

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE
PHILIPPIANS

DAY

1 - 7

DAY 1 - Paul in Philippi

Before we begin in the Book of Philippians it's helpful to look at the context in which this letter comes.

The book of acts tells many accounts of the spreading of the gospel as the Apostles (of which Paul, who had formerly been a persecutor of Christians called Saul, is now one), empowered by the Holy Spirit, take the good news of Jesus Christ out to the world as Jesus had instructed them to do.

Philippi was the first city in Europe to hear the Gospel. It was a Roman colony in Macedonia, northern Greece. The letter to the Philippians was written by Paul from prison (probably in either Rome or Ephesus) to the Christians in Philippi. There appears to be great love between Paul and those in Philippi and they have supported him from the very beginning of his ministry there.

Many years before this letter was written, we see in Acts 16 the account of the first time Paul went to Philippi.

Read: Acts 16:6-40

6 Paul and his companions travelled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. **7** When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. **8** So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. **9** During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." **10** After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

11 From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day we went on to Neapolis. **12** From there we travelled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days.

13 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. **14** One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshipper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. **15** When she and the members of her household were baptised, 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.

Paul and Silas in Prison

16 Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. **17** She 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." **18** She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so annoyed 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.

19 When her owners realised that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. **20** They brought them before the magistrates and said, "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar **21** by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice."

22 The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. **23** After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. **24** When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.

26 Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose. **27** 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. **28** But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"

29 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. **30** He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household." **32** Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. **33** At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptised. **34** 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 household.

35 When it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order: "Release those men." **36** The jailer told Paul, "The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now you can leave. Go in peace."

37 But Paul said to the officers: "They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out."

38 The officers reported this to the magistrates, and when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were alarmed. **39** They came to appease them and escorted them from the prison, requesting them to leave the city. **40** After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house, where they met with the brothers and sisters and encouraged them. Then they left.

Paul had an extraordinary time when he first went to Philippi as the good news of Jesus Christ came to Europe for the first time. The brutal reality of suffering for Christ, the miraculous power of God, and the beauty of salvation.

When writing the letter to the Philippians Paul is again in prison, but this time there hasn't been an Earthquake, yet he still has joy in his heart because of them and the work that God is doing through his life. He writes to them to encourage them to centre their lives on Christ, to live in unity with each other, and to stay strong in their faith in the midst of troubles.

Questions

Are there people or places where you find it harder to live out your faith?

Are there any particular ways in which you would like to grow in your faith?

Do you have people in your life who encourage you and that you encourage like Paul and the Philippians?

Actions

Pray and invite God to speak to you in these 4 weeks. Open your heart with humility and invite the Holy Spirit to fill us and strengthen us in our faith.

Take a few moments to pause and allow God to speak to you.

Pray with someone else and share your answers to the questions above. You can then support one another and celebrate together as you see God working in your lives.

DAY 2 - Paul's love for them

Read Philippians 1:1-8

- 1** Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,
To all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:
- 2** Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 3** I thank my God every time I remember you. **4** In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy **5** because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, **6** 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.
- 7** It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. **8** God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

Paul begins by greeting the church as he does in many letters.

Then, before anything else, Paul expresses his deep love for those in Philippi.

Notice verses 3-4 and verses 7-8.

Read the passage again and look out for the times Paul says 'all of you'.

We'll look at verse 6 tomorrow, but we can see how much emphasis there is on the community centred around Jesus Christ. Paul is not addressing individuals...but 'all of you'. Even his joyful prayers for them are because of their 'partnership' in the gospel with him. There is such a strong sense of togetherness and partnering in Philippians, both them with each other and them with Paul.

This is so important, particularly in our culture that is so incredibly individualistic and will work against two key biblical truths:

1. We need others and I am needed by others.
2. Christ is the centre of our lives, not ourselves.

To say that my life cannot function properly without others, and that the centre of my life is Christ (not me), is incredibly countercultural in our culture in the UK, yet this is at the heart of living out our faith in Christ.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 and see how Paul describes this same important reality in a very different context.

12 Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. **13** For we were all baptised by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. **14** Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

15 Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. **16** And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. **17** If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? **18** But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. **19** If they were all one part, where would the body be? **20** As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

21 The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” **22** On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, **23** and the parts that we think are less honourable we treat with special honour. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, **24** while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honour to the parts that lacked it, **25** so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. **26** If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.

27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

Questions

Who are we praying for? Do we pray with joy?

Do you have friends who encourage me in my faith?

Who are we partnering with others in our life and faith? Are we sharing life centred around Jesus?

How am I partnering with my church community or life group in the work of the gospel? What holds me back if not?

Actions

Pray for someone with joy in your heart.

Think and pray about joining a life group or a serving team at church so that we are all together partnering as 'all of us'. Maybe this is the right time to partner together with others.

Share communion with friends or family because all of our lives together are built on Jesus and all he has done for us.

DAY 3 - Paul's prayer for Love

Read Philippians 1:9-11

9 And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, **10** so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, **11** filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

Paul's desire is that we may love more and more.

The love that Paul speaks about here is the same word he uses in the famous passage in 1 Corinthians 13 that we often hear at weddings. This is the kind of love Paul is praying would 'abound more and more'.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-8a; 13

1 If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. **2** If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. **3** If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. **5** It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. **6** Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. **7** It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

8 Love never fails....**13** And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

This is the kind of love he wants to be coursing through the veins of the church: it's an exciting prospect to be loved like this, but it also requires us to play our part in loving in this way too. If we're honest, this is often extremely hard to live out in our lives.

Being forgiven, for example, often feels a lot nicer than forgiving someone else, or having patience shown to us is easier than being patient with someone else.

It's hard not to be self-seeking when someone else seems to get a lot of good things by being self-seeking themselves, or when we are celebrated for the things gained through selfish ambition.

Thankfully we are not left to figure this out on our own, Paul's prayer is that this love would grow in our knowledge and depth of insight of who God is and how he thinks about us (Paul will look at that more in chapter 2).

Questions

Am I keeping records of other people's wrongs?

Are there areas in my life where, if I'm honest, I have become proud or self seeking?

Where could I grow in love towards others in my church? (1 Corinthians 13:4-7 above can help highlight this)

What might it look like if my desire was that my love for my church family would grow and grow?

Actions

Ask God to reveal his love to you - it's the only way we can love him and others - and his love for us is the perfect example of what we see in 1 Corinthians 13. We need revelation from God.

You could pray this prayer from Ephesians over yourself (and with a friend):

Ephesians 3:16-21

16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, **17** so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, **18** may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, **19** and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, **21** to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

With God's strength, pray for those you find it hard to love. Pray that God will help you love others. Maybe with a small start, we can grow in the kind of love we've read about today.

Read Romans 5:5b-8

5b because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. **7** Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. **8** But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Pray and thank God that our love for others is all centred on what God has already done for us.

Repent and ask God to help you turn away from pride and self-centeredness into God's love.

DAY 4 - Knowledge and depth of insight

Read Philippians 1:9-11

9 And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, **10** so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, **11** filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

We come to this passage again today as this prayer holds the key to our understanding of the letter as a whole. This prayer expresses Paul's desire for the church in how to live as Christians.

His desire is that their unconditional love for each other to grow as they have a greater revelation of who God is. This growth in wisdom and love is what it looks like to live blameless lives (not perfect), full of the evidence of the transformation that has happened (and is still happening) in them because they have been saved by Jesus Christ. All this knowing that Christ is coming again to bring us into eternal life with him.

The 'knowledge' he speaks of is revelation of who God is and how God thinks about us. We find that in the Bible, through prayer, by the Holy Spirit, through anointed teachers/preachers etc.

'Depth of insight' is more to do with moral knowledge, learning how to make wise choices through experience. Life is complex and we need this wisdom as well as revelation of God in order to apply what we know to our lives.

He says that when we are living like that then we can discern what is best - testing things to decide what is morally best. We won't always get this right, but we can all grow in wisdom.

All of this is with our eyes on the day of Christ, the day when Christ returns in glory. This is an important theme in this letter.

That kind of life is what it looks like to be filled with the fruit (evidence) of righteousness, which he says, will bring glory to God.

Questions

When looking to grow in knowledge or wisdom, where do you start?
Social media, ourselves, the Bible...?

Can you recognise areas of thought or action where you would like to grow in love or wisdom?

Actions

If (when) you fall short of this kind of love in our thoughts or actions, rather than beating yourself up over it, or saying you'll try harder, pray and thank God for who he is and his love for you. If you have time, read ahead to Philippians 2:6-11 to see God's love for you in all its glory. We can then build our life of love in our knowledge of God as Paul prayed and, who knows, maybe from there we might actually start to grow in love and wisdom.

Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help you to love as we saw in 1 Corinthians 13 as you look at Christ.

DAY 5 - God is at work

Read Philippians 1:12-18

12 Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. **13** As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. **14** And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

15 It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. **16** The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defence of the gospel. **17** The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. **18** But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice,

Paul is writing this letter from prison. There is some contention about where exactly he is writing from (Rome or Ephesus being the main possibilities), but he is in prison now, and he has been in prison before (in fact he has been in prison in Philippi before in the very place he is writing to (see Acts 16)). Later in the letter he will talk about having experienced sorrows and in Acts 16 alone we saw how he was severely beaten because he shared the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul didn't pretend not to have problems, or simply ignore them, he faces the painful and brutal reality of his life and sorrows: he is not putting a brave face on it, yet he is not bitter. Read verses 12 and 18 again...it's quite the opposite. While facing the often painful realities of prison, in verse 18 he is even rejoicing!

Why? Because the Gospel is advancing.

Even through Paul's imprisonment, God is at work to bring about salvation through Christ. Paul has surrendered his life to Christ, therefore even in a prison he is content as long as lives are being saved. This is quite similar to what we see in the life of Joseph in Genesis (who had been sold as a slave by his brothers, and spent time in prison, only for God to use him to save the Nation of Egypt and his entire family).

Read Genesis 51:18-20

18 His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said.

19 But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? **20** You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

Joseph in a palace and Paul still in prison, both echo the same idea: My life is not my own, but God is at work in my life through the good and the bad to save others...I trust God.

Questions

Where are you discouraged at the moment?

Do you feel like you are facing obstacles to how you thought things should be going?

Do you ever feel like God has left you because you are in a 'prison'?

Do you lose faith in God because things have gone against you?

How much of our lives and comfort are we willing to give for the sake of others' lives being saved?

Actions

Pray with someone for faith to believe, as Paul and Joseph did, that although what is happening in your life might be meant for harm, God can use it to bring about his kingdom.

Allow the Holy Spirit to show you if there is any bitterness in your heart because things aren't working out how you had hoped.

Take heart. Your plans may fail, but when you are in Christ you are part of God's plan that cannot fail. Don't throw away your confidence, it's not over yet.

DAY 6 - Life or Death

Read Philippians 1:19-26

19 for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance.

20 I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. **21** For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. **22** If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! **23** I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; **24** but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. **25** Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, **26** so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.

Paul is confident because people are praying for him and the Holy Spirit is helping him. Let us remember just how important our prayers for others really are. Let us also remember the power of God the Holy Spirit, who is called the 'Helper' by Jesus when he promised him to the disciples in John 16, to encourage us and help us in every situation in our lives.

We can see here that Paul didn't have an unhealthy expectation that he was to be freed from prison - in fact he seems to see being killed as an equally likely outcome. Although he certainly hopes and has some sense of confidence that he will be freed to continue helping them, he is painfully aware that he is in a Roman prison where life could be taken away at any moment.

Despite his perilous situation, his confidence doesn't come primarily from what he hopes will happen. He understands the deeper joy that comes from the Gospel of Jesus Christ:

- if I live then I get to continue doing good work
- If I die then I get to be with Christ

Paul has great faith - he is not doubting the power of Christ - the earthquake that happened when he was in prison in Philippi (where he's now writing to) that we read in Acts 16 probably taught him that God can get people out of prison!!

Many people assume you have to have a completely unwavering commitment to what we think God wants to do in order to have faith, and anything short of this can be seen as a lack of faith, or even as the reason why we didn't get our miracle. NO!

Paul is a man of great faith...so much so that having seen many Christians killed for their faith, having been imprisoned and beaten himself, he can make the truly incredible statements he does in the passage above.

Has God put Paul in prison? Paul doesn't seem to say that, but is God using Paul's imprisonment to advance the gospel? Absolutely! If Paul is suddenly executed in prison will that mean a failure of God's plans on the earth? Absolutely not! He is so full of faith and is encouraging them not to be discouraged if he is killed. In Christ, death is no longer a defeat, for he will then be with Christ.

Don't be discouraged, because although your plans may fail, there is a plan that cannot be stopped: the plan that God started in Christ, is carrying on to completion in Christ and will complete on the day of Christ. When you are in Christ you are part of *that* plan!

Remember the words from 1:6: **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.**

That plan was for you, and for you to share with the world. In Christ, any setback (even imprisonment and death) is not a defeat for God's plan for this world. When we understand that Christ is at work in every 'defeat', then we can face the pain and disappointment of those things with faith and hope in our hearts.

Take heart and look to see where the kingdom is coming and have faith.

Faith to see breakthrough and faith to live in the prison a little longer, faith to be honest about your pain, frustration and confusion and faith to rejoice in your part of God's plan.

And even as Paul did, faith to live, and faith to die.

Questions

Do you get discouraged in your faith when, like almost every human being in history, you find that things haven't gone according to plan?

Where do we need to allow God to show us that he is working in the midst of setbacks?

What takes priority in our hearts, our own personal wellbeing or God's plans through our lives?

Are we willing to let the gospel cost us our comfort?

Actions

Pray together with somebody to grow into the kind of faith Paul had.

Ask someone to pray for you today and pray for them.

Spend a minute quietly with God and allow the Holy Spirit to begin to help you. Ask him to help you in whatever you need today.

DAY 7 - Living a life worthy of the gospel

Read Philippians 1:27-30

27 Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel **28** without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. **29** For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, **30** since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

In this passage Paul seems to be concerned with two main threats:

1. From Roman society to believe Caesar to be divine, with divine authority
2. The fragile nature of the unity within the church.

To say that Jesus Christ was saviour and Lord was to renounce Caesar as both of those things and to undermine the glue holding the Roman empire together. This was not welcomed and so the early church faced (and Paul was currently experiencing) varying levels of persecution under the Roman empire (there was also plenty coming from the Jewish religious leaders in other regions as well).

This was at times incredibly severe and led to many deaths. Because of this, the temptation to give up following Christ in order to live and function within society, was a constant reality for the Christians living at the time. Whether this was to avoid death, or simply to be able to live and work alongside friends and family in peace, the threat to ongoing discipleship was ever present within the Roman world.

Paul is also passionate for the church itself to have unity built on their common experience of Grace given by Christ. Remember how at the beginning of the letter Paul spoke about 'all of you' many times. Later in chapter 4 he will address some disunity head on because it is so important that they stand strong together.

Although circumstances and times have changed, we still face these two threats today. Every culture throughout history will try to pull us (often very subtly) away from following Jesus by making it hard for those who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Our cultures today are no different, and we should be aware of that and not surprised when we feel that threat.

Far from being removed from this world, we are called to live in it and see it transformed. Paul's desire for them (and us) in verse 27 is that we would 'stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel' strong together.

We are also all human and struggle to live in unity with each other even when we have received Christ. We can be encouraged that we aren't the first, and won't be the last, Christians to find each other challenging. We can't give up on each other though and must continue to work (and sometimes strain) for unity with each other.

Faith in Christ and suffering are also seen as clearly linked, so we shouldn't be surprised or discouraged if this is our experience as we looked at yesterday.

If they are to stay strong against outside pressures and remain strong together, Paul says in verse 27 that they should conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. We are to keep living right, not giving the enemy a foothold to exploit through our actions. No one is perfect, but we can pursue a life in line with Jesus' teachings, with fantastic consequences.

Questions

Where do you feel pressure to give up believing in Christ or his teachings, or where you want to hide what you believe? Are there certain places or relationships where that is harder?

Are there areas of your behaviour that are not 'in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ'? Confess to God and maybe talk with a friend to help you.

Are there people you struggle with or who you are bitter towards? With whom do you need God's help to love and live around?

Actions

Share with someone where you find it hard to be a Christian.

Read the following passages in which Jesus is speaking and then praying for us who would follow him. Receive Jesus' encouragement and prayer for you and allow the Holy Spirit to work in you so that this might be true of us.

Jesus said to his disciples in **John 16:33**:

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Jesus prayed for his disciples in **John 17:6-19** as they are in the world:

6 "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. **7** Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. **8** For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. **9** I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. **10** All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them.

11 I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. **12** While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by [c] that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

13 "I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. **14** I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. **15** My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. **16** They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. **17** Sanctify them by [d] the truth; your word is truth. **18** As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. **19** For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

Jesus prays for us that we would be united in **John 17:20-26**:

20 "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, **21** that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. **22** I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— **23** I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

24 "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

25 "Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. **26** I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to love others as Paul showed us in 1 Corinthians 13.

Pray together with a friend for strength to stand firm in the Gospel, in unity with others. We cannot do this alone, but God has given us the power of the Holy Spirit which makes this possible.