone is going to decide for or against isn't even an issue in this passage as it's so often brought up.

What is the point? Why did God raise Pharaoh up? So that he could display his power and so that his name would be proclaimed. What is the name of God? What is the name of God that was proclaimed in Exodus 34 in front of Moses? The Lord, the Lord, merciful, compassionate,

gracious. What happened when God hardened Pharaoh so that the plagues came on Egypt? What was the purpose of that? The deliverance of Israel.

God expended wrath on the oppressors and broke their power and broke their spirit for a reason. Not just because He's sovereign and He can do it and He wanted to show everybody He could. It was for the purpose of showing mercy on Israel, His covenant people, His chosen ones, the believers of that generation.

So God had mercy on those who were willing to trust Him. Those who put the blood on the doorpost. Those who followed Moses knowing that the future was uncertain.

But they trusted and they went out in the Exodus. God had mercy on them and He hardened Pharaoh for the purpose of having mercy. And in displaying that mercy and in delivering Israel with a mighty hand, His name is proclaimed and His power is made manifest.

Just as Paul talked about in Romans 1, what may be known of God is manifest in creation. God has made it evident. His eternal power and His godhood is manifest.

God has declared it in the works of creation. Why? So that He can have mercy. It's His purpose to make Himself manifest so that people can respond and put themselves in the position of receiving mercy.

That was one of the first places that we really saw mercy as a subject in Romans. And here in the last chapter, in Romans 11, it is talked about the mercy of God, hasn't it? It talks about this illustration of the tree with the branches that were in the tree and didn't bear fruit and God snapped them off and grafted in wild olive branches. And Paul says in verse 22, Consider the goodness and the severity of God on those who fell severely, but toward you goodness if you continue in His goodness.

Otherwise, you also will be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in faithlessness, if they do not continue in lack of faith, lack of belief, they can be grafted in for God is able to graft them in again. He talks about the fact that Israel, because of their lack of response, because of their hardness, have been blinded for a time.

And so he says in verse 30, Even as you were once disobedient to God, yet now have obtained mercy on the occasion of their disobedience, even so these also have now been disobedient that through the mercy shown to you they also may obtain mercy. God was hard on Egypt to show mercy to Israel. God has been hard on Israel to show mercy to the Gentiles.

And God is showing mercy to the Gentiles in the hopes that He can also come back and show mercy to Israel. God is trying to emphasize the positive side of His plan. It's His mercy.

It's His compassion. It's the good things that He wants to accomplish. It's the positive side of the ledger that He wants to fill in as He deals with His people.

So when Paul says now in chapter 12, verse 1, I beseech you therefore, brethren, believers, by the mercies of God, he's saying look at the opportunity for mercy. Look at the opportunity for deliverance. Look at the opportunity to receive the compassions and the graces of God.

He doesn't say I beseech you by the wrath of God. I beseech you by the possibility of judgment and the storing up of wrath that he talked about in chapter 2. He's saying I want to encourage you, parakaleo you, by the mercies of God. He only uses this word a few other places.

In fact, we ourselves are encouraged to have mercy. You find this in Colossians 3.12. And even as we are to be imitators of God as dear children, we find in Colossians 3.12, Paul says therefore as the called of God, as the elect, those elect that should be motivated like we saw in chapter 8. The called according to his purpose. As the called of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies.

Put on oiktirmon. Put on this same mercy that you have received. Remember those wonderful stories that Jesus told about the servant that received the mercy of his master and had his debts forgiven, but yet he wouldn't forgive the debts of his underservants.

The master came back and put him in the debtor's prison until he had paid every farthing. We are forgiven by God our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. God has been merciful to us and we are called to have that same mind.

Let the same mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus. Be holy for I am holy. And here the exhortation is God is merciful so be merciful.

Be compassionate. Have the same characteristic that God has. And notice this is the oiktirmos kind of mercy which is one that is memorable because of its expression.

It's not just, what a merciful person she is or what a merciful person he is. Why would someone consider you merciful? There will be an example in their mind of forgiveness, of long suffering, of bearing with a mistake or bearing with a wrong that's been committed. God is slow to anger.

He's quick to forgive. That's how we should be. And that's what we're called to, to have this same type of mercy.

God is willing even after all of the many grievous wrongs and disobediences that the nation of Israel has perpetrated against Him, He's ready to pick those branches up and graft them right back in again if they will turn, if they will be characterized by faith, the faith that produces fruit. That's all He's waiting for from them and it's all that He's waiting for from us. We're going to pause here and take our break and when we come back we'll see a couple of other very significant words here in Romans chapter 12 verse 1.