

Paul's Example No. 1 -- Loving and Praying for the Church

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[0 : 00] And this morning, we're beginning a new series for the summer on Paul's letter to the Philippians.

Edward Lobb of Cornhill, Scotland will be leading us through this. And so this morning, we're going to be reading from Philippians chapter one, from verse one through to 18.

So do turn that up. Philippians chapter one, reading from verse one to verse 18. 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.

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'm sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. It's 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 the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment so that you may approve what is excellent 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. I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guards and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from goodwill. The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former proclaim Christ out of rivalry, not sincerely, but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. Well, what then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth,

Christ is proclaimed. And in that I rejoice. Well, amen. This is God's word. And we'll return to it again shortly.

[3 : 13] Well, good morning, friends. Good to see you all here. Let's turn to Philippians. And our plan is that we should spend several weeks in this little letter of Paul covering most of the Sunday mornings this month and in August. So Philippians chapter one.

Now, if you are a new Christian or perhaps a fairly new Christian, you might well ask why our Bible contains so many letters. There are 13 written by Paul, the apostle and eight or nine others at the end of the New Testament. Well, the reason is simple.

The apostles wrote these letters to encourage, to instruct, and sometimes to correct the churches or individuals they were writing to. All the recipients of these letters needed encouragement to persevere in the Christian life. They all needed instruction so as to develop and clarify their understanding of the gospel and how to live out its implications. And very often, because the human heart is frail and fickle, they needed to be corrected because something was going wrong in their shared life as Christians. There might be heresy or bad behavior or immorality.

Now, in the church at Philippi, there's no sign that there was heresy or immorality, but there were problems. And in a moment, I want to visit three or four passages in the letter, which suggest what those problems might have been. And it's good for us to be faced with them, because the problems encountered by these first century churches are exactly the problems that can meet any church in any generation. And therefore, Paul's instructions to the Philippians back in 62 AD act as instructions to the Tron Church in Glasgow in 2022. Not that we necessarily have exactly these problems in our church, but any modern church could have them. And to be forewarned is to be forearmed. So if we can grasp what was going on at Philippi in the first century AD, we shall be able to live the Christian life in the 21st century with a much clearer understanding of the purpose of a church and of the dangers which threatened the stability and even the survival of any church. Now, before we go to those few passages, let me say a little bit about Paul and the Philippians and their city. Philippi was named in the fourth century BC after its founder, a man called Philip of Macedon, a powerful Greek general whose son became known as Alexander the Great.

But a couple of hundred years later, in the second century BC, Philippi was conquered by the Romans and it became what was known as a Roman colony. And this gave the city an enhanced status and its citizens had the rights and advantages enjoyed by citizens of Rome itself. Now, Philippi was a long way from Rome, at least 600 miles away as the crow flies, right up in the northeastern corner of Greece. But it was a city with a profile and it was also the first city in Europe to which Paul brought the gospel.

[6 : 35] Now, he went there in 50 AD with his missionary companions Silas, Timothy and Luke. Their initial visit was very brief and very painful. Paul and Silas were beaten up, they were imprisoned briefly, but Lydia became a believer and so did several others, including the jailer who was guarding Paul and Silas in the town jail. And you'll find the whole story told in all its details in Acts chapter 16.

Now, that was 50 AD. Paul wrote this letter some 12 years later in 62 AD from prison in Rome. And the lead up to this imprisonment is recorded for us in the closing stages of the book of Acts.

Paul had visited the church there on several occasions between 50 and 62. But here he was now under house arrest in Rome, guarded by members of the imperial guard. And you'll see them mentioned in chapter 1, verse 13. What had happened was that Paul had made an appeal to Caesar himself to judge his case. He was able to do that because he was a Roman citizen. But the Caesar in 62 AD was Nero, an unspeakably horrible man who, for political reasons, had arranged the murders of his half-brother, his own wife, and his own mother. How was Paul going to fare under the judgment of a man like that?

If you belonged to a church which had been founded by Paul, and you knew that Paul was facing trial by Nero, might you have been tempted to keep your head below the parapet?

To be a Christian in 62 AD in the Roman Empire was to live dangerously. All right, well, let's begin our detective work at chapter 1, verse 27. Perhaps you turn there with me. Chapter 1, verse 27. This is a key verse. You might almost say the key verse of the whole letter, 127. Paul says, Now just look at Paul's wish expressed there.

[8 : 55] I want to hear that you're standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, striving side by side for the faith, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. That's pretty telling, isn't it?

The Philippian Christians were facing some kind of opposition and pressure. And opposition and pressure can have the effect of dividing Christians from each other. And that's why Paul is saying to them, you've got to stick together, brothers and sisters, one spirit, one mind, side by side.

Now look on to chapter 2, verse 2. Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord, and of one mind.

So a consistent theme is emerging. The same mind, the same love, in full accord, of one mind. In other words, stick to each other as the wallpaper sticks to the wall.

Look on to chapter 4 and verse 1. 4-1. Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

[10:10] Stand firm. Why? Because Paul perceives only too clearly that they will be tempted to wobble in the face of determined opposition. Now look back at chapter 1, verse 29.

1-29. For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ, you should not only believe in him, but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

I was engaged in conflict. I am still engaged in conflict. You too are engaged in the same conflict, and it's going to bring you suffering for the sake of Christ.

Now, if I were one of the original Philippian Christians reading these things, I think my heart might have begun to beat rather rapidly on reading those words. Verses 29 and 30.

I would have felt a hot and cold feeling in the pit of my stomach, that feeling that signals the presence of fear. I might have said, does being a Christian engage me in conflict?

[11:18] I've got a very nice little house here in Philippi, with my nice little wife and our rosy-cheeked children. I've got a very nice garden where I'm growing potatoes and raising a pig for bacon purposes.

Do I want to risk my quiet, self-contained life of peace and comfort and get involved in Paul's conflict? Now, Paul is saying to that Christian, man up, my brother.

Real disciples of Christ cannot avoid conflict. If there's no cross, there's no crown. You need to get stuck into this battle side by side with your fellow Christians. You need to develop a oneness of mind with them so that you can engage your opponents effectively.

Well, friends, nearly 2,000 years have passed since Paul wrote these words in an uncomfortable position in a small house in Rome with one hand chained to a Roman guard.

But in some respects, we're in a very similar position today. The church and all that it stands for is under sustained attack, not so much by individual opponents as by powerful ideologies that demand we bow down to them and embrace them.

[12:30] And so, as James Philip used to say, the de-godding of God is the unmaning of man.

All around us, there's a growing sense of tyranny, an intellectual and social tyranny which demands our acquiescence. And if we don't acquiesce to its slogans and its values, we're threatened by ostracism, by loss of employment, and the smearing of our names and our reputations.

Now, you're very well aware of these pressures. I know. You know all about them if you're a health professional or a school teacher or a university student. The must-bow-to ideologies even creep into something like primary school mathematics, which you would think was neutral and impenetrable territory, wouldn't you?

But I heard the other day of this example in a primary school mathematics textbook. Listen carefully. A woman has two baskets of apples. Basket one contains seven apples, and basket two has five apples.

If she asks her wife to move three apples from basket one into basket two, how many apples are there now in basket two? So primary school mathematics becomes a channel for godless propaganda.

[13 : 55] Now, I don't need to multiply more modern examples. The Philippian Christians faced different pressures to conform, but what unites us to them was the facing of powerful pressure.

Now, for them, the main pressures were religious and political. Religious pressures from Jewish people who regarded Christianity as a maverick sect that undermined the faith of Abraham and Moses.

And political pressure from the Roman Empire, which was very unhappy that there were people who were following Jesus as king when they wanted everybody to bow to the emperor as king.

The church, of course, has always been under pressure from the world. But the existence of pressure is written into our very constitution. Jesus said to the apostles, if the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.

In other words, we're in good company. We're in the company of Jesus when we find that the world's institutions and ideologies are training their rifles upon us. But why did Jesus come into this world that hated him?

[15 : 03] It was because God loved the world and God gave his only begotten son up to the power of sinful men. Jesus, hated by the world, came to bring salvation, eternal life, to all in the world who would repent and turn to him.

Jesus faced the world. He confronted its godless mindset. He exposed its futility and its deceitfulness. And Paul is counseling the Philippian Christians to do just that, to stand united against their opponents, but not simply with the aim of defeating their opponents in argument, but of winning them for Christ.

Just look on to chapter 2, verse 15. 2.15, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish, in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ, I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.

So he's saying to them, you're to shine as lights in the world as you hold out to the world the word of life, this message of salvation. You see, Paul is not concerned simply to knock the world's arguments down, but to build and strengthen a church so that it shines like a star in the surrounding darkness, drawing new people to the message of eternal life and to real salvation.

So this is the flavor of Philippians. Stick together, be united in your thinking. There will be suffering, there will be conflict, but, chapter 1, verse 29, 1.29, it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ, you should not only believe in him, but also suffer for his sake.

[16 : 55] Granted to you. Think of that. Gifted to you by God. It's part of the divine package of blessing. The gift of God to the church is to believe in Christ and to suffer for Christ.

We cannot separate the two. To believe in Christ is the road to heaven. To suffer for Christ in this world is an unspeakable honor. Well, with that introduction in mind, let's turn back now to the first part of chapter 1, to verses 1 to 18, and we'll start right at the beginning.

First one, Paul and his co-author Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus. You could say bond slaves of Jesus.

Now, that's a bold self-description. Philippi, as a Roman colony, would have had a developed sense of hierarchy. Powerful people on the one hand and lowly bond servants or slaves on the other.

The Roman Empire ran on slavery in much the way that our world runs on petroleum. For Paul to describe himself as a slave would bring great encouragement to the many Christians who were slaves in the Roman system.

[18 : 07] But to whom are Paul and Timothy slaves? Verse 1, to Christ Jesus, King Jesus. Christ, of course, is a title, not a name. It's Christ who is king, not Emperor Nero.

And verse 1, they're writing to all the saints at Philippi, along with their overseers and deacons, their leaders. These New Testament letters are addressed to every Christian.

There may be hierarchies in the world, but there are not in the church. Paul calls all his fellow Christians brothers and sisters. Well, now, let's take verses 3 to 18 in two sections.

First of all, verses 3 to 11, we have Paul's loving, affectionate prayer for the Philippian Christians. Anybody who thinks of Paul as a cold fish of an intellectual needs to read this prayer and they will change their tune.

Certainly, he was a big brain. But he had a huge heart as well. Just look at how he thinks of these Philippians as he prays for them. Verse 3, every time he thinks of them, he thanks God for them.

[19 : 22] And verse 4, every time he prays for them, he is filled with joy. Why? Because, verse 5, of their partnership in the gospel with him from the first day.

That's the day in 50 AD when Lydia became a believer. From the first day, right up until now. So Paul is saying, we're in this adventure together. We're partners. We're up to the neck.

Now, he's going to command them, as we've already seen, to be united in their thinking as they engage in conflict. But he's telling them here in verse 5 that he is united with them.

And that must have been a massive encouragement for them. To be in partnership with this courageous Christian who was willing to stake his whole life on Christ. As he'd written to the Romans some five years earlier, I'm not ashamed of the gospel.

Indeed, he was not. If he had been, he would never have ended up in prison in Rome. And this Mr. Courage was telling the Philippians that he was in partnership with them.

[20 : 28] Now, courage begets courage. And he brings them further encouragement in verse 6 when he writes, When was that good work begun?

Well, in 50 AD when the infant church in Philippi took its first breath. And Paul knows that because this is a work begun by God and not by man, he knows that the God who began it will complete it.

At the day of Jesus Christ, at his return, the salvation of every Christian at Philippi will be completed. And we can have just the same confidence about our own salvation and its completion.

If God has begun a good work in you, which means if God has opened your heart to receive the gospel and you are now a believing Christian, you can be as sure as Paul was that God will bring that saving work to completion.

Which means that God will bring you safely to heaven, to eternal life, that he will take you to quote the words of an old hymn, through death's gloomy portal and bring you through the gates of Pearl into the new Jerusalem with great joy.

[21 : 45] Now, it's God, verse 6, it's God who begins this new work and it's God who will bring it to completion and that's why we can be so sure about it. So far then, thankfulness, joy in prayer, partnership in the gospel and the certainty of final salvation.

And then Paul tells the Philippians in verse 7 why he feels all these things about them, why he feels this thankfulness and joy. Look at verse 7.

It's right for me to feel this way about you all because I hold you in my heart. My heart. He's saying my heart is not just a beating organ with red and white blood corpuscles in it and various chambers and arteries of input and output.

You're in there as well. I love you, dear Philippians. That's what he's saying. You're the apple of my eye. You're the cream in my coffee. You live in that part of me where my intellectual and emotional life is fully expressed.

And the second half of verse 7 expands all this. It's because you are all partakers with me of grace. That is God's wonderful undeserved kindness.

[22 : 58] Partakers. Partakers and partners are much the same thing. You're partners with me in the gospel and you are partakers with me of grace.

Experienced how and where? Verse 7 in my imprisonment. Grace at work in prison. So Paul is saying I'm not alone in my imprisonment.

It's as though you are here with me. And here in Rome I am defending and confirming the gospel. That is to say preaching it, teaching it as people visit me in prison.

Even teaching it to the soldiers who are guarding me and are chained to me. To proclaim the gospel is to defend the gospel. You can't defend it if you don't give voice to it.

And let me tell you another thing he says. Verse 8 As God is my witness Now that's a very strong phrase carrying the force of a solemn oath. As God is my witness I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.

[24 : 01] I yearn to see you but more than that I yearn for what I'm now going to tell you about in verse 9. I'm expressing my yearning for you my heart's desire for you in the way that I pray for you.

So how does he pray for them? What does he ask God for as he prays for them? Well he tells us. Verse 9 It is my prayer that your love may abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment so that you may approve what is excellent 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.

It's a short prayer but it's rich in content and it's a great example to us of how to pray for other Christians. Do you sometimes wonder how you can best pray for other Christians?

I'm sure you do and I certainly do. We often find our praying difficult. When we were children we had a limited vocabulary of prayer. God bless mommy God bless daddy God bless Trixie the Labrador.

Now we need to develop and expand a vocabulary of prayer and Paul's prayers recorded in his letters there are about six of them do exactly that they expand our vocabulary so Paul teaches us how to pray for other Christians.

[25 : 29] Let's notice two things about this prayer in verses 9 to 11. First he prays for a growing love in Christian hearts verse 9 that your love meaning your love for each other may abound more and more your capacity to love each other and to express that love.

So he's thinking of the situation where an outsider might come into a church meeting and have a look at the church and listen to people talking that outsider should be able to say look at how much these Christians love each other they seem to really enjoy each other's company they laugh together but they're so concerned for each other's welfare as well they share their goods together they lend each other lawnmowers and bicycles they help each other out financially they invite each other home for meals they give each other homemade marmalade and honey and when one of them is in trouble and pain they give them solid real moral support and friendship they cry on each other's shoulders they share each other's joys they develop real and lasting friendships together which add immeasurable strength to their lives and they love each other across the divisions of class and ethnicity and education brainy professors and lowly shop assistants love each other and care for each other real love in the church is an authentic mark of real

Christianity so Paul teaches us to pray for it love now secondly he prays for knowledge and discernment for the Philippian Christians at the end of verse 9 knowledge and all discernment is his phrase now these are moral qualities he's not talking about intellectual ability here such as knowledge of history or chemistry he's talking about the ability to understand the moral features of human life to understand what is going on in society at large to understand what is good and what is bad in political and social trends it's not all bad Paul wants the Philippians to be grown up human beings who are not deceived who are not taken in by silly fads and fashions he wants them not to be blinded by influential people whose agendas are destructive and harmful to human well-being and we can be sure that he's talking here about moral discernment because of what he goes on to say in verse 10 so that you may approve what is excellent and so be pure and blameless for the day of

Christ he wants Christians to be able to weigh and measure what goes on in the world and what goes on in the professing church and to measure it accurately discernment involves distinguishing what is good from what is less good and from what is downright bad and even wicked an obvious modern example is the legislation about abortion so much of the world seems to be simply blind to the truth about it and fails to distinguish what is good for human life from what is destructive of human life and we need to be discerning also about church life because we know that churches vary so much both in their teaching and in their practice so we need to be able to distinguish healthy practices that promote godliness from unhealthy trends which lead people in the end to deny the truth of the bible but look at the goal of paul's prayer he always has in mind the day of christ he prays for the growth of their love and the development of their moral discernment so that verse 10 they will be pure and blameless for the day of christ's return filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through jesus christ to the glory and praise of god so these qualities and they are beautiful qualities these qualities of love knowledge and discernment are to be developed not so that the philippians should be praised themselves but so as to bring glory and praise to god these qualities are verse 11 the fruit that consists in righteousness righteousness right and godly living that comes not from any natural excellence in the philippians but says paul through jesus christ so that god is praised and glorified well now just imagine yourself at home tomorrow sitting in a comfortable chair and you're wanting to pray for a christian friend if you follow the example here of paul's prayer you might pray something like this dear lord god i want to pray now for my friend his capacity for loving others like my own is a bit limited he does tend to be a selfish old thing so please expand his heart so that he sees what a great help he can be to lots of others in the church help him to look for opportunities to give support and friendship and joy to others and help him also to grow in discernment because like me he's not very grown up he doesn't always see the wood for the trees so help him to grow in wisdom so that he can assess situations accurately so that he can distinguish the good from the bad and may it all be to your glory and praise so that other people should look at him and say what a great god the true god must be who can take a stunted human life like that and make it blossom into such love and maturity in jesus name i pray amen well let's turn now to our second section verses 12 to 18 now in this section we see christian leadership that overcomes fear look again for a moment at chapter 1 verse 28 128 paul is saying there to the philippians i don't want you to be frightened by your opponents now for him to say that surely news had reached him that they were wavering not only in unity but in courage that fear of their opponents might be hampering their attempts to preach the gospel at philippi and in verses 12 to 19 paul is showing them by pointing to his own example that fear

and anxiety and anxiety need not overcome christian resolve and just look with me at verse 12 and notice the word really i want you to know brothers that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel what has happened to me means my imprisonment and everything that led up to it my trial at caesarea my appeal to caesar the terrible sea journey and shipwreck my eventual arrival in rome as a prisoner awaiting trial by nero now you can understand how christians all over the mediterranean world might have felt that paul's apparent misfortunes were actually dealing a fierce blow to the progress of the gospel how they might say to each other our well-known leader paul is now infamous throughout the roman empire he's surely gone too far he's he's intemperate he's rash he's foolhardy his extreme outspokenness is damaging the gospel and the cause of christ now paul is saying in verse 12 don't think that what has happened to me is damaging the cause of the gospel on the contrary all that has happened to me is really serving to advance our cause let me explain verse 13 everybody around here the whole imperial guard that's caesar's personal bodyguard and everybody else in and around the prison they all now know that i'm in prison not as a murderer or a rebel but simply because i'm a christian my imprisonment is for christ not for bad behavior how could the whole imperial guard have come to know this well surely because as they took their turns on the rotor to guard paul by being chained to him he told each one the gospel he had a captive audience literally chained to him one after the other probably three or four men every 24 hours and it's clear that a number of people very close to caesar actually became believers just look on if you will to chapter 4 verse 22 the very end of the letter 422 all the saints greet you all the saints here the christians greet you especially those of caesar's household certain people who were serving the emperor at very close quarters perhaps even relatives of caesar had become christians some of them no doubt because paul told them the gospel himself and the consequence of this courageous and outspoken leadership is to produce confidence in other christians this is leadership at work look at verse 14 and most of the brothers having become confident in the lord because of my imprisonment are now much more bold to speak the word without fear most of the brothers most of them a few of them perhaps are timid a few of them are a bit peely wally but most of the christians have been emboldened by my imprisonment and now they're speaking the word how look at the end of verse 14 without fear verse 28 don't be frightened by your opponents verse 14 paul's courage removes the fear of the other christians around him in other words his leadership emboldens them now for a current or modern example just think of the i can say this in his absence i perhaps wouldn't if he was here but think of the leadership that our minister willie phillip showed to us during the pandemic he said to us especially in the early months of the pandemic don't be afraid don't be afraid everybody out there was melting with fear most churches were keeping their doors firmly shut and their message seemed to be stay away stay safe don't catch the infection but willie kept on insisting that we keep on preaching the gospel because to be safe

[36 : 10] for eternity is infinitely more important than being safe from covid willie's example lent boldness to all of us certainly lent boldness to me courage engenders courage some of you people who are younger you'll be leading churches in the years to come i hope a number of you will do follow paul's example and keep on speaking the words of life even under very unfavorable conditions you might even be in prison as paul was because of your testimony to christ that is a real possibility in mid 21st century britain we must bear paul's example in mind and follow it it will bring suffering but as we've seen from verse 29 suffering for christ's sake is something which is graciously granted to us by god it's his gift to us now on to verse 15 where paul introduces another unsettling idea he speaks in verse 15 of certain individuals who must be christians of a kind who are preaching christ from envy and rivalry and he tells us in verse 17 that their aim is to afflict him in his imprisonment perhaps to prejudice his case and make it more likely that nero should condemn him we cannot know for certain just who these people were because paul doesn't tell us but possibly they were people who wanted to combine christianity with the trappings and rights of judaism teaching that if you're really to be saved by christ you must also follow the jewish laws about kosher foods keeping the jewish calendar of festivals having your male children circumcised and so on paul was dogged by this kind of controversy all the way through his life as an evangelist and the motives of these people whoever they were are clear verse 15 you'll see the phrase envy and rivalry and in verse 17 again paul uses the word rivalry and quite possibly these people were jealous of paul envious of paul because god had blessed his true gospel preaching with enormous success all around the mediterranean whereas their own efforts to preach a confused gospel were pretty unsuccessful they were jealous of him in fact there is evidence from late in the first century that people jealous of paul and peter pressed for their execution and persuaded the roman authorities to put both of those apostles to death in rome just some two years after philippians was written but as paul puts it in verse 18 he is still able to rejoice that christ is proclaimed by these people even though their motive is rivalry and their preaching as verse 18 puts it is in pretense rather than in truth now i don't think that there are exact modern parallels to this situation nobody today is preaching come to christ but you've got to become a jew first and submit to jewish custom before you can be a christian nobody as far as i know is taking that line today but it's certainly true that christian preachers and leaders and organizations can become envious of each other envious of success and reputation i'm not really aware of this in our immediate area around here but it can arise in cities or towns where a church can develop a sense of rivalry and think of another church as a competitor rather than as a friend and a partner so do let's be aware of this if not now in the future because envy is a work of the flesh it has no part in the fruit of the spirit but even where a jealous competitiveness were to spring up between churches or between christian organizations paul is still teaching us to rejoice not in the envious motives of course

not in that but in the fact that christ is being proclaimed and people are coming to him
okay friends we're nearly done so what are the main lessons then of this first section of
philippians i think three first paul exemplifies love for the church love for the brothers and
sisters in most of us that deep commitment of loving the church grows slowly and rather
hesitantly over many years all of us by nature are selfish little things but paul teaches us in
his verse seven phrase to hold one another in our hearts secondly paul teaches us a
series in a series of striking phrases how to how to pray for each other that love may
abound with knowledge and all discernment with a growing ability to distinguish what is
excellent from what is poor or fraudulent or deceitful so that our lives should bring glory
and praise to god and then third paul through his imprisonment through his suffering
teaches us that our sufferings need not overwhelm us need not find us on the back foot on
the contrary they can be the gateway to gospel advance they can open the door to
salvation for other people who know us and in all of this paul's message is don't give way
to fear stay united at all costs don't be frightened of everything that opposes you in the
world today verse 14 be bold and speak the word without fear well let's bow our heads
and we'll pray dear god our father we remember how paul in philippians and in other
letters says to those who read the letters follow my example as i follow the example of
christ and we thank you therefore dear father for his example of courage his example of
being unashamed of the gospel unashamed to preach it even when there were great
pressures from both the religious establishments and the political establishment against it
and we do pray that you will give us something of paul's spirit of courage that you'll help
us to stand firm and indeed to stand united so that we're able to proclaim the lovely gospel
the saving gospel of christ to our society today we ask it in jesus name amen so that we
ask to we CRARadio so to say we have to info shoulds

Hillary how are you and as if and of be the taker to this