

The Call to Admonish One Another

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[0 : 00] All right, good evening. Would you go ahead and turn to the book of Romans, chapter 15. We're going to look down at verse 14 here in just a moment. I don't know how well it presents, but I get pretty nervous when I come up here.

This is only, I think, the second time I've done this. I get nervous every time I come up and do an offering devotion. I'm not quite as nervous with Life Group as I was before, but I've been doing that for a few years.

You would think, since I teach professionally, they actually pay me to do that. In a public school, I would get used to this kind of thing. Getting up here, getting behind a pulpit, talking to you about God's Word, things get a lot more intense.

I'm glad I couldn't find where you were, Trent, so I'm going to keep focusing over here. I thought if I got too nervous, I would just take my tie off and set it right here, and then people would focus on that if I get, I don't know, if I start messing up.

Really enjoyed the service this morning, talking about the triumphal entry and getting to that point. The different groups that want Jesus to be king, as long as it fits their plans, right?

[1 : 14] The way that they want him to be that way. Groups that just want him gone. But I can't help every time I get to that, as I read through the Bible and I get to that portion in the Gospels, of him going through that gate on the donkey, and then there's going to be this time when he goes through that gate again.

And Brother Frick and I are going through the book of Revelation, and we get to talk about that time, not when he comes on a donkey, but when he comes on that charger, that war horse, and he is going to set all of the things right.

And there's going to be this time where all of the dominion of the world shifts, and it becomes the rule and reign that's going to become the kingdom of the Lord and his Messiah.

Our walk with God, I think, can very often be boiled down to a series of decisions that where, piece by piece, we give our lives over to the rule and reign of the Lord. We make him our Lord at salvation, but even then, after that, there are these pieces.

We still have to step-by-step hand to him, pieces that we may not even realize that we're holding on to. I don't know if that's happened to you, where you think you have given all to the Lord, and the Lord puts his finger on something else, and you're like, I didn't know I had such a tight grip on this.

[2 : 34] And he says, I want that too, and we need to give that over to him. So, my hope tonight is that we can look at some scripture tonight that will encourage you to make him Lord in just one more area of your life.

So, Romans chapter 15, verse 14, a little background on this. Paul's covered a lot in this letter. Romans is an absolutely masterful work by any literary standard.

One of the reasons why you see John and Romans given out the way it is. It presents so much, and it's wonderful by any standard, but it's specifically wonderful for the believer because it carefully and methodically goes through this defense of God's justice in allowing sinners to be saved.

And that's no small task. How could a righteous God forgive unrighteousness, and how could he pardon it and remain righteous himself? And Romans goes through and explains that. Paul's going to end this letter by commending and thanking believers, but before he does that, he makes an appeal to the believers there in Rome.

And his appeal is that they help each other as they grow in Christ, and as they do the work of spreading the gospel, that they look out for, that they look out for each other, and that they support one another.

[3 : 54] And in verse 14, he gives, I think, the most pointed part of this directive, and he hymns it in with encouragement. So look at Romans 15, 14. This is what he says. And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

In this verse, we see Paul is saying that he is persuaded of something. And what is it that Paul is persuaded about? What is he confident of? And before we answer that, let's ask ourselves if we can be persuaded of the same thing.

If Paul is convinced of something, can I be convinced of it too? That is, if he can be sure of it, can I be sure of it as well? And I'm saying that because commentators will look at a verse like this and will say that it's hyperbole.

They look at this verse and say that this must be some kind of courteous, courteous exaggeration. Paul is actually embellishing their actual ability.

So while they agree on inspiration, they'll agree on inerrancy, there's this loophole of figurative language that gets you off the hook for believing this in a literal sense. And so some will look at this verse and say, Paul's just being really sweet here and saying these nice words in hopes that the Romans might do this, but he's really not as confident as he lets on.

[5 : 17] This would be similar to when maybe the weakest link on the team has to do the penalty kick or they're up for the free throw. And the coach says, you can do it or you got this.

And the coach might be thinking, well, he could because anything's possible, but he probably won't. I hope I can get credit for a sports metaphor here. Okay. Why would they do this?

Well, look at what he's saying here. This is no small thing. This is no small praise. Full of goodness. Full of goodness. Filled with all knowledge. Surely this isn't literal.

And just to make sure you understand their position, Paul here is speaking of brothers and sisters in Christ that he has most likely never met. He's met some of them, but most of them he hasn't even met.

Acts 2 tells us that there were Jews at Pentecost visiting from Rome, which is where this church probably got its start. This is 25 years later. Paul has not made it there yet.

[6 : 16] And he makes these comments about their virtue. And to say his comments of them are elevated is an understatement. This is very high praise. And if you just take a plain reading of this verse, it shows us that Paul is persuaded that they can actually do it.

He's convinced that they can. Full of goodness. Filled with all knowledge. And to clarify, that's to be filled with all kinds of knowledge.

He's not saying, of course, that these people were omniscient. This all has to do with categories, meaning that there is nothing missing from what they need to know of the Christian faith. They have all of the components necessary to build each other up in this way.

And so they're able to admonish. They have the ability to put in each other's minds what is needed for the growth in Christ. So we have to decide from the beginning here if these things are true.

Is Paul just flattering here? Or did the Holy Spirit direct Paul to write precisely what he did because it was factually so? I go through all that because even though I'm sure most, if not all of you, would side with me on that and say that that is what he's saying, we can still tend to just kind of lazily let such emphatic statements glance off of us instead of letting them deliver the blow that they need to, to take them as they really are.

[7 : 41] Much of preaching and teaching is convincing people that what they are reading is real, that this really is so. And that's a lot of our teaching and preaching because that's what a lot of our devotional reading is as well, or at least what it should be.

When we read our Bibles, we are constantly, or should be constantly reckoning those things that we are reading as true. We have to coach our minds into believing a reality that sometimes, sometimes doesn't quite fit with our experience.

So what we are doing with this verse right here, I believe, and what I'm asking you to believe is that this is a completely truthful statement about a church that Paul has never met. Okay, so if we can establish that, let's move into the next question here, and that is that, okay, if it was true of that church, is it true of this church?

Is it true of Vision Baptist Church? Is it true of national churches that have been started by our missionaries? You know, who a message is addressed to in Scripture is important.

And so was this just to the Romans? Was there some kind of exception here? Were they an exceptional church? Was the church in Rome something special, or is this the norm? Now, we hesitate with this, or I hesitate with this, because we're very well acquainted with the problems that churches have.

[9 : 04] What about churches on the field that are just starting out? I mentioned that Brother Frick and I are teaching through Revelation in our life groups, and when you get to the second and third chapters of Revelation, you go through all of the letters to the churches that are there in Asia Minor.

And as you read through those churches, your eyes start to get, these churches are struggling. I mean, they're going through some very intense things, so much so that as I go through them and I read some of the things that are happening in those churches, I would have a very hard time calling them churches at all.

But the Lord calls them His churches. Would this statement be true of them? Every church has its problems, and every church ought to expect them.

There has never been a ministry that has not been subject to the principle presented by the parable of the sower given by our Lord. Every ministry is subject to this. Some, when the seed is cast, some are going to grow and multiply, but some are going to wither, and some are going to get choked out by the pressures and influences of the world.

These issues shouldn't surprise us. Whenever the seed is sown, all those kinds of hearers are going to come. But does that in any way undermine what Paul is saying here and how it applies to us?

[10 : 23] Now, remember what we're investigating. Paul's made these incredibly elevated statements about the church, but history and our own experience can call that into question. And what about Scripture?

What was Paul's experience with the churches that he started? Was everything smooth? Did it all go according to plan? That really wasn't the case, was it? And if you're a student of the Bible, you probably think, I don't know, maybe the Church of Corinth pops into your mind, and there was some serious issues that were taking place there.

And think about how rough things were in that assembly. But even though things were rough there, and in many other churches, Paul still says these kinds of things about them. Let's look at a few of these.

Turn in your Bibles to 1 Thessalonians chapter 1. 1 Thessalonians chapter 1. Now, if you think about the time that Paul spent with some of these churches, it's absolutely incredible how short it was.

Paul spent about three weeks with this church in Thessalonica, and look at what he says to them in the first chapter here. He says, We give thanks to God always for you, making mention of you in our prayers.

[11 : 33] I'm sorry, that was verse 2. Verse 3. Look at what he says here to this church. Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and your labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father, knowing, brethren, beloved, your election of God.

Drop down to verse 8. He says, Look, everybody knows about your faith, and you have everything that you needed to progress in the gospel.

This sounds a lot like their knowledge and goodness being everything that it ought to have been, kind of like what Paul was saying to the Romans. They had what they needed, and this was a very young church.

What about Colossians? Turn to the first chapter of Colossians. This was another church that Paul hadn't come and seen yet. Colossians chapter 1, verse 3.

He says, We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have to all the saints.

[12 : 44] This is so well known about you that it, anybody that talks about you thinks about these things, your love that you have for all the saints and your faith in Christ.

Verse 6, Which has come to you as it is in all the world and bringeth forth fruit as it doth also in you. So, your faith is known and it's producing fruit. Down in verse 7, he talks about Epaphras, knowing about this, Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is for you a faithful minister in Christ, who also declared unto you your love in the Spirit.

This is so well known about you. Your love for the brothers is clear and you are bringing forth fruit. Philippians chapter 4, Philippians chapter 4, verses 15 and 16.

Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica you sent once and again into my necessity, a demonstration of the works that this church was doing.

Go back to Philippians chapter 1, verse 3, he's doing the same thing. Thank you God upon every remembrance of you. Verse 5, For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day into now. A fellowship in the gospel, being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it into the day of Jesus Christ.

[14 : 03] So, Paul wasn't just confident about the church in Rome, he was confident about the church in Thessalonica, and in Philippi, and in Colossae.

And completely confident that you're going to just keep increasing in the good work that has begun in you. Now, the Corinthians, the church that often gets the worst rap, right? What did he say to them? 1 Corinthians chapter 1.

Flip there one more time. 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verses 4 through 9. Verse 4 says this, I thank my God always on your behalf for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ, that in everything ye are enriched by him in all utterance and in all knowledge.

So, this church that we think has the worst problems, he's saying, no, you have the same thing that the church in Rome did. Verse 7, So you come behind, you come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

You shall also confirm you into the end that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

[15 : 09] You are enriched with all knowledge. You don't come behind in any gift and God is faithful and will work this out in you. This is just a sample of what any careful reading will prove.

It was assumed, it was assumed by Paul that the Holy Spirit would grow this group of believers and what they needed to be for each other. And as Paul is thinking these things and saying these things and then writing these things, he is doing so under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

So is it just Paul that's confident of these things? Or is the Holy Spirit confident of these things? And we really need to look at it that way. And he's saying to this to them, yes, while he's correcting their immoral practices, it wasn't that they didn't need correction, but they also at the same time had everything that they needed.

Paul was certain of that and we can also say emphatically, the Holy Spirit was confident of that. Paul believed this to be true about all these different local churches and because they were written down in our Bibles, we know that the Holy Spirit believes it too and God believes that about us too.

This isn't just individual churches that Paul wrote to. This is Vision Baptist Church 2. that the Holy Spirit is confident. The Holy Spirit is confident that we have everything that we need to help each other to grow in Christ, that we have that knowledge.

[16 : 35] Well, what is it that these people are able to do? Back to Romans 15, 14. Okay, this is our verse. We're going to look at some of the words there. What are these people able to do? They are able, this is what we're going to focus in on, they're able to admonish one another.

Now, this word admonish is an important word in the counseling world. The Greek word for this is *neuthio* and I get teased sometimes because I have to come up with all the Greek words here.

This is kind of an important one to know because it was used so extensively for biblical counseling when things started shifting from psychology back to this word.

And so, if you wanted to have someone help you in counseling and you wanted them to do it biblically, you would look for a *neuthetic* counselor.

Now, that has moved and we're using the word biblical now more and more, which I like. I like using the word biblical more than I like using the word *neuthetic*, but that is the word that's behind this word admonish and it's why that word was used for that word admonish.

[17 : 38] J. Adams, who made this word popular in relationship to counseling, defines the word this way and I really like this. It says, it means to bring about correction by verbal confrontation out of a deep concern for the counselee.

And I really think every part of that definition is critical. Counseling, counseling and warning are at the heart of the meaning of this word, especially with a view to correct a course of action that would be harmful or damaging.

You think of a warning sign. Look, you need to watch out. The way that you're going is dangerous and you need to be careful. And so, the imperative here is that we do just that and that we are able to do just that.

We warn people. Now, when we think of warning people, we most often think about people in relationship to the lost, telling them that they're on that broad road that leads to destruction.

But that's not what this is talking about. This is warning other believers. We have to tell each other if we're on the wrong course and especially be willing to engage with someone if they ask for help with something that the Bible addresses.

[18 : 47] God repeatedly tells the churches throughout the New Testament that they have everything they need to do it, but we still have to actually do it. We have everything we need to do it, but we have to actually do it.

We have to flesh that out. And so, here's the last transition and there are a few points to it. But let's review here. I hope, I hope that you're convinced that this verse is speaking to vision as much as it was speaking to the church in Rome or any of the other New Testament churches.

It was certainly addressed to them, but it's addressed to us as well and to you personally. God thinks this way about vision, that the people of vision are full of goodness. That's what he thinks about vision, that the people of vision are full of goodness and filled with all knowledge.

That is, there is no category of knowledge that they are missing, but this too, he thinks this about us too, that you are able to admonish or counsel one another because of the goodness and knowledge you have access to.

So, if this is to us and we're able to counsel one another, why don't we? Why don't we? What is impeding us from admonishing or counseling each other like we're directed to do here?

[19 : 58] And I think there's three things that I hear and things that make this difficult for me as well. Well, the first one is that we still often believe that it is someone else's responsibility.

We don't do it because we believe that the responsibility lies with someone else. Now, thankfully, I think that the church is steadily reclaiming its responsibility to care for the souls of its members.

That is its responsibility and I think that that is shifting back. But there are still those that believe very strongly that the church should stay out of situations in which a psychological diagnosis has been made.

And the argument boils down to a belief that harm can be done if you're not professionally trained in something. But the real danger here is that professional training of this kind almost always demands people ascribe to a philosophy that is decidedly against or antithetical to what Scripture says.

As people of the Bible, if we really believe that it is our source of faith and practice, we should understand that the greatest harm we can do to a fellow believer isn't a lack of professional training, but a failure to provide a biblical answer to any issue that the Bible provides an answer to.

[21 : 21] If the Bible provides an answer to a situation that our brother or sister is dealing with, it's our responsibility to guide them to that biblical answer.

we can't allow any field of study or wisdom of man to ever trump what the Bible has to say about these issues. And sometimes we compartmentalize this because you know, you think about the public school and we decry very often any time they walk into a science class and people talk about evolution and we know that they don't have a right to implement that into our children because we say whatever it is that they say, if the Bible says something else this is what we're going to go on.

But very often we shift when it comes to something that touches on the field of psychology and so we say well maybe there's more to be gained by a professional look here but at the same time we have to look if the Bible addresses an issue the Bible addresses an issue we have to provide that biblical answer.

Well let's say you're convinced of that. You believe that the Bible and Jesus is the answer to the problem. Very often even people who think biblically about that will still isolate that responsibility of that help to the pastor alone.

Now I believe that admonishing and counseling is a primary role of the pastor. It is definitely given to that office. But in this passage Paul is not addressing the clergy or it's not to the elders but it's to the whole church.

[23 : 03] Remember that these letters when that letter got to Rome somebody got behind a pulpit and he read it to the whole church. It wasn't just a small group of people that or the people that preached that they would read that to but it was read to that whole church.

He's not addressing just the clergy. Remember he's talking to the brethren and the brethren describes what kind of person. That's a believer. And so the average Christian there in Rome was charged with this.

If you are a believer then you have a duty to encourage and strengthen other believers. It may be that there are some among churches and there are and we know this and we can probably when we say this we probably think of certain individuals.

There are certain individuals in this church and people in your lives that have a special gifting in this area and there's people that you would naturally go to more than others. But this responsibility even though there are people that are gifted in this area this responsibility lies at the feet of every one of us.

Everyone that is a member of this church. So this role of admonishing is not just for the professional or even just the professional minister but it's for us and that means it's for you.

[24 : 19] All of those passages we have already looked at tell us that we must. And so sometimes we don't do it because we think the responsibility lies with other people but it really does lie with us.

Another reason that we fail to do this or why we don't want to do this is because we feel like we'll make the situation worse. Have you ever felt that way? I mean you got somebody that you really care about you love them and they're going through something and you're like I don't know I might make this situation worse.

Now I think this is something that we really do need to seriously consider. If someone is hurting and you engage in that situation could you make it worse? You could. Absolutely you could.

Have you ever made it worse? Okay? I know I have. I'm sure that by now you have received encouragement from someone about something in your life and it really wasn't encouraging at all.

Okay? That has happened if you're breathing that has happened to you and you've probably been on the giving end of this as well. I have this tendency and Jen can tell you about this to have this blooper reel play in my head over and over again about just this kind of situation.

[25 : 40] I don't know how long we were married before you just stopped asking what? Because we would be driving somewhere walking and I'd just go, ugh, what? I can't tell you.

I'm not going to bring this up. So these kinds of things are constantly playing in my mind. And I do this. I've made a lot of mistakes. Okay? I've made a lot of mistakes. I have made a lot of situations worse.

I've made situations worse in how I deal with my wife. I've made situations worse in how I've dealt with my children. Man, have you done that? Have you made situations worse when you're dealing with your children?

I've made situations worse in how I deal with my friends. But just because you have made a mistake with them doesn't mean you can stop dealing with them. Think about how that would play out in your family if you just said, I might make it worse and so you checked out and you didn't try.

If your child is struggling with something, you wouldn't. You couldn't as a parent just throw your hands up because you might make it worse. You don't get that option. You don't get to abandon the relationship because you're not qualified because you're the dad, you're the husband, you're the brother, you're the sister, you're the wife, whether you feel qualified or not.

[26 : 56] That's where you are. That's the relationship that you have. You don't have the option of letting someone else handle the responsibility because that responsibility rests on you. We have all at some point made a difficult situation more difficult or even a bad situation worse.

But just because you have made a mistake in your attempt to help doesn't mean that you have the option of not helping. Why? Because that's your daughter. That's your son.

No, you go, you make the mistake, you apologize if you need to, and you get back in the game. You read a book, you get some outside help for her, or for you too, if you need it.

You throw money. I mean, if this is your kid, right? You throw money, and you throw time, and you throw effort in it because it's your kid and you don't have the option of taking a back seat. That responsibility might be easy to see when it comes to your family, and you might say, okay, that's family.

This is different. And it is different. There's a difference between family and church. But what we're talking about here is responsibility. Do you have a responsibility to your church?

[28 : 07] Do you have responsibility to brothers and sisters in Christ? And absolutely you do. You have an obligation to the body of Christ. It doesn't just go the other way, right?

It's not just that your church has a responsibility to you. You have a responsibility to your church. I'm going to go through these kind of rapid fire, but Galatians chapter 6, verse 2, bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Ephesians 4, 25, putting away lines, speaking every man truth with his neighbor, for we are members, for we are members one of another. 1 Thessalonians 4, 18, comfort one another with these words.

5, 11, comfort yourselves together, edify one another. 1 Peter 4, 9, use hospitality one to another without grudging.

If you get involved in someone else's mess, you're going to get your hands dirty. We are messy people. If you are going to have a relationship with somebody else in this church, and it's going to be a real relationship, you're going to find out that things are not as clean as you thought they were.

[29 : 18] It's going to be like that with any person that's in here. Not everything is going to be all tidy and neat, but what's the alternative? Clean hands, an uninterrupted life, me time, but a brother or sister that is heading down a road to catastrophe with a warning that you should be giving?

Make the mistake. Do it. Make the mistake. Apologize. Do some homework, and then get back to it. We can't avoid it just because we might think that we would make it worse.

Lastly, we don't do it because we don't like confrontation. How many of you like confrontation? Somebody raised their hand. That's awesome. I don't.

It's rough, isn't it? It's really rough. And our verse is, we got to understand this. This verse is requiring this of us. It's saying that it has to take place.

We need to face the reality that the kind of counsel that we're being instructed to give here is at times the kind that confronts. Counsel that is biblical is going to require us sometimes to look at somebody that we love, knowing that they won't like it, and say, you're wrong.

[30 : 34] You're wrong. Man, I stew over this. Jen can tell you, it makes me sick. I get in a situation where I think I need to tell someone that they're wrong, and I get incredibly anxious over it, and then I have to start preaching to myself about what the Bible says about being anxious, and we can talk about that later.

But I can. I can just let it consume my thoughts, and it'll end up distracting me from everything else that's going on in my life. I absolutely hate it, and I just sweat over what the fallout of that conversation is going to be like, because you could lose a friend, couldn't you?

You really could. So how do we deal with that? Just to alleviate some of the tension that might be building here, this isn't a directive, this directive to admonish isn't a directive for us to start looking for things to confront each other about.

We need to make sure that we're not moving this into a category where we make ourselves judge of people. The one and other parts of these verses demonstrate that this is something that's happening in a mutual manner.

We are helping each other out with this. And there's other factors that need to be addressed. The other person's reception, your existing relationship, their relationship with the church, has there been a personal offense, is this a situation where you need to let love cover.

[31 : 48] And the Bible provides guidance for all of those specific kinds of things. But, if the Holy Spirit puts someone in your life that is seeking help, and this is what normally ends up happening, if a friend opens up about something that's a struggle in their life, it's your responsibility to admonish, but to lovingly, to lovingly admonish.

This past week Jennifer was helping Addie with her violin practice and they were getting close to the end and Addie wanted to spin things up so she rushed through the last part of her last song and Jen called her on it.

And she said, that was horrible. I love that. That was horrible. And Addie said, you know you're being a bad mommy right now. And so she just says, that was horrible, you didn't even try.

Now, you may chalk that up to bad parenting style or whatever it is, but it does fit what's going on here. Calling a bad job a good one would have made Jen a far worse mom than the truth.

If we confront, it needs to be done so lovingly. I really like what Dr. Siss said. He said, we need to confront without being confrontational. Now, that is not possible in some cases, but man, when we do that, we have to strive for it.

[33 : 07] We have to strive for it. Even attempting to do it that way can still be awkward, but once again, what is the cost of not confronting, what you don't pay in discomfort on the front end will be required in interest later on in your brother's life.

And I bet you have a story about that, where it wasn't taken care of when it needed to be, and now your friend or your loved one is reaping the whirlwind.

Have you ever thought, or have you been in a situation with someone and just thought, how has no one ever talked to you about this before? Like, is this the first time? How did it get this bad?

Was there no one in your life that tried to slow this down, or did they just not care enough to have that awkward conversation, which is probably what the case was? You are not in sin if you don't like confrontation, but you are if you avoid it at the peril of your brother.

To him that know it to do good and do it that not, to him it is sin. And what better place to get direction and correction for life than here at your church? Where else are you going to be surrounded by people who care more about you, the word, and God?

[34 : 20] How do we do this lovingly? Now, there is more to this, but here, I believe, is where you start. We are finishing up here. This last verse, 1 Corinthians chapter 10 verse 24.

I want to encourage you, this is another passage and I really think it helps us to get our responsibility and perspective here. 1 Corinthians 10 24 says this, let no man seek his own but every man another's wealth.

This passage comes in the middle of Paul giving reasoning and arguments about what to do in situations where meat is being offered to idols. And there is a definite difference in the thrust of the two passages that we're looking at here, but there's a relationship here that overlaps.

What is essential for our perspective here is that both of these circumstances we're talking about really considering what is in the best interest of your brother instead of your own preference.

Paul establishes in this chapter that an idol really isn't anything and that meat really isn't anything. That is, neither one of them are objectively moral or evil.

[35 : 26] The problem is that they definitely take on those attributes depending on what is being done with them and the motivations or reasons behind what is done with them. Now, there's a lot more to that study and it's a chapter that takes some work to walk through, but right here in the middle of it, we are given the proper motivation for anything we do in relationship to our brother.

And the point of the passage is simple. That motivation is to seek their welfare instead of our own. Period. Paul says when we come to this debate, our question always defaults to what we have permission to do.

That's how we come to anything. Can I do this? Am I allowed to do this? Do I have permission to do this? He says that's our default position and it shouldn't be that way. We shouldn't be coming to things saying whether or not I have permission to do these things.

In fact, Paul tells us that you actually have permission to do a whole lot. Probably more, hopefully more, than what you're doing. But that is coming to the situation with the wrong question.

If you're a believer, then it's no longer sufficient for you to think primarily of what you can do or what will profit you. And this isn't just about money, and I would say it's not even primarily about money.

[36 : 37] The context of this passage is explicitly concerned with the spiritual well-being of the other person. So let me ask you, how often do you consciously ask yourself what would be the best thing for your brothers and sisters in Christ?

And whatever it is that you're dealing with, with all of the lists that we say, what would be the benefits? it's, how often is your brother, where's your brothers and sisters in Christ on that list?

Because very often when I'm thinking about what would be best, I'm thinking about what would be best for me. And my brother and sister in Christ is pretty far down.

And it shouldn't be that way. It shouldn't be a factor in the decision-making process. It should be the factor. This encompasses everything from the shows we watch, the activities we are involved in, where we work, whether or not we say what needs to be said.

Maybe the real reason we don't say what is needed or put the time in is because our love isn't where it ought to be. But what is the distinguishing mark of the believer to the world? It's not righteousness.

[37 : 49] You would think that would be what it is. The distinguishing mark of the believer to the world is whether or not we have what? Whether we have love to one another. John 13, 35, By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love one to another.

And then Pastor Trent mentioned this verse, 1 John 3, 16, Hereby perceive we the love of God because he laid down his life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

You know, you're willing to take a lot from someone that you know loves you. Proverbs 27, 6, Faithful are the wounds of a friend. The Holy Spirit has charged us, charged us, with counseling one another.

It's our job to look out for one another and the Bible tells us emphatically that we have been given all we need, all the resources necessary to do the job he's asked us to do.

It's not always going to be comfortable, but our love for each other should win out. Our love for each other should win out. It should be the primary lens through which we should be looking and why we do what we do.

[38 : 52] We should live in such a way that whether we are encouraging or warning, they know it's motivated by love. So I encourage you to think about how you can increase your burden for your brother or sister.

If you would like some help in how to do this, how to help people, where to start, we're going to have an institute class on biblical counseling where we spend some concentrated time looking at those things.

We're going to look at foundational issues. We've done that before, but we're going to move into some specifics about what the Bible says about some particular and common issues, things like anxiousness, depression, family problems, and forgiveness.

Even if that's not for you, I know that Trent has asked people to think about how it is that they want to serve this year. And I've been thinking about that because I think that maybe some people don't have something that they're really passionate about.

Maybe there's not a particular ministry that you want to start or get involved in, but what about this? Think about this. Maybe there's a brother or sister here that is fired up about something and you could spend the year serving them.

[39 : 55] You could think about them. Think about a way to put them ahead of you. Maybe you could give your year to serving and lifting them up, a year looking out for the welfare of a brother or sister.

And what if you changed your New Year's resolution question from how can I improve myself to how can I improve my brother? How can I improve them? How can I get better at making my church stronger, more biblically literate, and more loving?

If you wouldn't mind bowing your head, closing your eyes with me, Pastor Trent, if you would come forward. I know that he'll probably say some things to you, but I think that any time we look at the word, we've got to make some sort of decision with this.

And I wonder if there isn't anybody else in this room along with me that knows that they have been putting themselves above their brother and sister. And so I would charge you, like the Holy Spirit charges us, to understand that we have what we need to do the job that he's given us to do.

And that job is to lovingly admonish, to comfort and counsel each other. cement them here.

[41 : 18] music