

# Philippians 1:1-11 "Union With Christ"

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[ 0 : 00 ] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah.

! It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian, checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless. Let's pray. Father, we give you thanks and praise that you created us with minds and with imaginations and with hearts and emotions. We give you thanks and praise that when it comes to hearing your Word and you want us to think as well as we can and use our imagination and come to the Word fully, Father, both aesthetically and emotionally, you want us to come to your Word and have your Word come to us in everything that makes us us. And I ask, Father, that your Holy Spirit would fall with gentle but deep power upon us to bring your Word to us and us to your Word so that your Word will form us. It will shape who we are, not only at the very deepest level of who we are, but in our day-to-day life. And I ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated.

Now, really, Christians shouldn't have favorite books of the Bible. I mean, because it's all God's Word written right from Genesis 1 to the end of the book of Revelation. But I have to confess, I do have books which I like more than others. And from the very early days of my Christian life, when I became a Christian grade 12, Philippians has been one of my favorite books of the Bible. In fact, actually, in some ways, like in hindsight, one of the things that the devil did to stop me from really entering into his Word was have me reading Philippians over and over and over and over again, as well as some other parts of the Bible. And so I wasn't reading all of the Bible. I was really just focused on a certain book and certain other little bits. And actually, it's a whole other topic of conversation that God used a philosophy professor who was a perpetual candidate for the Communist Party of Canada in Ottawa Centre, who was a very public atheist. He was the one who helped to encourage me to start reading the Bible from cover to cover. But that's a whole other conversation as to how God used Marvin

Glass to do that. And if he's passed away, if he was here, he'd probably just smile and shake his head because he wanted the opposite. But then you go, God had other things. But Philippians was in the early days just a favorite book of mine. I read it over and over again. I still love to read it. If some of you aren't that familiar with it... So by the way, I mention this because we're going to go through the book of Philippians. We're starting a new series today. That's what we'll be doing now until the end of June. It's just 108 verses. It's a very packed book. But it's a packed book when you...

[ 4 : 01 ] It's not like some books are really packed and they're hard to read. Philippians is easy to read. It's an easy read. But if you stop and meditate upon it, you realize just how densely packed it is with profound truth. And so we're going to take the next eight or nine weeks. We're going to go through this book. I think next week we'll have little ESV study journal bibles for you so you can make notes. But I don't think they're here yet. I think we're getting that. And so we're going to look at Philippians. And as I said, it was my favorite book. And if you're a seeker, whether you're here as a seeker or you're online as a seeker, reading the book of Philippians with us, you will, I hope, begin

to understand why Christianity following Jesus can be so deeply emotionally satisfying.

Like, I don't follow Jesus because it's emotionally satisfying. At the end of the day, I follow Jesus because I think it's true. I think Jesus really did rise from the dead. I think He defeated death and sin. And it wasn't just something that He accomplished, but He died in my place. He's the one that allows me to be made right with God. I believe all of those things are true. I think He's going to come back again. I'm a very simple-minded Christian. When I pray to God, I actually believe that God is listening to me and that He can do things. And when I ask the Holy Spirit to fall, I actually think that God is pouring out the Holy Spirit. I'm very simple-minded. But the book of Philippians is a really good way to start to maybe, if you're outside the Christian faith, to start to see that's why Christians, when they get the God, when they really get it, it's so emotionally satisfying.

And hopefully you'll start to see some of that this morning. So we're going to be reading the book of Philippians. You can find it in your Bible. It's really helpful if you follow along. It will be up on the screen, but it's always best if you can have your own Bible and follow along as we go through it. I want you to all be the type that just doesn't take my word for it, but looks around and see if I'm quoting it correctly or if I'm taking things out of context. So it's helpful if you open your Bible as we go through the text together. And just a bit of a context, you know, it looks like it's a special holy book. And obviously, I believe that Philippians is God's Word written, but it started as a letter. It was written as a letter. Paul didn't sit down and think, I'm going to write the Bible. No, he's imprisoned in Rome. And it's taking place... Some of you who've been part of the church for a while know that we just went through the book of Acts. And the book of Acts ends with Paul under house arrest in Rome itself. And by the way, house arrest in Rome in those days wasn't like... I mean, I've never been under house arrest, so maybe it's not like that here. But I think it was hard, far harder, because he was still always wearing chains and he always had guards with him in the house. And so he's in jail for two years. And that book of Acts ends after the first week there.

And if you're wondering what he does for the rest of those two years, one of the things he does is write this letter. He writes a letter to a group of Christians in what we now know of as Greece.

[ 7 : 13 ] They were amongst the very first European Christians. It might very well have been the first properly set up church in all of Europe. When Paul came there about 10 to 12 years earlier, and the story is told in Acts chapter 16. And so this is 10 to 12 years after he planted the church.

He's imprisoned. He's in chains. And he writes this letter to them. And it's really important to keep that in mind all the way through the book. Because when you read the book, you do not get the sense...

Like, okay, I'll be honest. I mean, I don't know. I've never been arrested. And hopefully, Christianity won't get persecuted. I'll never be arrested for being a Christian. I mean, that we should all pray for that, right? But I don't know how cheerful I'd be if I was in jail.

Like, I know for a fact I'd be terrified, right? And not only is Paul in jail, Paul is in jail falsely. He hasn't been guilty of anything. He's had three years of legal problems, five years before he's finally freed in the year 62. And you don't get that sense when you read this letter.

You'll hear about it, but you don't get that sense. Once again, it's partially how this... The Christianity is immensely emotionally satisfying as you enter into it deeper. So here's how the letter goes. Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi with the bishops and deacons, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, just sort of pause. First of all, the word saints is just referring to Christians. It's not like how lots of Christians nowadays talk about the saints, you know, Saint Paul and other saints, the Catholic Church and Orthodox churches have ways of declaring people saints. In the New Testament, it just means Christian. It means somebody who's set aside for God. And that's what's here. But here's the thing. I want to... I think it was just like a week and a half ago now, I was in my... one of my coffee shops. I was working on my sermon. And a young lady sat down just sort of beside me, like at the next table.

[ 9 : 28 ] And she had a jean jacket on. She had a patch on, like a sewed onto her jean jacket. And the patch said, I think I wrote it down, give me a minute while I overthink this.

And I thought it was hilarious. Give me a minute while I overthink this. I told one of my kids about it. She said, oh yeah, that's like a... she asked me how old was the person. And I gave her my guess. She said, oh yeah, yeah, yeah. For that age group, that's like a big thing. There's backpacks, all sorts of things where they talk about this. Give me a minute while I overthink this. So I'm not going to overthink this. But there's something very profound. And it's going to be something which is

constantly in the letter. I might not mention it every time that it's going to be in the letter. But it's actually a very big theme in the letter. And it's... if you go back to verse one again, it says, to all the saints in... in Christ Jesus, who are at Philippi. That word in. And this isn't overthinking it. It's a very important word. It's an important word for the Christian faith. It's an important word in Philippians. And what it means is this. It means that I... when I give my life to Christ, I mean, that's how I would understand it. Or I would come to understand that he's my savior and my Lord. Even if you don't know the moment that that happened, even if you're somebody who grew up in a Christian home and you never know a time when you didn't believe and trust in Jesus, at some point in time in your life, whether you're conscious of it or not, you... you gave your life to Christ and Christ comes into your life. And you now are in Christ. And you are in union with Christ. And this is going to come back time and time again in the rest of the letter, by the way. In fact, even in the next couple of verses, I'll point it out to you how significant it is. It's that you are in Christ if you are a Christian and he is in you. Now, this sounds a bit crazy, but if you think about it, it's essential to what it means to be human. It's the essence of friendship and love, romantic love in particular. Romantic love, often if you, you know, you're not somebody who's sort of always known each other, but you begin to fall in love. And when that happens, it usually begins with whether, you know, wherever it is, you know, a bar or a workplace or whatever, when you look at a person a certain way, and or you feel them looking at you in a certain way, and you meet with your eyes. Now, if it just happens like that, this is one of those things that passes and goes on. But if it then proceeds to conversation, and then it proceeds to a longer conversation, then it proceeds and it proceeds and it proceeds. Obviously, a lot of times, it doesn't go much farther than just that. But in every one of those cases, what you're doing is you're acknowledging their existence. And even if it's just the tiniest bit, you're allowing, you're recognizing them, and you're showing that you know them. And in some ways, you've just opened yourself up a tiny bit to them. And they've opened themselves up a tiny bit to you. And it's also the same in friendship, although it wouldn't be the same exact analogy. Like I, earlier, a couple of months ago, I, because I have this role now in our denomination to try to spearhead more church planting in our denomination, I got made a canon for a second time. So if you're really into titles, I'm canon, canon, or canon squared, or double-barreled canon, or as the bishop said to me last night, the loose canon. But that's a whole other topic of conversation. But I was at a gathering of about 30 people. I was one of 30 people. Everybody else was Americans. And why is it that when you're with a group of people like that, you have a connection? There were two guys there that if they lived in Ottawa, I would become very good friends with them.

[ 13 : 39 ] And there begins to be not just like the same type of chatting and banter that there is with the rest, but a different type of conversation where you start to let each other into your life.

Right? Isn't that what happens? And that's why, you see, that many of us who've experienced the death of a loved one, maybe it's the death of a child, or the death of a child, or the death of a parent, or the death of a spouse. And also even when maybe with a friend we end up getting betrayed by a friend who's been very close to us, you feel like something's been yanked out of you.

Because it's the nature of human relationships like friendship and love that you let that other person into you and you enter into them. So you see here that the language that's used of Christ of us is profoundly personal and human language. We see and know it in a tiny type of way in relationships of friendship and in relationships of love. But that tiny thing, there is this true or greater entering in, which is union with Christ.

If you have given your life to Christ, you are in union with him. He literally comes into you in a personal way, and you literally enter into him in a personal way.

You have a union with Christ and all that that means. And his union with you is with all of you. It's with all of your past. And as we'll see in a moment, it's with your future. It's with you in all of your depth.

[ 15 : 21 ] And that's this profound truth. Now, this is going to work itself out in several very, very challenging ways to us that will probably convict some of us of things that we're doing that we shouldn't do.

But look what happens here in terms of how it works out, because there's this other aspect of it, which is very important to understand. I mean, I really want, if you get nothing else out of the sermon, other than the fact that when you give your life to Christ, you are in a type of union with him. He literally comes in and you literally are in him, and you are forever changed. You are

eternally changed.

You are changed in a way that outlasts your death, that goes into the new heaven and the new earth. That's how you were changed. But in this text, you is always plural and singular at the same time. If you were from the Ottawa Valley, it should be translated as you's. If you're from the south, it should be translated as all y'all, all the way through this. You see, it can be hard enough for me to understand that I'm in Christ. It can be very hard to understand that we together have union with Christ. Let's look how the text goes. Verse 3, I thank my God in all my remembrance of you. Just a moment. I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all, making my prayer with joy, God bless you. And that word partnership there is a word, I can't remember now if it's eight times or nine times in the letter, but it's going to be in the letter a lot. And it's the word koinonia in Greek.

And in some ways, it would be better to translate it as koinonia almost, to have a loan word from Greek into English. Because it's not talking about a business partnership. This is all part of this mystery of the fact that I am in union with Christ, as is my wife, as is Laurier, as is Josiah, as is Ross and Shirley and Andrew. Like, if we are in Christ, we are all in Christ. There is an actual something here which you can say on one hand that it's mystical, because it is mystical. But it's not just mystical.

It's a type of union with Christ that Christ, when we're in union with Christ, there is this propulsion from Christ himself towards certain types of habits and postures. And so that's why, on one hand, the word partnership is important there. Because what Paul is saying is that they understood, this church in Philippi, that they are in koinonia with, there's this mystical, they are in union with Christ, and each one of them, and they are in union with Christ with Paul, and there's this connection there which matters. And it matters to the point that they send money constantly.

[18:28] Paul, when he goes to some places, has to support himself with his hands. But most of the time, he wasn't making tents. He was able to proclaim the gospel because people were sending them money, and one of the places that was sending them money was Philippi. I told you a little bit, if you go back, one of the things about when Paul declares that he's going to appeal to Caesar, that one of the reasons that Paul shocked them all is because lawsuits, just like today, powerful people will use their power to oppress weak people, because weak people can't pay for lawyers.

And so when Paul appealed to Caesar, Paul was saying that, I will undertake all of the expenses for me and all that's involved for me to make it to Rome. And somebody paid for that.

Koinonia leads to money being given. It leads to generosity to help people and to help the church and the spread of the gospel. It involves practical helps. It involves prayer. It involves presence. And you'll see later on is that they showed their concern by not just sending money, but by sending money with some of their people because they wanted to be present with him. They wanted to show concern. It's the same type of reason whereby, you know, if a loved one of our congregation, a loved one dies, that some of us might go to the funeral. The presence matters. And it's, it's, it's, it's, it's, that's what this koinonia word is. And it's going to, in fact, it shows up again just in a couple of verses. And it all flows from this union of Christ.

You see, that's why, well, let's look again here, verse three, I thank my God in all my remembrance of you always. It's, it's not just sentimental. It's not like something you would see in Hallmark.

[20:22] This is very serious if we take this idea that not only do I have a union with Christ and how is Christ going to begin to change me? How is he going to begin to change me if I am in Christ?

And how should he be changing us if we're in Christ? And so what we see here when it says, I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, it doesn't mean that he doesn't know that there's problems in the church in Philippi. It doesn't mean that he, he, he doesn't know. I mean, later on at the end of the letter, he's going to tell that these two women who are fighting and won't forgive and won't be reconciled. He's going to tell them to, to, to, to do it. Like he knows that the church isn't perfect, but what he's doing is expressing the posture that a person in Christ should have and a posture of koinonia. And the posture is one of thankfulness. Now, you see, here's where the, the teaching comes home. And we might smirk and say, oh yeah, yeah, posture of thankfulness.

Is it that you can easily see how this could be turned into a, a mug and a whole pile of, um, you know, cheesy Hallmark cards and all of that type of stuff. But no, no, there's a profound question being asked is every single one of us has a posture right now towards other Christians and towards Christ. We have a posture. The problem isn't whether or not we have, the issue isn't do we have a posture. The issue is, are you conscious of your posture? Am I conscious of my posture? Is my

posture one of superiority towards other Christians? Is it a condemning posture? Is it an ungrateful posture?

Is it an entitled posture? Is it an indifferent posture? Is it hostile? Is it judgmental? Is it filled with rivalry and team and party spirit? Is that my, is it gossipy? Is that my posture?

And when you think of the alternatives, why wouldn't you want to have your posture of being one of gratitude? You know, one of the things I haven't said this in a while, I love this analogy and I hope, I don't say it all, but I love this analogy. Just imagine for a moment, just sort of like in, um, you know, that Dickens novel about Christmas, imagine for a moment that God gave you the opportunity.

[ 22 : 38 ] He says, I'm going to take you forward in time to your funeral and I'm going to let you listen into what people say about you at, at, at your funeral reception. Okay. And so what do you want to have them say is your fault? Here's the question. What do you want to have them say was your problem at your funeral? Do you want to have them say, gosh, Sinclair was cheap? Do you want them to say, gosh, that's the most ungenerous man I've ever met? Gosh, that's the most ungrateful, unthankful man I've ever met. You don't want them to say that. What wouldn't you love it if they said this? The problem with Bob is he was way too thankful for other Christians.

Wouldn't that be a nice thing to hear at your funeral? That your problem was too much gratitude? Not too much bitterness, too much envy, too much hatred, too much injustice, you know, all that other stuff that you could keep adding and adding and adding. So here's this posture, and it's clear-eyed. It's clear-eyed. So you can begin to see a little bit about why it is that I like this text, and I know I'm not as filled with gratitude as I, as I should be, and I don't know if I express how much I'm just so appreciative of this congregation. I really view it as a blessing that I can be the pastor of this church. Like, I really do. I'm very grateful for the labor and the generosity and the prayers of this church. I'm grateful that I've gotten called to serve here.

And I know that when a time comes, if Jesus doesn't return and I'm retired, I will look back on much of my time here with gratitude. But now, remember I said to you, you can begin to see a little bit about the emotional power of this book, and you can, but also a little bit about why I like to read it. But this next bit, this next verse, was why I think you get an even better picture about why I like this book. Look at verse 6. Verse 6, and I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion. The actual word is perfection. He will bring it to perfection at the day of Jesus Christ. But verse 6 again, I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. He's praying this for the church. He's saying this to the church. He's also saying it in a sense to himself. See, here's one of the reasons I really love the book. I was a crappy Christian.

I'm still a crappy Christian often. And especially when I just become a Christian in my first early years, and you know, I had all the hormone issues that young guys have, and a whole pile of other stuff, the arrogance, all that other stuff, and I would keep just feeling to myself, I am such a crappy Christian.

And then I would read Philippians 1.6. And it's not saying, George, because you are such a spectacular example of the Christian faith, you will come to perfection. It's not saying that. It's saying God is at work in you, George.

[ 26 : 00 ] And the work that God begins in you, he will bring to perfection. Not because of me, but because of him. And as I read this text, over and over and over again, my conclusion wasn't, okay, I can go ahead, I'm going to be even crappier because God is doing this. No, it fills you with hope when you're a crappy Christian. It fills you with hope.

You know, one of the things which is so beautiful about morning prayer and evening prayer in the Anglican way, the old morning and evening prayer service, is that part of the service says that God does not weigh our merits, but pardons our offenses.

And that is exactly right. That is exactly right. So it's not narcissism. It's this acknowledgement that, you know, you turn to Christ in the smallest, little, tiniest way, ignorant and full of other types of things, and he comes and he takes you to himself, he brings you into himself, and all of his saving work, and he comes into you with all of his saving work, and you are made right with God by putting your faith and trust in him. It's all God's grace, and you are in union with Christ, and the work he began in you, he will bring to perfection.

We see this even more powerfully in the next thing that he says. Look at what it says in verses 7 and 8, because it touches on something which is one of the deepest shames that Canadians have. One of the deepest shames that Canadians have. Look at verse 7 and 8.

It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers, koinonia, with me of grace, both in my imprisonment, and the Greek word literally is, if it was to be translated literally, it would say both in my chains, and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. I'm going to use an example from the church that I served from 88 to 95 before I was here, and they had had just a whole pile of ministers for a long time, had only been there for about three years, and I was there seven years and plus, and it was only after I'd been there six and a half, six and three quarters years, that the first really deeply shameful thing was shared with me, which was a story of incest in a family. And that, of course, is a thing of deep shame. But then within a couple of weeks of that, two separate people shared another thing which is deeply shaming. They had been telling people that in both cases it was a son, that their son was off somewhere up in the oil fields or some other place and couldn't come home, and the mom shared with me with tears, two separate moms, not knowing that the other mom had a similar type of situation, that their son wasn't working in the oil field, their son had been caught and convicted of armed robbery and was doing hard time. In one case in Ontario, in another case in Alberta.

[ 29 : 26 ] That's why their sons never came home. Deep shame. And it's the same in Canadians. Canadians are often very deeply ashamed, especially if we're not, you know, we're not, you know, sort of, we're more middle class or working class.

There's deep shame around it. And so when Paul says here in verse 7, it is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all koinonia with me of grace. Both in my chains, and it was even more shameful in Roman society to be in chains, even though Paul is innocent, he is in chains. At the moment of his deepest shame, they still send money in prayer and are in koinonia with him. And in his heights, which is when he's defending and confirming the gospel, they are in koinonia with him. It is such a beautiful picture for us to aspire to with each other. And not just for ourselves, but with our Christians, brother and sisters throughout the city and around the world. And now we come to this final part, which is very profound. If I was to say what I wanted you to, one of the things of many things in this text to bring home, it would be a line from an old hymn. And there's a very, very old hymn that says, love to the loveless shown that you might lovely be. And if I was just to change that, it would be slightly this, love to the loveless and unlovely, that loved and lovely you will be. That's the heart of the gospel.

Love shown to those who are not lovely and not loved, to the intent that in union with Christ, you will become lovely more and more every day. And you will know how deeply you are loved.

And that's seen in these final three words, verses, which is a very profound prayer. One of the ways I try to describe the beauty of the Anglican way with the colics is this. As you've noted, there's the Heidelberg Catechism. There's different catechisms. But if you were to follow the ancient Anglican way and twice a day you were to pray the colic for the week and then see these other colics and prayers, that every one of these colics is both a prayer that you can pray, and it's also a prayer that you could meditate upon and go into deeper prayer. But it's also teaching you about the Christian life. It's very, very clever. You learn theology and spirituality through praying a prayer. And that's what Paul does here. And it's not translated, the Greek to English is a bit clunky, but here's how it goes, verses 9 to 11. And it is my prayer that, and in some ways, like if you were to say, okay, yeah, yeah, okay, we know the scholars want it to all be literal and all of that, and that's very, very good. And one of the things you should know is that I, every week,

I spend time with an academic commentary or two trying to make sure I understand the original language. And I'm, you know, I know all that stuff, and I'm not taking the words the wrong way. But, you know, if they were to lighten up a little bit and give more of an applied text, there'd be almost like a, and it is my prayer, colon. And then the next thing is the prayer.

[ 33 : 01 ] What is the prayer? That your love may abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, what is the best, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, when Christ comes in the new heaven and the new earth is ushered in, and you see him and you are like him, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. That's how Paul prays for the church and for individuals.

And isn't it beautiful? If you don't know how to pray for your small group leader, if you don't know how to pray for your Sunday school teacher, if you don't know how to pray for your pastor, if you don't know how to pray for your congregation, if you don't know how to pray for your missionaries, pray this prayer.

And you are praying a prayer that God wrote for you to pray. And look at its beauty. And you know the other thing about this, I don't have time to go into it. This prayer, we live in a world that is crazy for love and thinks about love in crazy ways.

Love is love. Love unconditionally. Love is blind. Love means unconditional positive regard and applause.

And those are all crazy ideas. They're crazy. I don't know, maybe if it gets on a YouTube video short and that's part of it, I'll get all sorts of hate.

[ 34 : 36 ] But it's crazy. They're crazy ideas. This text is an outline of sanity about love. It's an outline of sanity about love.

Verse 9 again, And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more. What's the image there? See, I think it was G.K. Chesterton that said that one of the problems we have about God is we think God's too old.

And we don't understand how childlike God can be. So here's the image. Let's say Louise wanted to get a watering can filled with water to go water some plants where the hose doesn't reach.

And maybe she has a four-year-old or a five-year-old granddaughter to help her. And Louise gives him the hose. How full would the four-year-old with the hose fill the watering can?

Well, you don't stop when it's full because nothing's more fun than having a hose. And seeing that watering can just overflow. This is God, the four-year-old God, filling you up with love.

[ 35 : 40 ] That's how you have to think of it. Not an old man with a gray beard, me with a beard, but a four-year-old little girl or a little boy with a huge smile on their face filling you up with love until it overflows and overflows and overflows.

And it's not just that the love is to overflow, but it's to be a love with knowledge and all discernment. And this is really important.

And here I'm going to be blunt. It was a shock to discover on October 7, 2023, and in the weeks after that, that so many Canadians were anti-Semitic and celebrated an act of horrendous barbarism.

And if you love what is unjust and evil, that is not love. That is not love.

If you love evil, that's not love. Don't we all basically know that? If you love injustice, that's not love.

If you love something which is showing no mercy, that's not love.

[ 36 : 52 ] We all have this fundamental sense that, and this prayer beautifully articulates it, that love should be at peace with goodness. And love and goodness should be at peace with justice.

And love and goodness and justice should be at peace with beauty. And it should be at peace with mercy and kindness. And there should be an at-oneness with all of these things.

And this prayer beautifully expresses that to a world that is crazy for love and thinks about love in crazy ways. And it is my prayer, verse 9, 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 on the day of Christ, that you're moving people to a good end.

If you have a friend who's thinking of committing suicide, it is not loving to give them a revolver, a loaded revolver. What you do is you spend time with them and get them in some psychological help so they get healed.

You love them to a good end. You rebuke your child if it looks like your child is getting into drugs, because you love them to a good end.

[ 38 : 03 ] This is beautiful. So that you may approve what is excellent, 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.

And isn't it just entirely what we understand, that love and goodness bears fruit? And you want to see that fruit in the world. You want to see that fruit in each other's lives and in their own life.

The Bible says the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. That's a singular word for nine different words. Singular.

You want to see them. You want to see fruit. It is of the nature. Why did God create? Not because he's lonely, not because he needed human beings to serve him, but because it is of the very nature of love and goodness and truth and beauty that it would create and bear fruit.

And hence we human beings exist. If you're here and you're outside of Christ, don't you want that prayer to be prayed over you?

[ 39 : 10 ] And why is it that you would like everything in that prayer prayed over you other than the fact that you want love to culminate in everything in your life being done to the glory of God? Like, why would that be something that would stop you from wanting this prayer to be prayed for you?

You see, if you like everything in this prayer to be prayed over you except that, it shows that you have... And I'm saying this because I had the same thing before I became a Christian, by the way. So it's not me pointing a finger at you and nothing... No, no. Why is it that I want to be the center and reject God? You see, it's not because Christianity cannot be true, but because you don't want it to be true.

See, that's why it is that to become a Christian, it's not a matter that to become a Christian, as you say, everything about Christianity makes absolutely no sense, it's completely irrational and there's no evidence, therefore I will become a Christian.

But it is that there's insights of beauty and of history and all of these other things which make you realize that Christianity is plausible, but there's enough revealed of God that you realize that you can actually give your life to Christ and that it's reasonable and it's good to do and it's worthy to do and it's important to do, but there's not enough to intellectually cub you over and it's finally when you lay down your arms and surrender and say, Jesus, I have been holding you at a distance and I no longer hold you.

[ 40 : 38 ] I desire to be yours. Jesus, and he comes in and you have union with Christ. How could I pray over you?

And it's my prayer for the Church of the Messiah that your love may abound more and more and that as your love abounds more and more, it will be a love that is at one and at peace with knowledge and all discernment.

And I pray over you that God will so pour out his love in your life and have it abound and overflow with knowledge and discernment, that you will have more and more and more a sense of what is good and beautiful and true and that you will love people towards that and that your own life, the love that is poured out into you by God, will be a love that makes you pure and blameless and that as God's love is poured out more and more on you and in you and through you, that that love and goodness and truth, you will bear fruit in your life, a fruit that is right with God and right with creation and right with other people.

And all of this, I pray, will come through Jesus Christ. And at the end of it, not so you say about yourself how great I am, but you will say, how great is our God.

I invite you to stand. Bow our heads in prayer. Father, some of us came here today almost not wanting to come because we've been very crappy Christians, maybe just for the last 24 hours, maybe for the last week, maybe for the last month, maybe for the last couple of years.

[ 42 : 29 ] We give you thanks and praise, Father, that when we put our faith and trust in Jesus, when we enter into a union with Christ and that he will begin to work within us and he will not let us go.

And thank you, Father, for that profound emotional and intellectual security that we have that we can now say, yes, I have been a crappy Christian.

Father, please forgive me and help me to live a life where your love is abounding in me and there is knowledge and discernment and purity and that my life shows forth a type of fruit that's just really beautiful in this world.

Father, we pray this prayer for ourselves. We thank you, Father, that in Jesus, love to the loveless was shown, love to the unlovely was shown so that each of us in Christ would know that we are loved and you are making us lovely for your honour and glory.

And all of these things we ask in the name of Jesus and all God's people said, Amen. Amen.

[ 43 : 41 ]