

United in Faith, Fellowship, and Purpose

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[0 : 0 0] Grace and peace, brothers and sisters. Thank you for the invitation. It's a privilege to be here. I bring you greetings from the First Baptist Church of Lisbon. It's good to fly again to this side and to fellowship with you and have this opportunity again together with the churches, also from the Reformed Baptist Network. I don't want to spend much time talking about myself because the word is more important, but just a brief overview. My name is Tiago. I married to Marta for 21 years now. We have three boys, Ruben, David, and Tiago. They are 17, 15, and 13.

So I was born and raised in Portugal. The Lord has been kind, gracious to me, and so I was brought up in a Christian home, and the Lord has saved me very young. The same to my wife.

And which is really rare in Portugal, where evangelicals are not but much over 1% of the whole population, and so the Lord was very gracious to us. And so we lived most of our lives in Portugal until in 2012, where when I was already serving as a full-time pastor, we came to the U.S.

so that I could study at RTS Jackson, furthering theological education, so that we could return to Portugal, we thought, four years later, and be not only involved in pastoral ministry, but also in seminary training. Those four years turned into almost 10, and last December we have returned. I accepted the call of the First Baptist Church of Lisbon, a historical church in our country that was very instrumental in the small Baptist movement, particularly in the 20s, 30s, 40s, and 50s of the last century, but that in the last 40 years has been declining ever since, and dwindling in number, but also in their spirituality. And so you can pray for us for this revitalization, so that the Lord might bless our work there, that He might give me knowledge, wisdom, a lot of patience, that I would meet the brothers there because this is a church that the Lord gave me to pastor. And so, of course, that we want to see the church growing in number and in maturity, but we don't want to do it by forgetting the saints that are already there. And so please pray for me, pray for our family also.

[2 : 3 8] The transition has been a little bit rough, particularly for my boys. They have, what they feel basically is that on paper, on their passports, it says that they are Portuguese, but they feel American. It's not a surprising thing. They lived almost 10 years on this side. Most of the most important years for them that they can consciously remember. And so this transition, of course, is difficult for them. Pray also for our seminary. So we have started a seminary, and Lord willing, classes start tomorrow. So we have so far 16 students registered, and perhaps two or three more.

Please pray for us. This is the first seminary that is being started in our country in the last 40 years. And so pray for us that we have the ability but are also focused on the ministry that we decided to do there. And particularly that we never forget, and this is something that we repeat over and over again to the churches. As teachers in the seminary, we don't want to substitute the God-given role of the local church. The local churches has a God-given responsibility that is solely given to her, not to the seminary, which is to recognize, train, and elect their pastors.

And so we want to help the local churches, not substitute them. And so please pray for us as we receive these students starting tomorrow, and that we might be successful in what we do, and prepare them well, particularly in teaching them, which is our mission statement, to read, interpret, apply, and teach Scripture. We don't want to do anything else. That's our main goal. Pray also as we seek to also work with pastors and other churches as we seek to have resources available to distribute to them with good theology, and as we seek also to follow up and bring like-minded pastors together.

But now let's go to the most important thing, which is the Word of God. And let me start by saying this, which is the beginning and observation so that then we go to the Word.

which is one of the most common and unfulfilled desires of humanity, is peace. This is evident among nations. Just see now the issue with Russia and Ukraine that has spread to the whole world. But we feel it also when we have this struggle at the individual level. You will agree with me if I tell

you that people want peace. They want to have a happy and a restful life. But the fact is that reality proves otherwise. No matter, no matter how much peace is sought and promised, it remains as a never-reached target. And it is true. It is true that we can experience for some time, either personally or as a society, moments of relative peace. But the ideal of peace has never been achieved. And this is, I think, at the present. Think about the U.S., an undeniable truth, which is that the world is growing not in unity, but in disagreement. One can argue about the reasons for why our society is in such a disarray. But the fact is that everyone seems to agree on this. The society we live in is not growing in unity. Of course, that as we say in Portugal, guilt always dies single, right? It's always someone else's fault.

[6 : 47] But this is a fact. It's a fact that it is the norm in human history and in the society that we live. We feel it in our daily lives, from our family relationships, in the work, with friends, but also, let's be honest, also in the church. This does not mean, again, that people are not capable of living a certain level of unity or consensus, because without this, life would not be even possible. But in this world, and this is the point that I want to make, is that conflict is more certain than unity. Unity is something that we experience at some level, but it's never something granted or fully achieved. Seems like we're grabbing pieces of sand, right? We just grab it, and we just see it passing through our fingers. So question, what then, in the midst of a world full of division, can unite people? Or from another perspective, what unites us as Christians? As members of Grace Fellowship, what unites you to one another? What is the reason for your unity, and how can you defend it?

What is the reason for the unity of these churches that are gathering together for the assembly of the Reformed Baptist Network? What brings them together? What should be the foundation of their unity?

So I invite you to open your Bibles in the epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Philippians, chapter 1.

And we're going to read verses 1 to 11. Philippians, chapter 1, verses 1 to 11.

Before we read God's Word, let us pray. Heavenly Father, we came this evening to worship You. You are the only focus of our adoration because You are worthy. You are worthy because You are the creator of all things, and so all things belong to You.

[9 : 12] But You are also precious to us because although we did not deserve, You have saved us. And so we belong to You.

And as we open Your Word, the Word that You have given us, the Word that reveals who You are, we come and ask You help.

Give us eyes to see. Give us soft hearts to receive it. And give us also the will to obey it.

That's our desire, and we pray in Christ's name. Amen. Philippians 1, 1 to 11. This is the Word of God.

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus. To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons.

[10 : 20] Grace to You and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God in all my remembrance of You. Always, in every prayer of mine for You all, making my prayer with joy.

Because of Your partnership in the Gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in You will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

It is right for me to feel this way about You all, because I hold You in my heart. For You are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in defense and confirmation of the Gospel.

For God is my witness. For God is my prayer, and I pray, and I pray for you in my heart. For God is my prayer. And so, be pure and blameless for the day of Christ.

filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.

[11 : 42] Among other things, as you see, Paul celebrates what unites him to the Philippian Christians. The gospel. This gospel, which simply means good news, is a message of peace.

Peace with God, reconciliation, but also with one another. But if we ask what unites us as Christians, what unite Christians to one another?

Let me suggest that according to Philippians 1-11, Christians are united at least in three things.

They are united, number one, in faith, number two, in fellowship or partnership, and number three, in purpose.

Number one, in faith, number two, in fellowship, and number three, in purpose. These are the points for today's sermon. Let's start with number one.

See verse one and two again. Paul greets them and says, Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi with the overseers and deacons, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[13:00] I don't know if you have the same tendency as I do, but I need to reply to many emails every single day. My tendency is to skip the greetings and go immediately to the reason why people wrote to me.

I think this is a normal tendency. And it's not just, let me be honest here, I don't doubt the sincerity of the greetings, but I know that someone wrote me not to greet me, but to say something, right? And in some ways, I think that we can have that tendency when we read the Bible and particularly Paul's epistles, and particularly because the greetings seem to be very similar, although they are not exactly the same.

And so we typically tend, or at least some temptation of skipping that. But let me suggest that if we skip this greeting, we are skipping actually the foundation of the whole letter.

Let me just, in a very simple, simple way, but just note three things about this greeting so that you can understand how foundational it is, not only for the relationship of the Apostle Paul with those saints, but also so that we can understand the relationship we have with one another.

[14:14] So these three simple details. Now first, Paul introduces himself in Timothy. Note that Timothy is mentioned, but as you read the letter, is always in the first person singular.

So we can assume that Paul wrote this letter. And he says that they are what? See verse one. They are servants of Christ. So the word servant in English, in many English translations, are not just, but an euphemism for the original word.

That actually means slaves. So Paul is saying that he belongs to Christ. He lives to Christ. That Christ is Paul's Lord.

He lives in complete submission to his will. He belongs to him. Now second, Paul identifies also the recipients of the letter. Can you see that?

He says, the saints who are in Philippi. And this was a common qualification among Christians. Why? Because they are saints. They were chosen.

[15:16] They were set apart by God and for God. So it means also that calling them saints is also recognizing that they don't belong to themselves.

They belong to God. They are his people. They are his chosen people. They are his sanctified, set apart people to live for him. And then third, Paul greets them in a peculiar way, which was also common among Christians.

And it was the way that I greeted you this evening. He says, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you realize that in just two sentences, two verses, we have the gospel as the basis of everything that Paul is going to say. This is the gospel, the gospel that Christians don't stop talking about, the gospel that we have already sang this evening, the gospel that we continue to proclaim and to present, that there is a God who created us, but that we have rebelled all of us against him.

And because of that, because he is a perfect and just God, we were under his condemnation. But then the gospel, which means good news, is God did not abandon us to our sins, but instead of punishing us as we deserved, he sent his only son God with him, who became a human being, a man, so that he could live a life, a perfect life, in perfect obedience to the Father, that we could not live.

[16:59] And on that cross, receive the death that we deserve. And we continue to proclaim that everyone who repents, and everyone who puts their trust, full trust, in Jesus Christ as their Savior, will be saved.

You see, therefore, Paul's greeting is the best news that Christians can receive. Because grace is an undeserved gift that God offers.

Peace is the result of that gift. We are reconciled to God. Our offenses against God are fully forgiven. Not because we had done something to merit it, but because the love that God has shown for us manifested in His Son.

Therefore, Paul greets them from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Dear brothers, the Lord Jesus is the basis, the foundation of who we are.

See the repetition of this foundation just in 11 verses. We have already mentioned they are servants of Jesus Christ. They are saints in Christ Jesus.

[18:18] It is the grace and peace that comes from the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. They have this hope, verses 6 and 10, until the day of Christ, until the day that He returns.

Verse 8, even the affections that they have for one another are not just natural type of affections. They are the affections of Christ Jesus.

In verse 11, Paul desires and prays that they might be filled with the fruits of righteousness that of course are presented to the Father, but can only be presented to the Father because they come through Jesus Christ.

Do you see? The greeting is an expression of the identity that Paul and the Christians in Philippi have in union with Christ. It is the sole basis, the firm and only foundation of the relationship between them.

They are servants who write to saints, all recipients of God's grace and peace. It is the grace and peace offered to them by God that unites them and that gives meaning not only to their personal lives, but also to their relationships.

[19:39] So I must ask you today, as Christians, is this the measure of your life? Can you say that your relationship with this Jesus defines and mediates all your other relationships without exception?

That this Jesus not only defines who you are, but the way that you relate with everyone else, even with non-believers? Can you say, for example, that Jesus is the single and central reason that unites you to this church?

That you live united in faith in Jesus who is the Lord of your lives? Brothers and sisters, the Lord Jesus is the only reason why we are gathered here today.

We don't have another reason. We call this day the Lord's day because it was the day that our Lord resurrected and in His life we have life.

Otherwise, we would not be here. We would have no reason to be here. This is a day sanctified for rest and worship because we celebrate our salvation in the person of Jesus Christ.

[20:59] We are united to praise the same God. We are united in the same Lord. We have the same faith. We are united in the same certainty, the same hope.

Look at verse 6. The certainty that Paul has for the lives of those believers. And I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

He has done it all. But He continues to fulfill His ministry in our lives today. Brothers and sisters, God is the author and finisher of our faith.

He is the only one who is the certainty of our eternal salvation and hope as well as the sole reason for our unity. unity. Note this, that we are united to each other because we were first united to Him. And it is in union with Him that we are united to one another. So you see, a friendship is only as strong as its foundation. Friendships are built and destroyed.

[22:15] And the reason friendships in this world tend to be so volatile, unstable, unstable, is the weakness of what unites it. If the reason for what unites you to another person is not Jesus, your friendship soon or later is going to end.

But in Christ, we have a bond that is unbreakable. And this is important as we gather as members, for example, of the same local church.

because many times what brings division and conflict are secondary things. It's because we forget what unites us. I don't want to put at stake the times that we need to be firm and the times that we need to go for conflict because we need to defend the gospel.

But how many churches divide because of secondary things? We need to be reminded of what unites us. You see, the importance of a friendship is measured by the value of what unites it.

And it is the excellency of Jesus that makes our unity excellent. You see, as Paul said, we do not preach ourselves. The church does not distinguish itself from the world because we're good.

[23:33] Our distinction is that our God is good. And it is Him that we proclaim. So I would ask you, how do you choose and what is the basis of your friendships?

Can you say that Jesus is the reason for the friendships that you seek to maintain? Is Jesus part of your conversation? Is He the most important basis and the foundation for the relationships here at this church?

And you might think that what I say is too radical. And Christians are many times seen as radicals. But I'll tell you why. It's because our faith involves all of our lives.

There is no detail that escapes the realm of faith because our faith is the size of our God. It is as broad and deep as the sovereignty of God.

Jesus is the subject of our lives. And this is reflected in the way that we relate to others. So we are united. We are united in the faith that we share.

[24 : 36] We are united because we are one in Christ. That's our identity. We are Christians. That's what we are.

And so we are united in faith but we are also united number two in fellowship in partnership. See verses 3 to 8. So we are not only united in our beliefs we are united in what we do.

Verses 3 to 8 again. I thank my God in all my remembrance of you always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

And I am sure of this that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to feel it this way about you all because I hold you in my heart for you are all partakers with me of grace both in my imprisonment and in defense and confirmation of the gospel.

For God is my witness how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. So as it is usually often in Pauline's letters after the greeting Paul prays for them in the usual and typical double structure.

[25 : 55] You see from verses 3 to 8 Paul thanks for them for their lives and then verses 9 to 11 see in your Bible Paul intercedes for them.

Now note this because our identity who we are is defined by God then we recognize that we owe everything to God. That's why Christians pray constantly.

Do you see the alls on verse 3 and 4? He says that I thank my God in all my remembrance of you. And then he says always is the same word in every prayer of mine for you all.

You see it's comprehensive. We give thanks and intercede because we know that everything that we are and everything that we have we owe to God.

So we thank Him continually because we know that from Him comes all in every good gift. But we also intercede because we recognize our dependence on Him.

[27 : 05] We recognize on one hand that everything comes from Him but also as we look into the future we are also dependent. We know that what we will be what we will have will be also a gift from Him.

So we pray. But at the same time note this also that the content of our prayers is a representation of what we consider that is important.

Have you ever realized this? Have you ever thought about the content of your prayers and how much it says about what you think is really important?

You see the content of our prayers reveals the greatest desires of our hearts. What you ask of God is what you think is most important.

So that is why it is so important that we learn to pray with the Bible. Let me give you a quick illustration. During my childhood it was common especially for new believers that would ask a very normal question which would be how should I pray?

[28 : 15] The most common answer that people would give is it doesn't matter how you pray whatever comes to your heart or to your mind because God knows all things and He receives all prayers.

And number one I do recognize the good intention of this answer and I do believe that there is not a formula that we should follow in repetition so that our prayers should be received.

But I think that is a better and a more excellent answer to the question how should I pray? Because do you remember when the disciples came to Jesus and asked Him teach us how to pray?

And how did Jesus answer? Jesus said oh you can pray whatever comes to your heart and to your mind. Was it? No. Jesus actually taught them how to pray.

And we should have the scriptures as our guide for how we pray. We have a whole book of prayers. We call them the Psalms. The scriptures are full of prayers and we should learn with the scriptures.

[29 : 31] You see when Paul prays he gives thanks. And he says at the same time that he does it with joy. But he's reminding the most important thing that happens in their lives what God has

already done.

You see this prayer is a celebration of the lives of the Christians in Philippi. Not because of how good they are but what God has already done in their lives.

And Paul's focus in his thanksgiving see verse 5 is the cooperation. Paul rejoices that the Philippians are his partners are his co-workers.

Paul and the Philippians are part so to say of the same team. Each one occupies its own role and function. But they are all seeking the same things doing the same things having the same desires. They have a common ministry. But now know also that this cooperation is qualified. See again in your texts. It is a cooperation or partnership verse 5 in the gospel.

[30 : 43] The reason of the partnership between Paul and the Philippians is the advancement of the gospel. That is the focus. You see what changed them and what changed their lives is actually what makes them live.

Number two it is a continuous cooperation. He says from day one until now. The church at Philippi had been founded by Paul.

In fact it was the first church that Paul founded established in Europe. You can read in Acts 16 the providential way that God has brought Paul to them.

And so the gospel that has come to them is to be preached to all nations. You see Baptists according to scripture believe that local churches are autonomous.

What does this mean? It means that we believe that according to the teachings of the Bible that there is no human authority above the local church. That Christ is the Lord of the church but the local churches are governed by the local churches.

[31 : 56] That there is no authority above them. But at the same time when we say that a church is autonomous we do not believe that churches are islands completely independent from one another.

You see the biblical teaching of the autonomy of the local church should not be confused with this sole independence of being proudly alone.

Let me say in this way if the autonomy of the local church is evident in the New Testament the communion and partnership between the churches is no less evident.

The autonomy of the local church is evident but partnership is equally evident. So churches interact and partner for the sake of the kingdom of God.

You see for Paul the generosity of the church at Philippi towards him was actually an evidence of their faith in their salvation. See verses 6 and 7 and follow Paul's logic.

[32 : 58] He says I am sure of this one of the most known verses in scripture. One of the verses that we repeat over and over again for the certainty of our salvation.

That we cannot lose our salvation. It is granted because it was granted by Christ not something that we do. So he says I am sure of this that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

And he adds this. He says it is right for me to feel this way. So apparently Paul had reasons to believe that that was true.

He says because I hold you in my heart. And then he adds this. Second part of verse 7. For you are all partakers with me of grace both in my imprisonment and in defense and confirmation of the gospel.

So if I ask you this how does Paul know that it is right it is fit it is appropriate to be sure of their salvation.

[34 : 11] Because according to Paul they were all partakers with him of grace. I would like you to note an important aspect because Paul talks about the Philippians cooperation in their ministry and it is true that cooperation between Christians and between churches is comprehensive.

But Paul's focus here is on material support. The financial support that the church gave to Paul was one of the reasons why he wrote this letter. To thank them. See turn your Bibles to Philippians chapter 4 and see verses 14 and following and allow me to read it quickly to you.

So 4 14 and following he said yet so after also one of the known verses and many times one of the most misused verses of scripture when Paul says that I can do all things through him who strengthens me he said yet it was kind of you to share my trouble and you Philippians yourself know that in the beginning of the gospel when I left Macedonia no church entered into partnership with me and giving and receiving except only you even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again not that I seek the gift but I seek the fruit that increases your credit you see Paul is

not saying I don't really care about the gifts that you have sent me to me over and over again actually he is thanking them but at the same time do you see Paul's focus is that his main joy so he rejoiced with those gifts but what was his greatest joy his greatest joy was that actually that proof it was an evidence of their faith it was a credit to them you see we

Christians don't see prosperity as a problem we see it as a blessing to be used with a purpose we Christians don't see prosperity as a problem we see it as a blessing to be used with a purpose as Paul told the Philippians we must remember to ourselves that generosity is an evidence of genuine faith partnership in the gospel is a fruit of our salvation because those who have been reached by the gospel they live for the gospel generosity is just one of the measures of the conversion of our hearts because our generosity is proportional to our understanding of God's generosity towards us you see so we are united we are united in the same faith we are partners in the same mission in the same ministry we are united in what we are we are united in what we do but finally number three we are united in a common purpose we are united in purpose see verses 9 to 11 philippians about more and more note note this is more of what they already have they are already

Christians and then he adds in science and knowledge or discernment you see it's the philippians grow in maturity more than what they already have and it is interesting because it is a mark of this letter because Paul's aim mainly in this letter is not correction but encouragement encouragement in difficult circumstances and how is that growth and maturity achieved again see what Paul says it is in science and knowledge or is in knowledge and discernment you see they need to know the truth but they also need to know how to judge what is in accordance with the truth they need to know but they also need to know how to apply brothers and sisters in a culture where information and misinformation reigns where a multitude of voices compete for our attention again we need to be reminded of where truth is we must be rooted in the word of God we are bombarded every day every hour with information in so many ways and we need to be reminded of the most basic things we need to be reminded where truth is we need to be reminded of the verses that we have learned since we were kids as all scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching for reproof for correction and for training in righteousness that the man of

[40 : 07] God may be complete equipped for every good work 2 Timothy 3 16 and 17 we must be reminded also of this that the word of God is living and active it's not like any other word it is sharper than any two edged sword piercing to the division of soul and of spirit of joints and of marrow in discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart you see even when it comes to us with correction even when it confronts us we continue to say as the disciples where should we go you have the words of life and we need to come to them over and over again to be reminded of truth to be reminded of true hope but also for Paul knowledge and discernment are also not an end in themselves they are more than an intellectual exercise so what is the end of this knowledge and discernment that Paul is praying for for what number one see verse 10 so that you may approve what is excellent you may approve what is superior what really matters so that you might be just as the text says sincere that you might be pure with no ulterior motives focused single minded in the way that you live that you might be as Paul says without scandal without fault without guilt with a clear conscience so that as Paul says you might be full of righteousness brothers and sisters this is what we want the goal is our salvation is our growth we want to be focused on these things these things are the things that really matter brothers and sisters at the same time do not be discouraged in your fight against sin it is a daily battle but it is worthwhile because we know what is our aim what is our desire what is our hope what is our certainty never read these words and these exhortations as legalism because

Paul never had that in mind Paul is not a perfectionist what Paul wants for the Philippians is that they might live for what really matters that they might put aside everything that is secondary and run that's what he thinks about himself it is in this letter that we read these words Philippians 3 12-14 Paul says about himself not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect but I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own brothers I do not consider that I have made it my own but one thing I do forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus this is our prize we want to be like him we want to be found in him we want salvation we want to be like Christ but Paul still has another end in mind that starts temporally verse 11 it is until the day of Christ Jesus and also to the glory and praise of God you see Paul's circumstances may indicate his failure he is in prison probably in Rome but Paul's perspective is different and this is very important

for the day and time that we live in someone's success can only be measured based on what a person wants to achieve right how do I define success defines what I want to achieve and that actually defines if I will be successful or not we should not let other people define what success is for a Christian you see if for

Paul his desire and his focus and his goal is the advancement of the gospel and the glory of God and if his imprisonment and his sufferings result in the growth of the kingdom and the glory of God then for Paul he is being successful and he gives thanks to God for that and these are not my words just read verses 12 and following at home because Paul wants to encourage them I want you to know this I'm in prison but since I'm in prison the gospel spread even more thanks to God glory to him for him he was being successful because if his goal was the spread of the gospel and if his imprisonment resulted in the spread of the gospel then amen you see the Christian perspective is eternity eternity is where we focus our eyes is until the day of Christ as Paul said I want to be found in him

Christians Christians do not assess their condition by their circumstances but by what Jesus has done for us in the hope of his return isn't that exactly what we do when we partake of the Lord's supper a sign that we continually do repeatedly as a church why do we do that on one hand is a memory we look back and we see what Christ has accomplished that's our foundation but then we do it until he comes because there is an end there is a goal and we can see it our certainty is in the person of Jesus and what he has done so therefore glory and praise to God are the ultimate goal of Paul's prayer that's how he ends because if God is the author and finisher of our faith if our salvation is solely the result of election the love of God and by grace alone then the glory can only be given to God we praise

[47 : 21] God because we owe everything to him you see our submission to God is an obligation he is God but our submission to God is also a joy because God is good and his promises are sure what do you want most in your life what do you pray the most what do you seek the most are you focused in what really matters or are you distracted among so many temptations in this world we want to give praise and glory to God because he is worthy he values that Jesus is excellent enough for us to leave everything for him we are united we are united in the same faith we are united in the same purpose therefore we are united as we serve our

Lord Jesus until he returns let us pray heavenly father we thank you because you did not abandon us to our sins you did not leave us in condemnation but you rescued us you've done what no one could imagine no one could ever plan what came from your mind in your will but you did it because you sent your only son God with you and he was willing to become like one of us oh father what a salvation what a grace what a love father we want to be like you we want to reflect your character we want to grow in maturity we want to live in full devotion to you oh father use us and help us in our weaknesses as we fail many times in being distracted with other things thank you father in christ's name amen