



**DAILY SCRIPTURE & PRAYER RESOURCE for the
WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY
20 MAY – 27 MAY 2012**

DAY 6—FRIDAY 25 MAY

Theme: Changed by God's Steadfast Love

Scripture

Habakkuk 3:17-19 *God, the Lord is my strength*
 Psalm 136:1-4,23-26 *The Lord's steadfast love endures forever*
 1 John 5:1-6 *This is the victory that conquers the world, our faith*
 John 15:9-17 *No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends*

This is the victory, our faith (1 John 5:4)

Reflection

The prophet Habakkuk teaches us that it is trust in God's abiding faithfulness that keeps hope alive in spite of all failure. Habakkuk's lamentation turns to joy in God's fidelity that supplies strength in the face of despair.

Psalm 136 confirms that the memory of the marvellous deeds of God in Israel's history is trustworthy evidence of God's steadfast love. Because of divine intervention, the people of Israel experienced extraordinary and surprising victories. Recalling God's great works of salvation is a source of joy, gratitude and hope, which believers have for centuries expressed in prayer, hymns of praise, and music.

1 John reminds us that *that which has been born of God* is what overcomes the world. This does not necessarily mean victories which can be measured by human standards. Victory in Christ involves a change of heart, perceiving earthly reality from the perspective of eternity, and believing in the final victory over death. This victorious force is faith, the bestower and source of which is God. And its most perfect manifestation is love.

In the words of the gospel reading, Christ assures his disciples of God's love, the final confirmation of which is Jesus' death on the cross. At the same time, he invites and challenges them to show love to one another. Jesus' relationship to his disciples is based on love. He does not treat them merely as disciples, but calls them 'my friends'. Their service of Christ consists in conforming their lives to the one commandment of love, resulting from internal conviction and faith. In a spirit of love, even when the progress on the way to full visible unity seems slow, we do not lose hope. God's steadfast love will enable us to overcome the greatest opponent and the deepest divisions. That is why *the victory that conquers the world is our faith and the transforming power of God's love*.

For reflection/discussion

1. Does victory always mean God is with you? Whose side is God on: that of the victor, or of the vanquished – or of both? What about times when God does not do 'marvellous deeds' on our behalf?
2. What does it mean to 'lay down one's life for one's friends'?
3. How should we express Christian love in contexts of different religions, ideologies and philosophies?
4. What must we do to become more credible witnesses of God's steadfast love in a divided world?
5. How can Christ's followers more visibly support one another throughout the world?

Prayer for the Day

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, by your resurrection you have triumphed over death, and have become the Lord of life. Out of love for us you have chosen us to be your friends. May the Holy Spirit unite us to you and to one other in the bonds of friendship, that we may faithfully serve you in this world as witnesses to your steadfast love; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

