

**W@W1Pet41**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

### **LIFE SECRETS**

**1 Peter 3:10-12** *For, 'Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.'* (NIV)

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

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The 'pride of life' is one of the three main areas of temptation (along with the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes - cf [1 John 2:16](#)). In order to feel good about life, Satan lures us to raise our own profile by speaking badly of others; and to deceive others by saying either less than the truth or more than the truth. Peter reminds us here that this quote from [Psalm 34:12-16](#) is still speaking as God's Word - those who want to enjoy life must be utterly truthful. Otherwise our own words will trap us, and the good we seek will escape from our grasp; also, our prayers will not be answered.

The person who follows Jesus needs to learn a daily repentance. We should constantly turn from the evil around us, which seduces us and pleases the devil; so that we can practice what is good, and please God. Speaking the truth is a key indicator of godliness, because Jesus is the Truth. But the habits of our fallen world often appeal to our old nature and seek to invade our own hearts. When that happens, we are no longer shocked by hearing ourselves exaggerate or failing to tell the whole truth. But it greatly saddens God who will not respond to our prayers as He would like (cf [Is 59:1-2](#)).

In business, lies can become a convenience, luring the client with a promise that the product can never deliver. Bosses might tell employees less than the truth in order to keep them 'on-side' in a time of change. Verbal deceit happens everywhere; at home, at work, in the church ... but it should not happen at all. The Lord is watching out to see the man and woman who carries love to do what is right, and to answer their prayers, and to enable them to enjoy the life He has given them. So perhaps a review of your mouth-style is overdue.

**Prayer:** *Father God. Thank You for being so direct in Your Word. I have known that You prefer truth to lies, but I had not realised how essential it is to always speak the truth, and how harmful to myself when I do not. Please forgive me for the times I have lied in order to make myself look big; and please keep reminding me to be truthful in every conversation, text and email - at work, in the church and at home. For Your glory's sake. Amen.*

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**W@W1Pet42**

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**CONFIDENCE WITHOUT FEAR**

**1 Peter 3:13-14** *Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened."* (NIV)

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and many other languages*

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All children assume that they are safe, until they find out that some people hurt them. Such experiences light a fuse of fear which may continue to hold them back through their adult lives, further inflamed by other painful experiences. Peter's readers had bad experiences too. He addresses them as 'strangers in the world' and 'scattered' ([1 Peter 1:1](#)) - they must have known the feeling of being despised: and suffering is mentioned 15 times - it is one of the themes of the letter. So, with personal experience of suffering, they were in danger of being paralysed by fear.

Personal confidence comes with eagerness to do the right thing. The more we practice righteous living, we grow in assurance that God (and other people) will approve of us. Obedience brings blessing. It is also a blessing to live without the accusation of a guilty conscience. But in a wicked world, the righteous will become targets for those who hate truth and God's light. When that happens, there is another blessing from God; Jesus said so in [Matthew 5:11-12](#). So Peter emphasises that fear must not be allowed to terrorise any disciple of Jesus.

Fear will always take us off course. Either we will be too terrified to move forwards in obedience to the Lord, or we will take a different path to avoid the pain we fear. Both ways take us away from the blessing that comes with obedience, and the blessing that comes with endurance. Whatever suffering you fear - God's blessing will outweigh the hurt of every attack; and you will grow in confidence as God honours those who honour Him (cf [1 Samuel 2:30](#)). There is business to be done for God, so you must reject the domination of fear by deciding to trust the Lord and live obediently for Him. It will start a good revolution in your life at work, as you stop cowering and grow in confidence that God will keep His promise and bless you.

**Prayer:** *Lord God Almighty. Thank You for your promise to bless all those who trust you and live according to Your Word. Help me to be more concerned to please you than to avoid difficulties that may be hurtful. And help me to grow in confidence as I practice my faith by obeying You at work as well as at church. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*

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**W@W1Pet43**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

### **READY TO ANSWER**

**1 Peter 3:14b-15a** ... do not be frightened. But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. (NIV)

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

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People cannot become followers of Jesus if they have not heard about Him, and what He has done to save us. Although there are millions of Christians in the world today, many of their friends and colleagues have not yet heard them speaking about Jesus Christ. Some believers think that their faith is a private matter only for them; but Jesus told us to make more disciples for Him ([Matthew 28:19](#)). Many others are simply afraid of an adverse reaction from friends and colleagues. But Peter says, "Don't be frightened!"

Some believers have the gift to preach or teach publicly, but everybody who honours Jesus as their Lord and Master should want to speak well of Him. Most of the opportunities will come when we are questioned about our faith or lifestyle. So each born-again Christian should be ready with simple answers such as, "I believe in Jesus so I am learning to obey and follow Him"; or, "I know that I am going to heaven because Jesus died for me". Of course, these answers will probably trigger more questions, but trust the Holy Spirit to help you - and never be ashamed to say when you do not know, because you are willing to find out and tell them later.

Part of the reason for going to church is to get prepared to answer questions about Jesus: it is a significant part of a church leader's responsibility (cf [Eph 4:11-13](#)). We should not just listen to teaching, but use it to prepare ourselves to answer questions. Many people want to find the secret of life, and hope after death: it is only found in Jesus. But your friends may never know if you are unprepared to tell them. If you belong to a workplace Christian group, why not use the time to prepare your hearts and your answers - it could save someone's life.

**Prayer:** Gracious God. Thank You for the people who first told me about Jesus. Help me not to be afraid or ashamed of speaking about Him. I really do want Him to rule my life today and prepare me for tomorrow. So please help me to work with Your Holy Spirit, by Your Word, to know how to answer questions about following Jesus. For his Name's sake. Amen.

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#### WINNING ANSWERS

**1 Peter 3:15-16** ... be prepared to give an answer ... But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. (NIV)

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

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God's truth has its own inbuilt power. We cannot force people to believe in Jesus - trust grows as they discover that Christ is trustworthy. Our task is to explain who Jesus is and what He has done, so that others will be persuaded to take action, by repenting and turning to follow Him. So, we need to answer questions about our faith and the reason we behave differently, and to do so gently and respectfully. If it is not obvious that we respect the questioner, how will they know that God loves them: and if we do not win their trust, why should we expect them to trust the Lord?

Good behaviour is a clear witness of Christian character. It should be the backdrop against which people ask questions, seeking the reason for our gladness, and courageous endurance. It is also the best defence against accusations of double motives, manipulation and other features which mark membership of a cult. Of course, some will still find any excuse to ridicule believers, but their mocking should eventually give way to a sense of shame for having slandered the innocent.

Hostility can bring out the worst in us. A violent or cynical question might make us want to respond with aggression: but [Proverbs 15:1](#) says, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." Jesus let the wicked condemn themselves: His silence proved their guilt and His innocence (cf [Is 53:7](#); [1 Peter 2:23](#)). So when the spotlight is on us, because we belong to Christ, we have no need to think of clever arguments or powerful words to win the argument. Simply say what is true about Jesus, and let the Holy Spirit convince them of their need to repent and receive the Saviour.

**Prayer:** God of truth and love. Please help me to present Your truth graciously and to live a holy life, so that others may be convicted of their sin, and long to find their Saviour. Even when they refuse to respect me, help me to go on loving them, as You do. Help me to trust that You will use my gentle words and Christ-like lifestyle to show them it is possible to repent and be saved. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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### PURPOSEFUL SUFFERING

**1 Peter 3:17-18** *It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. (NIV)*

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

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Born-again Christians will sometimes get into trouble for speaking about Jesus. The nature of sin is that it resists the Lordship of Christ; and so any suggestion that He should be worshipped, trusted, loved and served may meet a hostile response. When this happens to you, remember that it is not a personal attack (even though it may seem to be!), it is against Him. However, Jesus did experience this personally, and in a very violent way; so that He might bring you into a right relationship with God (see [www.crosscheck.org.uk](http://www.crosscheck.org.uk) to find out more).

The suffering of Christ was not only the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world (cf [1 John 2:2](#)), but also a life pattern for all who are called to continue to resist the evil in the world, the flesh and the devil (cf [1 Peter 2:21](#)). Such resistance is against the grain of human nature and every community that rejects Jesus. It will bring us some trouble - although our difficulties are small compared with Christ's agonies - but will also be rewarded in glory (cf [2 Cor 4:17](#)).

[Hebrews 10:35-36](#) says, "So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised." So although we often pray for easy relationships at work and home, when God allows difficulties, do not despair or give up. If you suffer for doing right, don't do what is wrong to escape the problems. The workplace may be uncomfortable for the believer, but God is your protector for eternity. Therefore keep on doing and saying what is right, for His glory's sake; and for the blessing of those who are watching to see if Christ's power is in your life; and for your future reward.

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father. Until Jesus comes again, I know that believers will have troubles wherever Jesus is rejected. Help me to keep on trusting that You to win the lost, and get great glory in using my words and active witness. When I feel like giving up, may I know Your power to help me to endure. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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**W@W1Pet46**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

### **UNJUST JUSTICE**

**1 Peter 3:18a** *For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. (NIV)*

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and many other languages*

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The one thing that God the Son did not deserve, was to die for our sins. The sins were ours: the punishment should have been ours too. He had no sins, and therefore there should have been no punishment for Him. You might say, "It wasn't right!" But it is not us who determines what is right; that is God's job. And He says that the only way that human beings could ever be in the right with Him, was for God to charge all our sins to His own account, and for Jesus to pay for them - with His life (see more at [www.crosscheck.org.uk](http://www.crosscheck.org.uk)).

When Jesus Christ died, it was not a sample or example of sacrifice; but a once-for-all action to fully satisfy the anger of God against our sins. Nothing more is needed to atone for past sins (or indeed future sins!). The Bible says that the death of Christ was a perfect and complete sacrifice: nothing can be added to gain God's love ... except to accept it - by admitting our sinfulness and trusting Him to be our Saviour. When we do, we are 'brought to God' and, we can approach the Almighty with bold confidence (cf [Heb 10:19-22](#)).

If this is true, and the Bible assures us that it is, why are so many Christians uncertain whether God loves them? Why do so many God-fearing people feel that they have to earn their salvation when God says we cannot (cf [Eph 2:8-9](#))? Or why do some church-goers always feel condemned, and unable to even come to God in prayer? There is one main reason: they do not believe that what the Bible says is true! So if your assurance of salvation has slipped away, tell the Lord about it; and then take this verse as God's promise to you, and come back to the Saviour who loves you.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord Jesus. I want to thank you for agreeing to die for my sins on the cross. Please forgive me when I drift from holding tightly onto the salvation you have won for me. Help me to come to You with boldness, and help me to trust Your Word that I am acceptable to You - only through what You have done for me. In Your great Name I pray. Amen.*

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#### LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT

**1 Peter 3:18b-20a** *He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. (NIV)*

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

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Today's passage is among the most difficult in the New Testament. It deals with the time between death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. We normally gain understanding by comparing a new fact or idea with others that we already understand. So it is particularly hard to understand what happened when Jesus was dead, because the first Easter was a totally unique event. The only way to know the meaning of these verses is by a careful dissection of the way the Greek words are used in the original. Alas, the short scope of this devotional makes that impossible but you can find a much fuller discussion at [Sundoulos.com](#) or [in Wayne Grudem's commentary on 1 Peter \(p.203\)](#).

The uniqueness of Jesus centres on the fact that He was both a man and yet truly divine (fully human and also God in a human body). Although His body was wounded by human cruelty, he committed His spirit to His Father's safe-keeping as He died. But at the resurrection, Jesus had a new body (although still bearing the marks of His wounds from the cross) which was energised by the same Spirit which His disciples recognised as being the Jesus they knew and loved.

Whatever mysteries are contained in today's verses, we will probably not fully understand until we see Jesus face to face. But one thing is certain. The dead Jesus was made alive by the Spirit and He is still powerfully alive. That is really important to followers of Jesus because of what [Romans 8:11](#) says: "And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you." In other words, all those who have the Holy Spirit in them will have His power to help them live the Jesus-life in their bodies now, and physical resurrection when Christ returns. It may seem too good to be true - but it is very good and very true ... you have God's Word!

**Prayer:** *Risen Lord Jesus. Thank You for giving me Your Holy Spirit when I repented and received You into my life. I am so glad that I am not alone, for Your Spirit is with me to help me to follow You every day, until I will see you with a new physical body. Help me to live a new sort of life that pleases You, in the strength and wisdom which You supply. For Your glory's sake. Amen.*

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**GOD'S PATIENT SALVATION**

**1 Peter 3:20b-22** ... God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolises baptism that now saves you also--not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience towards God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand--with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him. (NIV)

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

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These verses have had a variety of interpretations, including the idea that the physical act of water baptism has saving power. But other Bible verses do not agree! We are saved through God's grace when we put our faith in Jesus the Saviour (cf [Eph 2:8-9](#)). We are forgiven when we repent (cf [Acts 2:38](#)), and a desire for baptism is the confirmation of that repentance. Religious leaders who came to John the Baptist were refused baptism because there was no change of lifestyle to offer any evidence of a change of heart (cf [Matt 3:7-8](#)).

God longs to save all who choose to find refuge in Jesus; like Noah's family who were kept safe in the ark (cf [Gen 5:8-9:17](#)). The flood was a 'baptism' which engulfed them; and yet their faithful obedience and God's grace preserved them. But the flood also separated them from the wicked world that had despised God's provision for 120 years (cf [Gen 6:3](#)). After that 'baptism' there was no going back to the old world - it had gone. So today, water baptism marks out the person who has declared faith in Christ, having repented of sin; and it affirms the beginning of a new life, renouncing the old life.

All that is most reassuring to the conscience. A bad conscience can see no hope, but a good conscience breeds confidence in God's promise of a good future with Him. We can be confident that as Jesus was raised from the dead by the power of the Spirit, so it is possible to live a resurrection life now (cf [Rom 6:4](#)): and to receive a resurrection body like that of Jesus when He comes again. God wants you to have that confidence to live His new life today, and to refuse to go back to old ways.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord. Thank you that I have found a refuge in Jesus. Thank you for the confidence you give to live unashamed because I am forgiven, loved and safe for eternity. Help me to remember that my decision to be baptised was also a decision to renounce shameful ways, and to follow Jesus only. For His Name's sake. Amen.

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**W@W1Pet49**

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**JESUS IS SUPREME**

**1 Peter 3:21b-22** ... *Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand--with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him. (NIV)*

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

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Where is Jesus today and what is He doing? Some people, who claim to follow Jesus, just try to follow His example and obey His teaching as recorded in the Bible. That is, of course, a very good thing to do, but it misses a vital dimension. Jesus is a real living person and not just a wise author. Although the Bible forbids us to try to make contact with the dead (cf [Deut 18:10-12](#)), Jesus has been raised from death - so that we might have a relationship with Him.

Peter tells us that Jesus is in heaven with God the Father. '...at God's right hand', means that He is the all-powerful executive of God's purposes. Jesus is so powerful that every angel and other spirit beings, including demons, are inferior to Him in power and authority - they are all in submission to Him. So, Jesus is the sovereign ruler over everything and everybody. If we belong to Him, as a born-again child of God, we have immediate access to chief executive of the universe. Until we see Him, when He comes again, we can be confident that Jesus is working effectively to establish his Kingdom; providing for His people and protecting them from evil.

However much you may suffer, Jesus is there to intercede and act on your behalf. No demon can tempt you without permission from Jesus, and He is there to give you the strength to overcome (cf [1 Cor 10:13](#)). Peter was writing to people whose confidence may have been battered by suffering; so he assures the church that however black things may look, Jesus is supreme! So whatever your personal circumstances at work or home, remember that Jesus is greater (cf [1 John 4:4](#))! Keep on obeying Him, but don't forget that the power to overcome does not lie in your strength alone, but in His supreme power (cf [John 16:33](#)).

**Prayer:** *Father God. Thank You for giving supreme power to the Lord Jesus Christ. May I not only follow His teaching but also trust His powerful and gracious intervention so that I may find your provision and protection each day. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*

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#### **NO LOOKING BACK**

**1 Peter 4:1-2** *Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. (NIV)*

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and many other languages*

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The sufferings of Christ were real, agonising and literally excruciating. Yet we can treat them so lightly. They inform our worship and the wonderful songs we sing; they are the essence of our communion service. Yet we can so easily separate them out into a 'religious' part of life, and silence their message in the workplace, home and leisure environments. The truth is that Jesus was put to death because of our sins, so that we might be free to live a new life ... and not go back to old ways.

To be 'done' with an old relationship means that you never return. To be done with exams, is never to take another one. To be done with sin is to be settled in your heart and mind that you are not going to insult the Lord Jesus, by despising His painful sacrifice - by continuing to lust after the same offensive passions that took Him to the cross. His purpose was to fulfil God's will by His obedience; so that our disciplined obedience should also achieve His will.

But many Christians never properly think about it: they are content to use the benefits of the cross to soothe their worries while they fulfil their own ambitions. So Peter instructs us to take a grip of our thinking. If we say that we follow Jesus (who was totally focussed on the Father's will), is the same true for us? If not, these verses are an important starting point to consider what real Christian living is all about. Then we need to make lifestyle decisions that are in line with God's purpose for us, and be accountable to other people to fulfil them. Other believers at work might provide just the incentive you need.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord. Thank you for all that Jesus did on the cross for me, but I am sorry that I often treat His sufferings so lightly, forgetting that when sin is 'done with', it is so offensive to return to it again. Please convict my heart of my responsibility to honour what Jesus did for me by setting my mind to godly objectives at work, home and in the church. And please lead me to the kind of Christian fellowship which can help me to be accountable for the decisions I make before You. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*

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#### **ENOUGH WRONG NORMALITY**

**1 Peter 4:3-4** *For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do--living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. (NIV)*

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

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'Normal' is a strange English word. Mathematically, it means 'forming a right angle'. Scientifically it means 'conforming to scientific laws'. Chemically, it defines the strength of a solution. Statistically it can mean a mode or an average. Biologically it describes an organism working without any defect. Now, all those definitions assume that something is absolutely right and true. However, socially, 'normal' means 'what is usual' - and that is assumed to be 'what is right' ... even when it is wrong according to God.

When people refuse to obey the only God who can save them, they will trade in whatever pleases their sinful nature. They may be sophisticated; but sensuality, alcohol, drugs, and immorality can soon become normal, even though they are wrong. When such errors become embedded in a society: those who have no relationship with God through Jesus Christ often become hostile to the follower of Jesus. The first hostility is social isolation; the Christian is considered strange. Your refusal to immerse yourself in behaviour that offends God is offensive to those who want everybody to approve of their lifestyle. The second act of hostility is to ridicule your faith and abuse your God-fearing nature. Systematic bullying and even physical persecution may not be far behind.

Whatever the world says, it is God's Word which defines what is normal. Christians who are tempted to go back to dark ways must realise that enough is enough - the wasted years must not be repeated. Peter wanted to reassure his readers that such attacks were to be expected. They were not a sign of God's indifference but a reminder of the corruption that is in the world: a world, which will be judged by Him one day. In the meantime, however your family or colleagues treat you; remember that the Lord Jesus also suffered at the hands of people who were convinced that they were right, even though they were totally wrong. Our responsibility is simply to please our Saviour and leave the consequences in His hands.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord. Thank you for this reminder that personal hostility against me, for obeying You, may be expected at some time. Please help me to stay true to your Word and to resist the pressure to conform to the world. May my fellowship with other believers at work help support me and them to follow Jesus without compromise. For His Name's sake. Amen.*

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**SPIRITUAL SURPRISES**

**1 Peter 4:5-6** *But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.*  
(NIV)

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

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Peter has just been describing those who serve and worship their corrupted, sensual appetites ([1 Peter 4:3-4](#)). Such people live for today, without thought for eternity. They judge the 'weakness' of Christians who refuse to do the same, without reckoning on the strength of the judgement of God. They are so blind: blind to their own nature and its rebellion against truth, blind to their collusion with Satan's purposes, blind to the righteousness of Believers who obey God, and blind to His right to judge the wicked. They are also blind and deaf to the gospel - the only message by which people may find salvation.

So they really do need to hear and believe the gospel. This verse does not mean that God gives a second chance to dead people (that would be against Jesus' own teaching in [Luke 16:19-31](#)). It means that even the most wicked and perverse (spiritually dead) person, who believes in Jesus, will be saved. Their physical death does not cut them off from God's salvation; because when Christ returns, both the living believers and those who have died will all be raised to new life with Him.

The gospel is a surprise to many. Wicked people, who trust in the salvation which Jesus offers, will go to heaven; while respectable people, who do not trust in Christ, cannot enter. The difference between the two is that those who submit to Christ are willing to repent of their sins and receive His grace; but those who proudly assert their own uprightness are as blind as the wilfully immoral (cf [Luke 18:9-14](#)). So this passage should encourage us to persist in following Jesus, however greatly we have sinned: it also encourages us to preach/speak/share the gospel with those who cannot yet see their need, with the prayer that God will use it to bring them to repentance and faith.

**Prayer:** *Father God. I am so grateful that I do not have to pretend in Your presence; that I can confess my sins to You, and trust in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to gain Your forgiveness. So please help me to keep trusting you and to be concerned for those who are sleep-walking into Your judgement. May I have the courage to declare your gospel even to those who cannot see their need of salvation. For your glory's sake. Amen.*

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**SPIRITUAL PRIORITY**

**1 Peter 4:7** *The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. (NIV)*

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

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As the approach of exams encourages study, and imminent guests spur our hospitality preparations, so reminders about the return of Jesus Christ have always mobilised Christians to get their lives ready to welcome Him. Although we have not been told the details of our life with Him for all eternity, Peter urges us to be clearly aware of all the small details that make up our life now - and make a habit of discussing them all with the Lord. Watching for His return one day, and watching our lifestyle today is Peter's expectation for every Christian. Indeed, a spiritually watchful life of the Believer is in sharp contrast to the careless lifestyle of the worldling (cf [1 Peter 4:2-4](#)).

How shall we make decisions about every-day relationships and responsibilities, so that God will be honoured and Christ's purpose will be satisfied in us? The Scriptures reveal God's mind and act as a mirror to our own hearts (cf [James 1:22-25](#)); and our prayer-life reveals how much we want our lives to please the Lord. As we place the details before Him, with all their apparent contradictions, so He moves in power - in our minds to make a clear distinction between truth and error; and in our circumstances to open the way for us to do His will.

Minds which are numbed by alcohol, drugs or sensual pleasure cannot pray properly. Choices which allow wickedness to rule in our lives will strip away the self-control, which should be the result of the Holy Spirit's work in our lives, and is essential for effective prayer. Workaholism and even Christian activism may leave little space or desire to pray. But every Christian needs to have the time, desire, discipline and persistence to pray. Without prayer we will not discern the Lord's mind about the essential details of every personal interaction, every use of time, money and other resources. So clear your mind to pray, and do it as though everything depends on it ... because it does!

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord God. Thank You for Your patience with me, but I am ashamed of my prayerlessness. Forgive my habit of making decisions, small and large, without talking to You first. I repent of allowing my mind to be so crowded that I lose sight of Your greater purposes, and fail to fit in with Your plans. Please help me to reform my priorities so that my mind is always clear to speak with you and content to await Your answers. For Your glory's sake. Amen.*

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## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

### **WHEN WRONG IS COVERED OVER**

**1 Peter 4:8** *Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. (NIV)*

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and many other languages*

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[Ps 32:1](#) and [Rom 4:7](#) both say "Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered." The expression 'covering' sins recognises that our sins are permanent statements of our rebellion against God. They do not evaporate with time, or lose their significance as we do more good things. If we should try to cover up our sins, God sees and knows (cf [Prov 28:13a](#)). But if we confess our sins, and abandon our wicked ways, God will have mercy (cf [Prov 28:13b](#) and [1 John 1:9](#)).

The Bible tells us that those who trust in the sacrifice of Jesus, have their sins 'paid in full'. Although God cannot forget anything, even our sins; He then chooses not to remember them (cf [Heb 10:17](#)) and therefore our sins do not count against us. The record of our debt to God is cancelled and blotted out. As with any debt, when it is paid off, the debt is covered and we are free. So although we remain sinners, we are made holy by the blood of Jesus, saved by His grace.

It is the same way with those who sin against us. Their sin still stands, but we can choose to cover their sin, refuse to bring it to mind and not demand anything from them in compensation - that is love in action. The word 'deeply' refers to the taut muscles of runners who are determined to win. It takes a lot to love sinners like that, but it is the Jesus-way; it certainly cost Him, and it will cost us. Of course, where there is no repentance there can be no reconciliation, but we may trust that our love may lead people to repent and be reconciled with us; as Christ's love has brought us to repentance and back into relationship with Him.

**Prayer:** *Dear Father God. Thank You for Your grace to sinners, that all who admit their sins and trust in Jesus will be set free from the guilt and burden of their wrongdoing. Help me to fully appreciate what it cost You to do this for me; and help me to consider the need to forgive those who sin against me. Give me the strength to love them with an intensity which hides their sins from my sight, and opens the way for their repentance and reconciliation. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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**THE MARK OF HOSPITALITY**

**1 Peter 4:9** Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. (NIV)

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

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This email devotional will be received in 169 countries today. Each nation has its distinctive culture, and some have multiple sub-cultures. For many, but by no means all, hospitality is an important component of social life as it was in Bible times. So why does Peter urge his readers to welcome others into their homes, to provide generously for them and to go out of their way to make them welcome. A clue to the answer is in two words, 'offer' and 'grumbling'.

Where people are expected to open their homes to family, friends of family, customers and passing travellers - the motivation is social duty and obligation. There is no choice in the matter, or opportunity to refuse. However the opportunity to resent the intrusion may be reinforced with every knock on the door (or Skype call!). But Peter says that we should be proactive to offer a welcome, not only to family but to strangers also (cf [Heb 13:2](#)). Because it is a part of our Saviour's heart to welcome the stranger and to seek out the lost.

Grumbling is the slow burning fuse of resentment which is difficult to extinguish. It comes from a self-centred mind-set and produces a sourness of heart and an inability to share the gospel. It was the fatal characteristic of the Israelites in the wilderness (cf [1 Cor 10:1-10](#)). Their grumbling made them unable to receive the Lord's wise guidance (because they thought they knew best), and disqualified them from their inheritance. And [James 5:9](#) says that grumbling against other believers is a serious spiritual offence. But, freely offered hospitality is the mark of the Christian who is working with God, to bless the believers and to welcome in the strangers ... all because He has already done that for us.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord God. Thank you for reaching out to find me and for welcoming me into Your kingdom when I did not deserve any of Your kindness. Help me to show my gratitude to You by welcoming those who You send, and reaching out to those who are lost. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

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**W@W1Pet56**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

### **USEFUL DISCIPLESHIP**

**1 Peter 4:10** *Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. (NIV)*

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and many other languages*

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There are many sad sights in this world. Abandoned vehicles and empty buildings invite the thought, "What a waste!" Worse still are the homeless and hungry who sit without purpose day after day; or the addicts who live only to feed their habit. Although we rejoice to see many Christian ministries giving such people love and hope; there might be an even greater shameful waste within the church. Every person who has been born-again by God's Spirit has been special gifts/abilities to serve others in this sick world through God's power. If those gifts are ignored, unused or squandered on self-interest - what a tragedy!

We have been given gifts but have we received them? A gift is properly received when we gladly accept the abilities God has given, and thank Him for them. Part of the function of the local church is to help every member to recognise the gifts they have been given, and encourage the use of these gifts. The Bible identifies many gifts in at least five main passages ([Rom 12:3-8](#); [1 Cor 12:4-11, 28-30](#); [2 Cor 8:7-8](#); [Eph 4:11-13](#); [1 Peter 4:9-11](#)). These gifts range from preaching and praying, to hospitality and helping. Nobody has all the gifts, and no gift is insignificant (cf [1 Cor 12:12-26](#)), because every gift is God's provision for bringing His grace to an aching world.

So it should be a priority for every follower of Jesus to find out which gifts they have been given: then to give thanks and receive them as a part of God's equipping, and ask Him to see the opportunities to use them! Then do it! Anything less is a waste of the most significant resources God has given to the world. As we seek to become more like Jesus, so the evidence of His Spirit's presence will develop in our lives (cf [Gal 5:22-23](#)), and we will learn to serve others for Godly reasons. Do not be troubled about how other believers serve the Lord. They have their gifts, and you have yours - each gift has its own function: just be sure that you are using yours ... to His glory.

**Prayer:** *Almighty God. Thank you for having given to me particular abilities to serve other people with Your grace. Help me to welcome, with thankfulness, all You have given. And help me to be diligent in using Your gifts, so that the love of Christ may be understood by others as I minister to them. Help me to be alert to use Your gifts in cooperation with You - at home and at work, in the community and in the church. I want to be a blessing; please give me the desire and discipline to obey. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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**W@W1Pet57**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

### **DIVINELY POWERED FOR GOD'S GLORY**

**1 Peter 4:11** *If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen. (NIV)*

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and many other languages*

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Every follower of Jesus, born-again by His Spirit, has been given special abilities to bring God's truth and love to a sin-sick world. These gifts are given by God, to achieve His purposes through His amazing power. These are God's instruments for spiritual surgery, to bring wholeness to shattered people. But like any surgical instrument, they are tools and not toys. Tools, when correctly used, achieve a specific purpose; but toys are playthings, to amuse the pleasure seeker. Alas, Christians can treat God's gifts as toys, dulling their proper use, despising God's intentions and frustrating His plans.

So those who are gifted with 'word gifts' (such as evangelism, preaching/prophecy, teaching, words of knowledge, and tongues), are at risk of stealing God's glory by using them as opportunities for personal power. Peter says that such people need to be conscious that God wants to use their mouth for His purpose, and not theirs. Those with practical gifts should also commit their use to God - so that His strength is evident and His work done; and not their ego boosted. All these gifts are given with the same intention, that grateful people will praise God (cf [Matt 5:16](#)) because their lives are transformed.

One day, every knee will bow to Jesus Christ because everybody will have to admit that He is supreme (cf [Phil 2:9-11](#)). Until then, Christians are supposed to understand this truth and practice submitting everything to Him (cf [Phil 2:5-8](#)). As they do so, others will see how great and glorious God is: and they will have the opportunity to submit to his grace also. As someone has said, "The only gospel that others can see is the gospel according to you and to me"! If we use God's gifts for His glory, He will do amazing things in bringing transforming grace to the hearts and homes of our friends and colleagues.

**Prayer:** *Lord God. Forgive me for my wicked selfishness when I have used Your sacred gifts to advance my name and status, prosperity and power; instead of Yours. Help me to honour the privilege You have given to me in supplying these gifts, and help me to be conscious of the importance of using them so that everybody can see how great You are. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*

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**W@W1Pet58**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

### **NORMAL CHRISTIANITY**

**1 Peter 4:12** *Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. (NIV)*

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and many other languages*

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You would think that the display of God's kindness through the faithful service of His people (cf [1 Peter 4:7-11](#)) would stimulate gratitude and praise to God. Certainly that is His intention (cf [1 Peter 4:11b](#)). But Satan, manipulating people to oppose God's plan, has a totally different objective. Because godly Christians are the best advertisement for Jesus the Saviour, the devil wants to neutralise their impact. Persecution of many kinds and personal harassment are the usual tactics to stop Christians being open about Jesus.

Peter says, that we should not get upset or think that we have gone against God's plan ... or that suffering is abnormal for followers of Jesus. Certainly, it is not nice, but it is not abnormal; it should be expected at some stage in our Christian lives. When it comes (and of course we need to distinguish trouble for the sake of Christ from distress resulting from our own sins, see [1 Peter 4:15](#)), we should see it as a normal part of being identified with the Jesus who suffered at the hands of sinners. Therefore we must not lose heart (cf [Heb 12:3](#)).

If we do not recognise the attacks as being against the Body of Jesus, of which we are a part, we will become discouraged; we will be tempted to stop using the spiritual gifts we have been given. Of course, our persecutors will not understand that they are being stirred to wickedness by the Wicked One; they will just be possessed by an appetite to get at us; yet they will not be satisfied even if we cower before them. So Peter's instruction is helpful. When people turn against us because they refuse to turn to Jesus, remember it is normal. It is simply because we remind them of Jesus. So don't stop serving the Lord even when it gets tough.

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father. Thank You for knowing and understanding my pain when people resent me because they are resisting Jesus. Please help me to understand that many other Jesus-followers around the world are also suffering. Help me to pray for them and to realise that my situation is not unique. Strengthen me, through Your Word and by Your Spirit, not to give up; nor to abandon my service. And may You be glorified, even in my suffering. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*

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**W@W1Pet59**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

### **PAIN KILLERS**

**1 Peter 4:13** *But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. (NIV)*

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and many other languages*

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Some have said that the antidote to the pain of suffering (for the sake of Christ), is prayer. And, depending on what they mean, that is helpful. But so often we base our prayer on a desire to be released from the distress. But as with any pain, the more you focus on it, the worse it feels. True prayer is centred on our Lord and Saviour, in worship and there is a carrier-wave of praise throughout. True prayer recognises the joy ahead of us, and therefore the need to reject feelings of shamefulness which suffering brings. That was how Jesus endured His sufferings (cf [Heb 12:2](#)).

Many sporting people, playing hard with their team, will not even notice some injuries; nor will soldiers in combat. The reason is that, provided they are still able to function, the goal of winning is greater than the pain of getting there. But for the Christian, there is another motivation. The Lord Jesus suffered, and our painful experiences are like an after-shock of the cross. Our pain cannot save us or others, but it helps us to identify with our Lord and also to know that He really can sympathise with our situation (cf [Heb 4:15](#)).

Of course, Satan uses pain to tell the lie that it marks the end; and therefore is to be feared and resisted. Childbirth may feel like that at times, but there is also the prospect of new life and joy ahead. It is the same way for Christians. The anticipation of eternal joy puts today's sorrows into perspective (cf [2 Cor 4:17](#)). The well-taught believer will learn to focus on the permanent joys of God's eternal presence to come. In striving to complete the Christian life in good order, straining forwards to please the Lord (cf [Phil 3:13-14](#)), the pain is dulled by praising Him today, in the anticipation of participating in His glory when He comes.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord. I do not like the painful experiences of rejection that come because I trust in You. But I know that I should praise you for who You are, and for the high calling I have received. It is a privilege to have a little share in the suffering that Jesus experienced when He was rejected. Help me not to hate those who turn on me, but to pray for them, as Jesus did, and desire that they may also share your glory; as they turn to you in repentance and faith. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*

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**W@W1Pet60**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

### **BLESSINGS WITH A DIFFERENCE**

**1 Peter 4:14** *If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. (NIV)*

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and many other languages*

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Most Christians assume that blessings are like candy sticks: sweet, long lasting and satisfying. In a way they are, but blessings are more than that. A blessing is a spoken promise of good things to come. Yes, such a proclamation will bring immediate joy, but it is the joy of promise and not yet the greater joy of fulfilment. When God speaks blessings over those who are obedient, we may be confidently joyful now as we anticipate the greater tomorrow.

But what about the malicious words of those who are resisting the grace of God, and despise us for being followers of Jesus; surely that cannot be a blessing? But in a way they are, because if anybody accuses you of belonging to Christ, they have announced your destiny, an inheritor of the Kingdom of heaven (cf [Matt 5:10](#))! You also have the blessing of Jesus (cf [Matt 5:11-12](#)) with its promise of eternal reward. In addition, there is the Father's blessing (cf [Matt 10:32](#)) and the Holy Spirit's blessing (cf [John 16:12-15](#)) speaking of what is to come.

So the paradox is that when the Jesus-resisters speak evil of your association with Christ, they are actually pronouncing a blessing that is confirmed by God, Father Son and Holy Spirit. The promise of God's blessing should be a great encouragement in the hard times. It looks to a reward that the world cannot take away (cf [Jn 16:22](#)). So, do not fear those who speak badly of you because of Jesus; pray for them (cf [Luke 6:28](#)) because [Matt 10:33](#) says, "*But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.*" This may really help you to listen to insults with God's ear, and to win for Christ, those who want you to lose.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord God. How I need to revise my views about those who make my life a misery because I belong to You. Help me to hear Your commendation as they accuse me of loving Jesus. May I accept that Your blessing is upon me as I am ridiculed for my faith; and help me to believe that you will fulfil every promise to those who love You. Keep me true and faithful to You; and prayerful for those who as yet cannot yet see Your love, and who do not fear Your wrath. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*

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