

Our Joy & Unity & Mission

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[0 : 00] I'd ask you to take your Bibles and turn to the book of Acts in the New Testament. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts chapter 16.

We're going to read verses 11 through 34. Acts 16. We'll read verses 11 through 34. This is the exciting and true word of God.

From Troas, we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace. And the next day on to Neapolis. From there, we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony, and the leading city of that district of Macedonia.

And we stayed there several days. On the Sabbath, we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there.

And one of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.

[1 : 13] When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. If you consider me a believer in the Lord, she said, come and stay at my house.

And she persuaded us. Once, when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future.

She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. This girl followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, These men are servants of the Most High God who are telling you the way to be saved.

She kept this up for many days. Finally, Paul became so troubled that he turned around and said to the spirit, In the name of Jesus Christ, I command you to come out of her.

At that moment, the spirit left her. When the owners of the slave girl realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities.

[2 : 17] They brought them before the magistrates and said, These men are Jews and are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice.

The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas. And the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten.

After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly, there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken.

At once, all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose. The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped.

[3 : 27] But Paul shouted, Don't harm yourself. We are all here. The jailer called for lights, rushed in, and fell trembling before Paul and Silas.

He then brought them out and asked, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? They replied, Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.

Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night, the jailer took them and washed their wounds.

Then immediately he and all his family were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them. He was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God, he and his whole family.

Please open with me this morning to Philippians. We're beginning a new series today on this little letter to the Church of God at Philippi.

[4 : 42] Our scripture reading has already told us how the gospel first came to this leading city of Macedonia, which is present-day Greece.

And it tells us of some of the first converts to Christ there that made up that infant church plant. Lydia, that seller of purple and her family, that demon-possessed girl that was set free, and then that prisoner or the jailer and his household.

And that was the beginning of the church at Philippi, and it held a unique place in the heart and love of the Apostle Paul. As from the very beginning, they financially supported Paul in his mission.

And so ten years later, when these folks at Philippi heard that Paul was in prison, they sent help once again to him through one of their own leaders, Epaphroditus.

And along with his gift from the church, their gift from the church, Epaphroditus brought news of the church. And Paul is now writing back from his Roman prison to thank them and to instruct them.

[5 : 58] Follow along as I read the first 11 verses from Philippians 1. Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons, grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart.

For whether I'm in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

And this is my prayer, that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.

[7 : 28] Amen. 14 years ago, we worked our way through this little letter verse by verse. That is not my plan this time.

Instead, I want to just hit highlights of this book. I'm calling it Lessons from Prison. In the letter, Paul addresses a variety of topics, but at least three major themes stand out.

Joy, unity, and the mission. Joy. Some have even called this letter the epistle of joy. Indeed, joy is the triumphant note that runs throughout.

Back in the 17th century, about 100 godly pastors and Bible scholars met in London as the Westminster Assembly to come up with a statement of faith and a catechism for the saints to use to teach their children, to grow in knowledge themselves in the great truths of the Bible.

Question number one of the shorter catechism. What is the chief end of man? The main thing, the main goal, the main purpose for man, mankind.

[8 : 46] Answer. To glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. Joy is at the heart of what we were created for.

The enjoyment of God who is Himself, the fountain and the source of all true joy. And when our race forfeited that joy by sin, God's purpose in sending His Son to save us was that He might be glorified and that we might be joyified, if I can put it that way, for His glory and for our joy.

That our joy in Him might be restored, starting here and now and then perfected, unmixed forever, as in His presence is fullness of joy.

And it is right hand our pleasures forevermore. Now we've had a lot of attacks on our joy this past year. And indeed, this is part and parcel of life on planet Earth, isn't it?

There are many joy thieves. Many joy killers. Kill joys. And it's hard to rejoice in hard times.

[10 : 05] But if we'll learn, we'll find that it's not impossible, as Paul will show us. In fact, God's words in this letter are calculated to instruct and to feed our joy and to bring us to rejoicing in the Lord always.

It's a big word, isn't it? Always. Every day, all day, not pretending with a painted smile, but really rejoicing from our hearts in the Lord.

So I'm wanting and I'm needing an extra dose of this joy food in my life right now. Maybe some of you, due to the pandemic, are taking extra doses of vitamin C and vitamin D and some zinc just to strengthen your immune system and to combat the virus.

Well, the Apostle Paul is giving us some vitamin J to combat all that might steal our joy in days like these. But another major theme of this letter is secondly, unity.

Unity within the local church, but unity with all the people of God, the true saints. There were cracks in the unity in the Philippian church.

[11 : 22] Epaphroditus had come and no doubt had told him of them. And Paul treats them seriously. He addresses both the problem and the solution and the vital importance of unity in the family of God.

He'll teach us both the basis of our unity and the practice of it, practically. How to practice it. Indeed, the very first verse takes up this theme of unity.

Maybe you missed it. But he says, Paul and Timothy, the servants of Christ Jesus to all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi.

Here's the basis of our unity. It is our union with Jesus Christ. You see, by faith in Christ, I have been united to Christ.

I am in union with Christ, never to be separated. But I'm not the only one. All who are in Christ, all the believers, all the saints are in Christ with me.

[12 : 33] And that's the foundation of our unity. And we need to start there. Our union with the same Christ is the foundation of our unity together.

We're all joined to each other because we're all joined to him. And as we live out of that union with Christ, we will enjoy union with each other.

And again, this past year has not been easy on our unity as a church. But I'm speaking now of the broader situation. We bless God for what we have experienced here.

But it has been a difficult year for unity in the broader body of Christ at large. At the end of December, at the end of last year, World Magazine published an article that I think just the long title will give you a hint about what the article was about.

2020's church divide. A pandemic and national controversies have splintered churches and taken a toll on pastors struggling to hold them together.

[13 : 43] pastors were interviewed who were at their wits' end. Burned out, some fired from their churches. Many had members leave their churches because church leaders were not taking the virus seriously enough while others in the very same church left because they were taking it too seriously.

And so the pastor was being pulled in both directions and losing bleeding people on both sides. But the handling of the pandemic was just one thing.

There were also divisions over how to address the racial unrest in our nation. There were differences thrown in about a nasty election and the politics that are splitting our country.

And just one of these might have been enough to deal with. But the Lord has seen fit in his wisdom and love to sift the church with all of these in one year.

It was like the perfect storm. And we were hit from many sides besides all the usual interpersonal stresses and strains that are in every congregation.

[15 : 01] Local church unity is under fire big time and just as Christ, the head of the church, delights in the unity of his congregations, even so Satan delights in the frictions and factions and unloving divisions in God's family.

So unity is another major theme in this book. And it's not difficult to see how joy and unity are related and affect one another.

Joyful Christians promote the unity of the church, don't they? Their joy is contagious and is healthy for the church. It's not difficult to see that unjoyful Christians, grumbling and complaining and discontented, erode the unity and sow seeds of disunity in the church.

Paul will deal with that. And at the same time, united Christians promote the joy of the church. Indeed, we have a whole psalm in the Psalter that's dedicated to rejoicing in the blessedness, the joys of unity.

Psalms 133, how good and how pleasant it is when brethren dwell together in unity. There the Lord commands the blessing, even life forevermore.

[16 : 19] So we'll see the interaction of joy and unity. But there's a third major theme of the letter, and I couldn't miss this as I read and reread the letter, and it's mission.

Mission. It's paramount in every age that the church stays focused on our mission. The mission given to us by our victorious Lord Jesus before he ascended into heaven.

The mission to make disciples of all the nations. And there's hardly a more pagan nation than this as we're headed. This is one of the nations where we're to be making disciples.

And then baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And then teaching them to obey everything that Christ the head has commanded. But the very issues before us at any given time in our country are tremendous temptations to pull us away from our primary mission.

Our reason for existence. I'm not saying that the Bible does not speak to issues such as pandemics and politics and race and that it is never profitable to address such.

[17 : 40] No, but the church cannot afford to become reactionary, simply being jerked here and there by the latest problem in the land. We must stay on mission to advance the saving gospel of Jesus Christ to this disease and dying world and the place where God has put us.

And so the devil would love nothing more for us than to retreat in these times from our mission, to hunker down in cowardice, apathy, paralysis.

And so we find in this letter Paul's constant concern for the gospel of Jesus Christ to remain central in all that the church does. That in all things, at all times, we might be advancing the cause of Christ's mission.

Now it's not hard to see again how joy and unity promote the mission of advancing the gospel. A happy and united congregation is a loud advertisement for the life-changing power of Christ who saves self-centered people and makes them concerned about others, even to sacrificing of their own rights.

to each other. Their joy reveals that it really is a big thing to have all of our sins forgiven, to have a personal relationship with the eternal creator through Jesus Christ and to be a citizen of heaven.

[19 : 17] So joy and unity promote the mission. So Paul will tell us when we come to verse 27 of this first chapter, whatever happens, you see, that's a big arm reach, whatever happens, conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

That way, when I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel, not contending against one another, but contending together for the faith of the gospel, a united church with a united heart and voice, commending the gospel that brings us together in a world that's increasingly divided.

That is part of our mission, which is greatly to God's glory. So this letter is for us. These lessons are for us. The Lord has had them written down for us and preserved 2,000 years for us living in 2021.

Well, may the Lord meet us then in our study and help us as a congregation to be more and more armed against these attacks of the enemy upon our joy, our unity, and an unswerving commitment to our mission.

So let's just jump right in. Verses 3 and 4. I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy. So here we are.

[20 : 51] Just got the greetings over and Paul's already talking about joy, isn't he? What makes that even more remarkable is just to remember where Paul is.

He's in prison. He's under enforced social distancing from his work, not allowed to come and go as he pleases, strict limitations on his freedom, also unjustly and unfairly imposed upon him for the sake of his master Jesus.

And he's not grumbling and complaining, he's rejoicing. A joyful prisoner. Just as he was ten years earlier in a prison in Philippi when he first brought the gospel there.

and was beaten and bloodied and locked in the stocks of the inner prison. And what was what was he doing there with Silas about midnight?

Singing the praises of his Lord. He's a joyful prisoner. And even so now from his Roman prison, he has access to the throne of grace where he always prays with joy.

[22 : 12] I wonder, are your prayer times joy times? Are those times that you enjoy your Lord? Here's our first lesson from prison.

Prayer times are joyful times when marked with thanksgiving. Prayer times are joyful times when marked with thanksgiving. You notice how Paul's joy is fed from his mind.

I thank God every time I remember you. That's an activity of the mind. Every time I think about you. So what do you think about and remember as you're praying for your brothers and sisters?

Their weaknesses and sins and faults? What do you think of when you pray for your pastor here? If you're thinking about my faults and weaknesses, God help you because your prayer time is not going to be a joyful time.

But Paul's thinking about things for which he can give thanks to God for his brothers and sisters. Maybe he was thinking how God in Christ had interrupted these people who were living their Christless lives.

[23 : 32] Lydia pursuing her business selling material. This poor slave girl demon possessed.

This rugged jailer and how the Lord came and set them free and saved them. Paul's got food for Thanksgiving right there, doesn't he?

Do you think of your brothers and sisters and how Christ has converted them and changed them by the power of his grace?

Our joy, like Paul's, follows our thanksgiving. Now, if we're praying without thanksgiving, we're going to be praying without joy that we could have if we did pray with thanksgiving.

Notice what Paul specifically mentions, what he joyfully thanked God for about them. First, their commitment to the gospel mission. Verse 5, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

[24 : 33] From the very get-go, they were all in for the mission. Partners. If you're in a business and you have two partners, they both share in the rewards and Paul says, that's what you are with me.

You're a partner. You're there in Philippi. I'm out and about, but we're partners. And that's the way it was from the beginning. The gospel had saved them and they wanted a vital part.

They wanted partnership in this work of taking that gospel to others. Say, that's an evidence of new life in Christ. When someone is tasting the joy of sins forgiven and says, I want others to taste this.

How can I help that cause forward? So Lydia, as soon as she was saved, immediately what does she do? She invites Paul and his evangelistic team to stay at her house and opened her home as a meeting place for the believers.

That rugged jailer who had just slammed these men into stocks came to hear the gospel and believe and at once he welcomed Paul and Silas into his house.

[25 : 43] He washed their wounds. He fed them. Why? Because he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God. He and his whole family. You see, he wanted others to know this joy of sins forgiven.

Being right with God. The promise of eternal life. He said, come in and tell my family what you told me. And then when Paul and Silas left, he and the other believers there in Philippi, this little group said, here Paul, take our hard earned money and you go and tell others about Jesus so that they too can believe and rejoice like we have come to do.

It is a true joy to see the saints taken up with the mission of Christ. To see you involved in witnessing to lost people that God has planted you beside.

To see you discipling one another, urging each other on to follow Jesus, praying and sacrificially giving of your finances to advance the cause of Christ.

It filled Paul with joyful thanksgiving every time he fought and prayed for these Philippian believers. Because he knew that this was the work of God begun in them.

[27 : 08] This is not natural. this is supernatural and he thanked God for it. Are you praying for your brothers and sisters here and elsewhere?

Be sure to add thanksgiving to God for his good work in them and turn your prayer times into joy times. That is to rejoice in the Lord as you pray for one another.

another reason he always prays with joyful thanksgiving he tells us in verse 6 is being confident of this that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

This is our second point. What does he give thanks for? Well their commitment to the mission now for the certainty of their salvation being perfected. The certainty of themselves being perfected.

You see Paul had no rose colored glasses as he thought of the saints. Epaphroditus had told him about the troubles there in Philippi. He knows they're not perfect.

[28 : 15] No saint in this life is. But though they were not perfect they were on their way to being made perfect and that in itself was enough to cause Paul thanksgiving and joy as he prayed for them.

He was confident that the one who had begun the good work in them. He was there when that good work was begun in many of them and the one who had begun it in them would be faithful to complete that good work and carry it on to perfection.

Now what is that good work that he began in them? Well it's clearly the work of salvation. And Paul had seen it he'd heard of it and he rejoiced to know it would be completed one day.

How could Paul be so sure so confident of that? Just because God never begins the good work of salvation without being committed to fully finishing what he started.

And that's joy food. That's joy food for us and for those we're praying for. So I want to camp on this a while. I think we can suck joy from this truth for our own salvation but also for our brothers and sisters.

[29 : 34] Who began this good work of salvation? That's what's at issue here as well as who's going to carry it on. He says he who began the good work. Well who's the he?

Well it's not me and it's not you. It's the Lord. Jonah says salvation is of the Lord and he ought to know. He was going down for the last time in the angry sea sinking down to the roots of the mountain with the seaweed wrapped around his head.

And suddenly he's swallowed alive by a great fish commanded by the Lord and three days later he's vomited out at the command of the Lord onto dry land. And all Jonah can say about the whole thing is salvation is of the Lord.

It's his doing. And that's what the whole Bible says. It's the most elementary truth but it's the most important one to get right. That God saves sinners.

That he begins the work and he completes the work and finishes it. Now sometimes Christians think that they began it by saying but I remember seeking the Lord or I remember calling on him to save me.

[30 : 51] I believe that he saved me but I began by asking him and seeking him. But you see the question is why did you seek him?

Why did you call on his name? The Bible says there's no one Romans 3 11 and 12. There's no one who understands. There's no one who seeks God.

All have turned away. Not seeking him. All have turned away from him. They have together become worthless. There is no one who does good.

Not even one. If there's none of us who do good how can we begin this good work? It's a good work. This work of salvation.

We can't. Somebody else is going to have to start a good work because we can't do good work. Because a work that God considers good is done by faith in the Lord Jesus.

[31 : 47] It's done by love to God. It's done with the right heart motive. And none of us had that good. And none of us seek God as the text says.

But I remember seeking God. We seek God like a felon seeks the law. Like Adam and Eve sought the Lord after they had sinned.

No we don't seek him. We run from him. We hide from him. So if we ever came to seek the Lord it was because he first sought us.

And he moved us to seek him. We sing that in 397. I sought the Lord. And afterward I knew he moved my soul to seek him.

Seeking me was not I that found oh Savior true. No I was found of thee. You see it was when we were not seeking and would not and could not seek him that God sent his son and the son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost.

[32 : 54] No one can come to me Jesus says unless the father draws him. You see we were unable unwilling to seek him.

Ephesians 2 1 to 5 makes it clear that it was precisely when we were dead in sin that God made us alive in Christ. We were the walking dead physically alive but spiritually dead.

We had no heart for God no heartbeat for God dead spiritually. No love for him his law his gospel. No I was alive to myself but not to God.

And it was precisely then when I was dead toward him that he made me alive. He began the good work you see. Paul was Paul seeking God on the road to Damascus going down there to kill some more Christians or imprison them.

No he wasn't seeking God but Jesus sought him and found him and saved him. God starts and begins the good work in us. So a man is lying on the beach and he's unconscious there along the ocean edge and he had been swimming and he got caught up in the riptide and now he sputters and spits out the water and he comes to he's comes to his consciousness.

[34 : 14] And he remembers kicking furiously as he was being drug down by the undertow. And he said man I must have really kicked and swam hard to make it here to shore.

And the lifeguard that's bending over him says no way pal. You were going down for the last time and I saw you and hopped on my wave runner and got to you and dove in and went down and scraped you off the bottom and drug you to shore and had been working on you for 15 minutes with CPR and don't get this idea that you saved yourself.

Now you won't remember all that I did because you were unconscious. And yet the one who did the work of saving was me not you.

Now you get the parallel. Yes you remember seeking the Lord. But you don't remember what God was subconsciously doing to you.

He was beginning the work if you ever sought the Lord. If you ever had true saving faith in him. It was because he began the work first. Remember Lydia?

[35 : 29] Paul went down to that river where he found these ladies and he preached Christ to them and she listened and she responded in faith in the Lord Jesus.

Oh well there see the gospel's offered. But but she began the work when by faith she laid hold of Christ. Oh but wait. You notice how Luke explained what happened that day down by the riverside.

When it tells us in Acts 16 14 that the Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. And that simply is saying to us that before the Lord opened her heart it was closed.

Closed to the message. No room here for you is the sign over all of our hearts closed until the Lord unlocks the heart and opens the heart.

And then Lydia's and jailers come to Jesus. Jesus. But it's the Lord who begins the work. Did you understand the gospel?

[36 : 39] It was because God enlightened you and opened your heart. Did you feel convicted? You remember being convicted of your sin and the heaviness of guilt and of the wrath of God upon you?

Well that's because the Holy Spirit was working conviction in you. Did you receive Jesus Christ by faith?

It's because he God first opened your eyes to see beauty in Jesus and and to see that he meets every one of your needs as a sinner to be right with God.

Whatever you have done in this this this believing this repenting it's always the response to something God did before. And that's why Paul says that he who began the work in you.

And we need to take that to heart. For ourselves for one another. This is good news that that the one who began this work of salvation is God and not us.

[37 : 40] Why is that good news? Because the one who begins the work is the one who completes it. And if it depends on me. I won't see at the finish line.

I will have trailed off somewhere along the way. But if the work begins with God. I'll meet you at the finish line. Because he carries that work that he began on to completion.

So here's the reason all true believers will persevere to the end in holiness because God is preserving them. The Holy Spirit dwells in us. Why does he dwell in us?

For many reasons. But one is to sanctify us. One is to keep us going for this very work. To work in us. To will and to do what pleases him.

To be careful to obey his commandments so that when we stray the Holy Spirit seeks us out. Convicts and humbles and disciplines us in grace.

[38 : 39] Draws us back to himself and restores our souls. His love will not let us go. And that's why Paul is so confident. That the work of salvation that God begins he will complete.

Well can you see why that would bring joy and thanksgiving to Paul's heart? Because he's thinking about these Philippians. Imperfect. Troubles. Weaknesses.

All kinds of spots and wrinkles in the church. Because he says I know that one day you're going to be as perfect as Jesus. Jesus. And he can give thanks and he can rejoice in that.

Be sure to do the same with your brothers and sisters. Especially if you're having trouble getting past some of their imperfections and failures. Go to the end. Thank God that he who has started the work will finish it.

So having told the Philippians what he joyfully thanks God for about them. He now tells them what he asked God to do for them. verse 9 and through 11.

[39 : 51] And this is my prayer that your love may abound more and more. There were unity problems in the church as we'll see. But Paul wants them to know up front. That these are failures of love.

And that's our second lesson and last lesson for today. Failures of unity are failures of love. And here's the proper diagnosis of unity problems in the church. It's a love problem.

It's not ultimately the science of mask wearing or social distancing. It's a failure to love your brothers and sisters even when there's a difference over the science of mask wearing and social distancing.

The issues will change. But whatever they are real love refuses to allow such things to come between a brother and sister in Christ. We who are united in Jesus.

That is too precious to let something destroy it. And he acknowledges they do love one another. Indeed 1 John as we saw weeks ago tells us that you're not a real Christian if you don't love the brethren.

[40 : 53] But their remaining troubles of disunity show that their love still needs to grow and to abound more and more. Indeed every failure of love is a need for more love.

Every failure in unity is a need for more love and that's why he's praying for it. He begins with prayer for unity because he knows any growth in love is a fruit of the spirit.

We call down the blessings of the spirit in prayer. When I pray for you I pray for love to abound more and more. Is that your reflex response to people that are hard to get along with in your life?

That you go to the throne of grace and pray for love to increase and abound in your heart for them and in their hearts for you to thank God for them and to pray for this love.

Notice it's not just any kind of love he prays for our feelings of love can easily go astray. And so we need a love that abounds more and more in knowledge and depth of insight.

[41 : 56] A love that is grounded in knowledge. knowledge. And he prays this seeking two results first so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ.

We need knowledge to know how love is to act in every situation. Love's a powerful emotion but it needs to be informed directed guided by God's law.

Love is what fulfills the law. Every commandment is just spelling out what love looks like. And so we need not only love welling up in our hearts for one another we need the law to tell us what love should do in each situation.

God's law is the tracks on which the engine of our love is to run. It teaches us how to love how love acts.

So are you coming daily to God's word to learn how to love? We need increasing knowledge and deep insight to be able to discern not just what's good but what is best.

[43 : 09] Love seeks the best in the other. So we need wisdom to know what is fitting. What is proper?

What's the very best thing in this situation? What's the best thing to do? What's the best thing to say? What's the best left unsaid? What's the best time to say it?

Place to say it? Manner to say it? It's no undirected emotion of love that will do. That could do more harm than good. We want our love to abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight and discernment of the very best way to love.

Now you see why he's praying for this. This is no easy thing. But there is knowledge of God and there is prayer to seek the Spirit's help in making our love to abound in knowledge and depth of insight.

The second result of this is that we may be filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the praise and to the glory and praise of God. I'm praying for your love to increase and abound more and more depth of insight knowledge that you might be filled with such fruits of righteousness.

[44 : 27] It is the fruit of the Spirit, this love, you see. And it only comes through Jesus Christ. I've said it before, I'll say it again. It takes Jesus to live the Christian life and and this love, this unity, it only comes through Jesus Christ.

And that's why in the end it brings glory and praise to God because this entire salvation begun, continued and completed is the work of God in Christ.

And so to him the praise, the glory and praise to the glory and praise of God. Augustine said the only thing that really unites men in a common desire for is, excuse me, the only thing that really unites men is a common desire for the same ends.

So here it is. What's our end? Our great end is to glorify and praise God, to bring glory to him by abounding in love for one another. Now that's an end worth living for.

It's an end worth suffering for. It's an end worth denying ourselves for. And Paul will unpack that. So Satan will oppose this with all of his might. He hates glory and praise coming to his rival.

[45 : 40] He can't steal our salvation. He would steal our joy in the Lord because he knows that the joy of the Lord is our strength. The joy of the Lord is our adorning advertisement of the goodness of our saving God.

And so God has us go through the very same trials as the world. Only with the fruit of the spirit of love and joy and peace that his glory and praise might be advanced.

And if Satan can't steal our salvation, he would steal our loving unity because our unity greatly glorifies God that in this divided and hateful world, he has a people who are united in supernatural love.

Even with many differences, who are these are the people of God and what brings such people together? Oh, they're one in Christ. That's the basis.

What must the savior be to accomplish that? Unity. In variety and differences. And if Satan can't steal our salvation, he would love to sideline and undercut our mission, distracting us with arguing and complaining and bickering and dissension.

[46 : 55] And the mission always suffers when the church is fighting with each other. That's Paul's concern. Church striving against one another within is not a church striving together for the faith of the gospel.

The mission our Lord left with us. So we're not ignorant of Satan's devices. Let's watch and pray. Let's joyfully give thanks for one another. Let's grow more and more in our love for each other with knowledge and depth of insight and discernment to know what is best, praying for it, laboring for it, and all by Jesus Christ.

Drawing everything we need from him. So that glory and praise will come to our God. I'm going to ask that you stand and sing.

Christ for the world we sing. The world to Christ we bring. This is our mission. With one, with joy, and with one accord.

Let's sing. Let's pray. Who is like you, O Lord, majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders.

[48 : 09] We've read of the wonders that you worked in Philippi 2,000 years ago, calling men and women out of their sins and joining them to Jesus Christ.

Teaching them together to seek the joy and salvation of others to the glory of God. They didn't do it perfectly. And you sent letters, a letter to them and your spirit to them to work in them both to will and to do of your good pleasure.

Would you use this book to teach us, to bring us along? There are just as awesome works of wonder that you have done among us, setting us free from the power and chains of sin that held us.

And we thank you, Lord, that you didn't bring your people out of bondage in Egypt to let them die in the desert. But you brought them all the way home to the promised land. And you will not begin such a work in us without completing it one day.

So sanctify us on the way that we might be a praise to our Savior and a glory to our saving God. And we ask it in Jesus' name.

[49 : 24] Amen.