

Joyful Partnership in the Gospel (Philippians 1:1-11)

Zionsville Fellowship | Ryan Hallahan | May 31, 2026

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In one of our closets at home, my wife and I have a box of cards and notes that we've given each other over the years. Many of the notes are from when we were first dating in college. I remember getting those and I would pore over every word. I would ask questions such as "Why did she use that word?", "What did she mean by that?", or "Why is there glitter all over this?" The reason I bring this up is because that is what I hope our summer in Philippians will be like for us. Imagine how the Philippians examined and enjoyed this letter from Paul. Now we've received this letter that Paul wrote, which is God's Word given to us. And, as a church, we are going to pore over every verse. It is my prayer that God would give each of us the excitement and desire to study this book in the same way that I was excited to get those notes and cards.

As we go through this book, I'd like to encourage you to spend time reading it on your own. At the least, I recommend reading each section that will be covered in the upcoming Sunday's sermon, but it is also great to read the entire letter in one sitting from time to time. The more time we spend as a church reading and studying Philippians this summer, the more impact it will have in growing us and deepening our faith. It is great to have the kids with us this morning, and I want to encourage you to be reading Philippians this summer, as well. I can share my experience that I did not read the Bible until I was in college. You have the tremendous opportunity to grow in your knowledge of the Bible at a young age, so don't miss that opportunity!

Today, we will be looking at Philippians 1, verses 1-11. So, if you have a Bible with you, please open to Acts 16.

I thought that would be a good test to see who is paying attention. We will be in Philippians, but to help us get the context it will be useful if we get some background from Acts first.

If you don't have a Bible with you, you can find them in the seats in front of you, and Acts 16 is on page 924 in those Bibles.

The goal this morning is going to be to get ourselves oriented with some context, and then we'll also get into the first section of the letter.

Context

To start with context, Philippians was written by the Apostle Paul. This is one of Paul's 13 letters included in the Bible. He wrote it to the church in Philippi. In order to fully understand and appreciate this book, it is helpful to know the background of the church and its relationship with Paul.

Paul was sent by the church in Antioch as a missionary. He took three journeys which are described in Acts. In chapter 16, we find Paul on the second of those three journeys.

In verses 1-5, while on his journey, Paul met a young man named Timothy. He decided to bring him along on the journey. This is the first time we meet Timothy in the Bible, and as we'll see when we get into Philippians, he became well known to the church there.

From there, Paul was journeying with Timothy, Silas, and Luke through what is modern-day Turkey, and he received a vision from the Lord that directed them to go to Macedonia. Following God's leading, in verse 12, they arrived in Philippi.

Paul's typical strategy when he arrived in a place was to go to the synagogue and preach the gospel to the Jews first on the Sabbath day. However, in Philippi, he didn't do that. Many scholars think that is because there may not have been enough Jews in that area to have a synagogue. Instead, on the Sabbath day, Paul went to the riverside where there was a place of prayer, and there he met some women. One of those women, named Lydia, believed the gospel and was baptized. She and her entire household believed. Lydia was the first convert for Paul in Europe and she immediately opened her home to Paul and his companions.

From there, in verses 16-24, we read the story of how there was a demon-possessed girl that had a spirit of divination and was a fortune teller. Paul eventually became annoyed by this girl following them around and cast the spirit out of her. The owners of the slave girl were upset that their source of income was gone, so they had Paul and Silas beaten and put in prison.

In the middle of the night, while Paul and Silas were in prison, they prayed and sang hymns. Note Paul's attitude in prison, because he is in prison again as he writes the book of Philippians. During the night, there was an earthquake and Paul and Silas' chains were broken and the doors of the prison were opened. Paul somehow convinced everyone to stay put so that the jailer was not punished, and the jailer then asked Paul how to be saved. To ask a question like that, he must have been listening to Paul and Silas praying and singing before that or he had seen something in them. In verse 31, Paul said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved." And so the jailer and his entire household came to faith.

As Paul and Silas were released and about to leave town, in verse 40 it says that they visited Lydia along with the brothers. Evidently, by that point there was already a group of believers. And so that is how the church in Philippi was planted. After that, the Philippians continued to support Paul in his work. In Philippians 4, it tells us that after Paul left Macedonia, the Philippian church was the only church that supplied him and provided for his needs. They also gave to the offering that Paul was bringing back to the church in Jerusalem on his third missionary journey. And finally, as we'll see in Philippians, the church sent one of its members to minister to Paul and to help him.

So this is a church with a longstanding relationship with Paul.

That is a bit of context. Now let's flip over to Philippians 1. Six books to the right, page 980 in the church Bibles.

We will start by reading the text. Philippians 1:1-11.

¹ Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons:

² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³ I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. ⁷ It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. ⁸ For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. ⁹ And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent, and so 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.

Greeting (v1-2)

This letter starts with a traditional formula for letters written around that time. It tells us who it is from, tells us who it is written to, and gives a greeting. That is verses 1-2.

It says it is from Paul and Timothy, but the author of the letter is Paul. We can tell that because the letter uses the word “I” throughout. Also, in chapter 2 Paul says that he is going to send Timothy. As we saw in Acts, Timothy would have been well acquainted with the church, so it makes sense that Paul would include him in the greeting, especially if Timothy would be visiting soon.

It says Paul and Timothy are servants of Christ Jesus. Depending on which English translation you are using, you might see that Greek word translated as servant, slave, or bond-servant. The idea is not that of a slave like you might think of in the American context of slavery. But a bond-servant in this context is someone who voluntarily gives himself to their master. They devote themselves to someone else, disregarding their own interests. That is Paul and Timothy; they’re servants of Christ, meaning their lives are fully given to Christ. This same word is actually used in chapter 2 to refer to Christ, as He took on flesh and was fully obedient to the Father.

More could be said about Timothy, but we’ll save that for chapter 2, where we learn more about him in more detail.

The second half of verse 1 tells us that the letter is written to the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi along with the overseers and deacons. That word *saints* can be a little confusing because it has been used by the Catholic church to canonize various people throughout history. But the word *saint* is basically just a way to say that someone is a Christian. All of us are saints if we are following Jesus. The word *saint* literally means “holy” or “set apart for God.” That should be all believers.

Paul writes to the saints along with the overseers and deacons. An overseer would be a pastor or an elder, and a deacon is one who serves the church. We are familiar with that term as we have deacons here. Since the church body *and* its leadership are mentioned here, it’s likely that the letter would have been read to the entire church in Philippi.

So we know who wrote it and who the recipients were. But we might ask some additional questions.

First, when was this written?

Paul likely wrote this letter from prison in Rome. At the end of the book of Acts, Paul found himself in prison under house arrest for two years. It is during that time he likely wrote the letter. That would be roughly 10 or 11 years after the church was first planted in Acts 16.

Next, why did Paul write the letter? There may be several reasons:

First, the Philippians had heard that he was in prison, so Paul wanted to update them on how he was doing.

Second, the Philippians had sent one of their own members, Epaphroditus (whom we will meet in chapter 2), to serve Paul and deliver support from the church, so Paul is writing to thank them for that gift.

Third, Paul wanted to encourage the Philippians in their faith and call them to unity, especially as he addresses conflict within the church in chapter 4

One final question we might ask is what is the theme of the letter. As we go through this book, there are a few themes that we will see over and over. Those are joy, unity, and the gospel. So, you can say that the theme of this book is joyful unity in the gospel. That is a great phrase to keep in mind as we read.

So we have the context and some themes. Next, Paul closes the initial greeting in verse 2, where he says “Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Did you know that if you look at each of Paul’s letters, without fail you will find this similar greeting at the start of each letter? Grace and peace to you. Not only that, but then if you go to the end of each of his letters, you will find that there is some form of the words “grace be with you.” There is a lot that could be said about the words grace and peace. But there is one aspect of this that I find fascinating. I first heard about this when reading the book *Future Grace* by John Piper.

Grace can be defined as God’s unmerited favor to us. You may have heard the term *means of grace*. Means of grace are ways that God communicates to us, strengthens us, and deepens our faith. God’s Word is one of those means of grace.

So when Paul starts his letters by saying “grace to you,” you might say that he is pointing out that grace is coming to the reader through this letter as it is read. And then, he ends the letter by saying “grace be with you.” We are done reading, but we don’t just close the book and forget about it. We keep the Word with us as we go about our daily lives. It sustains us. The grace stays with us.

We can think of it like this as we study this letter as a church. Grace to us. And don’t forget about peace. Grace and peace to us. Peace in the assurance and joy that we have as believers.

So that is the intro and greeting. Next we get into the first section of the letter. In this section we’ll see Paul’s gratitude for the Philippians and then a prayer for them.

Paul’s Gratitude (v3-8)

We’ll see Paul’s gratitude in verses 3-8 and then a prayer in verses 9-11.

As we read this section, one way to describe it is that Paul is overflowing. You can almost feel his love for the Philippians just pouring out of him.

That is pretty amazing, if you think about it. Remember where Paul is as he writes this. He is sitting in prison in Rome, unsure when he is getting out. You might think he’d be a bit downcast, but no. He is joyful. As I said, we are going to see that theme throughout this letter. Some have called this “the Epistle of Joy.” Paul mentions the words joy or rejoice sixteen times in four chapters.

How does Paul have such joy while in tough circumstances?

Romans 15:13 says, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.”

So, there is joy and peace in believing, but how do we get that joy? Some of you here today might not be experiencing this joy that Paul has as he writes this letter. To think about how we get that joy we can look at Hebrews 12:2, which says, “Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”

We get the joy by looking at Jesus. He is the example. He went to the cross and was able to have joy in that moment because of what He knew would come afterward.

Second Corinthians 4:16-18 says, “So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”

Paul has joy because he knows his current afflictions are momentary, and there is an eternal joy to come. His focus is not on his own circumstances. As we continue through this letter, it will be clear that Paul’s focus is on spreading the gospel. If he were focused on his own comfort, his own bank account, his health, or his own status, he would probably not have been able to have joy. He knows that this life is fleeting, and so his focus is not on those things.

We can learn from Paul here. Our focus, as believers, should be on the gospel. We have the hope of eternity with Christ, so while we are here on this earth that hope is what brings us joy. This goes back to verse 1, where Paul called himself a servant of Christ. He is not concerned with himself, but with serving Christ.

As we dive into this first section of the letter, in verses 3-8 we see Paul’s gratitude. Verse 3 tells us that he is grateful for the Philippians. And verse 4 tells us that he shows his gratitude by thanking God for them when he prays for them. Verse 5 answers the question, “Why is Paul grateful?” He is grateful because of the Philippians’ partnership in the gospel. Paul is pouring himself out in order to further the gospel, and he is so grateful that the church in Philippi has partnered with him.

One way that you can think of the book of Philippians is as a missionary support letter. Paul is supported by the church in Philippi who partner with him, and he is writing to thank them for their support and update them on his circumstances.

How have they partnered with Paul? Verse 5 says they have partnered with him from the first day until now.

Well, we saw the beginnings of that in Acts 16. Lydia was the first convert when Paul got to Philippi, and she immediately opened her home to Paul and his companions on that first day.

Shortly after that, when the jailer and his household were converted, they showed Paul and Silas hospitality by cleaning their wounds and providing for them.

In Philippians chapter 4, Paul gives us a little more detail. He says, “And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again.”

So after Paul left and continued on his missionary journey, the church in Philippi helped to provide for his needs. And it appears as if they were the only church that was partnering with him in that way. In 2 Corinthians 11:9, Paul tells the Corinthians that when he arrived to share the gospel with them, he did not burden them because of the help being given by the churches in Macedonia.

There is more to the partnership. On Paul’s third missionary journey, he was collecting a gift to bring back to Jerusalem to help the believers there. Let’s read 2 Corinthians 8:1-5. It says,

¹ We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, ² for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. ³ For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, ⁴ begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— ⁵ and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.

There are the Philippians again. It tells us there that the church was in poverty, yet they were begging to be a part of the gift for the saints in Jerusalem.

And finally, we come to the point where Paul is writing this letter. As I said earlier, one of the reasons he is writing it is because the church in Philippi had sent one of their own on a short-term trip to bring a gift and serve Paul. The Philippian church, once again, is right there to partner with Paul in his work.

So Paul is thankful for the Philippians. And the reason he is thankful is because they are partners in furthering the gospel.

This part of the letter reminds me of ZF's missionary partnerships around the world. I wanted to specifically mention the children in the room this morning because they exemplified this so well this year. Each of our grade levels, kindergarten through 5th, were partnered with a missionary this year. Throughout the year, you kids prayed for them, and over the winter each classroom raised money to send to their partners. Getting to help send that money to our partners was probably the most fun thing I've gotten to do this year in my role. Our partners were so touched and overjoyed to receive those gifts and prayers from you kids. We got notes back, and one partner even sent a video to share with the class. Those notes that we got back echo the sentiment that Paul is showing here.

I'd just like to read a portion of one of those notes we got back for the kids. It says this:

“As the Lord's people, even though we live in very different parts of the world, having these heartfelt connections with one another is so meaningful. We heard that you collected donations for us, and we were incredibly delighted. We will always remember the donations you gave. May the Lord protect you, your family, your church, and your beautiful country. Stay in love and in Christ...”

You kids are partners in the gospel with your missionaries, and they are grateful for you. I think that is a great picture of what we read here in Philippians.

That brings us to verse 6, where it says, “And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”

Paul is grateful, and he is also confident. He is confident that God is going to complete the work He started. What is the work referenced here? The work is referring to the Philippians' salvation. The fact that the Philippians are partners with Paul in the gospel is evidence of their salvation. And if God starts the work of salvation, He is going to finish it.

Romans 8:30 says, “And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.”

We saw earlier that we are all saints, or holy ones. We are holy in status when we are saved, but we are not yet holy in practice. As believers, we go through a process of growth, called sanctification. And that process is not completed until we get to heaven and are glorified. We can have full confidence, though, that God will complete the work He started in us.

Ephesians 1:13-14 says, “In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”

I think the reason Paul probably shares this here is because he wants the Philippians to be able to share in his joy. Paul has joy because he is confident in the hope he has in Christ. The Philippians can have that same confidence and hope.

In a similar way, as it says in 2 Corinthians 13:5, we should examine our own lives to see if we see fruit of our salvation. Because when we see that fruit, we can have that same confidence and hope because God is going to

complete the work He started in us as well. To be extra clear, that fruit is not earning our salvation, but it is evidence of salvation.

Then in verses 7 and 8, Paul highlights his affection for the Philippians. This reads to me like one of those moments where someone might say, “there are no words.” Paul could have said here, “there are no words to describe how I feel about you.” Of course, he found words, and the tone here is overflowing. Paul says, “I hold you in my heart” and “I yearn for you.”

Verse 7 starts by saying that it is right that Paul feels this way. That refers to the confidence he just mentioned in verse 6. Paul can have confidence because he sees evidence that God is working in the Philippians. They are partakers with him both in helping him in his imprisonment and also in his work to defend and confirm the gospel. We’ve already seen examples of the partnership.

So because of that, Paul holds them in his heart and yearns for them. But where does that yearning actually come from?

The end of verse 8 tells us that it is the affection of Christ. It is God working in Paul producing this affection for the Philippians.

This leads to a question for us. Do we feel this way about our brothers and sisters in Christ? If we look around the room, how do we feel about each other? If we think about our mission partners both local and around the world, how do we feel about them?

I’m going to go out on a limb here and guess that some of us probably don’t share this overflowing affection that Paul has. So how do we get it?

I would like to offer a couple of practical ideas:

First, we can pray. Ask God to give us this affection for each other. This affection doesn’t happen naturally. It is a result of God working in us.

Second, become a partner like the Philippians were. It is hard to have an affection for someone that we don’t know well. Paul was able to feel this way about the Philippians because he knew them, and they had been serving together and supporting each other for roughly ten years.

Join together with someone else in trying to advance the gospel. That could mean serving together with another person or family from our church body. Or, that might mean partnering more closely with one of our mission partners.

I can share from experience how this has worked in our family.

About 8 years ago, we put a map on our wall by our kitchen table. The purpose of the map was to remind us to pray for the spread of the gospel around the world. We had just read the book, *Radical*, by David Platt, which gave us this idea. We asked the mission pastor at the church we were a part of at the time to recommend to us a missionary that we could be praying for. An amazing thing happened. As we started to pray for that ministry, we began to care more about what they were doing and it gave us the desire to be more involved. We ended up visiting them, which only grew our love for them even more, and we have been partnered with them ever since.

That is just a simple example, but by getting to know each other more deeply, or getting to know a missionary more deeply, it can lead to partnerships that can then lead to this sort of affection that Paul has here. I encourage each of us to consider how we can deepen relationships with others in our body and elsewhere.

One note, though, about the types of partnership this is talking about. It isn't just hanging out and being friends. The goal here is to be partners in the gospel. We are working to serve each other, make Christ known, and glorify God. Sometimes when we think of fellowship, we think of sharing a meal together or doing an activity together. There is nothing wrong with those things and we should do them, but the partnership we are talking about here is gospel-focused. It involves both serving each other and advancing the gospel together.

Another way to think about this is to look at the end of verse 8. It says that Paul yearns with the affection of Christ Jesus. The love that Paul has for the Philippians is really just an extension of the love that Christ has for them. So when we look at a fellow brother or sister, remember that Jesus loves them enough to die for them and so we should share that same love for them.

This is important because it is the love that we have for fellow believers that shines brightly to the world around us and sets us apart. John 13:34-35 says, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Paul's Prayer (v9-11)

So, Paul is overflowing with gratitude for the Philippians. Next, in verses 9-11 he prays for them.

⁹ And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent, and so 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 gratitude and love for the Philippians leads him to pray for them.

We see the prayer request in verse 9, the reason for the prayer in the first half of verse 10, and then the result of the prayer in verses 10 and 11.

First, the request in verse 9 is that their love would abound more and more. Paul has already talked about how grateful he is that they are already so loving and have been great partners in the gospel. But he cares for them and wants them to continue to grow in their faith. We saw in verse 6 that God is working in them, and that means that the work is not yet complete. The Philippians, and by extension, all of us, can keep growing in our faith until we get to heaven.

Notice, though, Paul says this is not just any love; it is a love with knowledge and discernment. When Paul prays for them to have knowledge, he isn't praying that the Philippians would do well on Jeopardy. He gives the reason starting in verse 10. The goal of knowledge and discernment is that we can approve what is excellent. There are a lot of things competing for our attention. Sometimes, it might be pretty easy to discern what is good vs. bad. But where this really becomes important is discerning what is good vs. best. We only have so much time, so what Paul is praying here is for the Philippians to have discernment in choosing the best things.

Romans 12:2 says it this way, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

Paul is praying that the Philippians would be able to grow in their knowledge and discernment so they can love the right things in the right ways. I think a great way to illustrate this is found in John 15:7. It says, "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."

The idea there is that when God's Word is abiding in us, meaning we are saturated with it, it will begin to guide our desires. When that happens, we will begin to pray for things that more closely align with God's will.

That example is looking at how knowledge and discernment guides our prayer, but in a similar way, that is why Paul says he wants their love to be founded on knowledge and discernment, so that they love what is excellent. You could almost say this prayer is about knowing God's will. And the best place to get this knowledge and discernment is in God's Word.

What is the outcome of that? If their love is growing more and more in that way, the results are there in verses 10 and 11. They will be pure and blameless for the day of Christ and filled with the fruit of righteousness. Paul is praying that the Philippians will love even more than they already have. And if they love with knowledge and discernment, that will lead them to be pure and blameless and full of fruit.

To be pure means to be genuine or sincere. This has to do with our internal attitudes. Another way to say that would be to say that we don't have hidden motives. To be blameless means to be without fault. This has to do with our external actions. It means to be free from offense.

When this says pure and blameless, what does that really mean? It says we will be pure and blameless on the day of Christ. That is referring to the day mentioned in verse 6, when the Philippians' salvation is fully completed. That salvation will be fully completed in glorification when Jesus returns. So in one sense, you could say that when we get to heaven, we will be pure and blameless. And that is true. But, it seems like the sense of what Paul is saying here is that we are working toward that in this life. We can see that in Paul's own life in chapter 3, verse 12, where he says, "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own."

What Paul is basically praying here is that the Philippians continue to work toward that which has already been promised. As they love with more knowledge and more discernment, it will bear fruit in their lives. But notice in verse 11, none of this happens without Christ working in us. Verse 11 says the "fruit of righteousness that comes through Christ."

John 15:5 says, "Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."

So we can summarize this prayer in this way: They are to love more and more, with a love that is full of knowledge and discernment. The result of that is that they will be more pure and blameless and fruitful. And that fruit is all because Christ is working in them.

How do we grow in love like this? We need a foundation from God's Word to grow our knowledge, so that we can discern what is excellent. And that will guide us to love the right things.

Finally, the ultimate result of a life full of this kind of love is the end of verse 11: glory to God. I saw one commentator put it this way: When someone sees a Christian loving in this way, the goal is not for that person to say, "What a good person!" But the goal is for that person to say, "What a great God!" This love is possible only because of the transformative power of the gospel and God working in us.

Matthew 5:16 says, "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

Let's close by recapping a few ways that this text applies to us.

First, this text shows us that the Christian life is a joyful life. If you are here today and are not following Jesus, a question for you is, "Do you want the joy that Paul had as he wrote this letter?" The joy of believing in Christ is a joy that surpasses any life circumstance. If you repent of your sins and trust in Jesus alone to save you, that joy can be yours.

If you are here and you are following Jesus, let the fruit of that salvation give you confidence and joy because of the hope that we have in Christ.

Next, thank God for the fellow brothers and sisters and mission partners that God has put in our lives. And ask that God would give you a deep love for them like Paul had for the Philippians. As I mentioned earlier, one practical step we can take is to look for ways to build strong relationships focused on the advance of the gospel. That could be with others in our own body or with mission partners.

Lastly, we can apply Paul's prayer to ourselves, meaning that we should pray that we would love more and more with our love based in the knowledge of God's Word so that we can discern what is excellent and bear fruit, all to the glory of God.

Let's pray.