

W@WPhil1

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THE CAST

Phil. 1:1-2 *Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (NIV)*

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

Email headers have the helpful habit of identifying all the people who are involved in the communication. Greek letters were like that too. This is especially helpful for us because, like all good stories, every book of the Bible encourages us to identify with some of the characters, and to compare/contrast their reactions to God with our own. In a play it would be called a cast list, but this letter is no fictional fantasy; all the 'players' are living for real ... which is why we need to pay good attention to how they relate to God, because He wants to relate with us too.

Paul is writing under house arrest in Rome, where Timothy was his companion and assistant in gospel ministry to the many people who visited him. They knew that they were there because the Lord had brought them to share the gospel in the centre of the Roman Empire (cf [Acts 23:11](#)). They were servants of the Lord and of the gospel message (cf [Eph 3:7](#)). The first church in Europe (at Philippi), had generously provided funds and resources to help Paul's missionary activities; their willing self-sacrifice meant a lot to Paul (cf [2 Cor 8:1-5](#)). Their leaders were truly servant hearted and Paul felt great warmth of affection for them and the whole church.

Paul is writing to encourage this church - they would go through hard times too. The opening sentences are more than just a traditional greeting: Paul wanted them to lift their eyes above horizon of their circumstances to the grace of God, and the peace that comes from being in good relationship with Him. The Lord Jesus Christ was not only the Christians' example of a life of grace and peace, but the only person who can give us these gifts and help us to live like Him. Without them we can have no confidence of total security in Christ. But if we do have that confidence, going to work becomes a whole new world, doesn't it?

Prayer: *Heavenly Father. Thank you that you have not left me to work my way through life by myself. Thank you for fellow believers and Christian leaders whose example and encouragement have already helped me to keep going in difficult circumstances. May I look to You above all, to receive your grace day by day so that I may live in the peace which comes from knowing that I am secure in Christ; and also to encourage others in my workplace to do the same. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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W@WPhil2

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GOD'S FAMILY AT WORK

Phil. 1:3-5 *I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, (NIV)*

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

Family relationships are, or should be, the strong girders around which society is built. In a way, gospel-friends are even more significant because they enable the growth of the church. They are not just acquaintances; they are blood relatives in a dynasty that will never die! The blood belonged to Jesus Christ, whose sacrifice brought us into His family, making us brothers and sisters with Him. No wonder that Paul was thankful for the believers in Philippi. His house arrest (probably in Rome) was made easier when he remembered the love of his spiritual family.

Of course he prayed for them, God had used them to provide for his physical needs, and their prayers had sustained him. Every memory of them was a cause for joy. But it was more than that. They were not only family but also co-workers in the gospel. They had become followers of Jesus because they believed the gospel, and their joy led them to support the missionaries in the best way possible: they played a full part in sharing the gospel and suffering for what they believed and taught. Paul knew that they would really understand his situation ... and he really understood what they were going through too.

That was why he was writing. They needed encouragement to keep going; by the apostle's prayers, the teaching they had already received, and through this letter which was a reminder that God's love and power for them was undiminished. Gospel partnership is often seen at its best in the tough times - as this letter will go on to unpack. But for now, we (like the Philippians) might reflect on those who have taught the Word to us and supported us, so that we can go out of our way to encourage them. If we have started living by faith in Jesus, we need to finish well! So pray for fellow Christians, maybe start a workplace prayer group: find ways to work with them in sharing the gospel, in the workplace as well as in church.

Prayer: *Dear Lord. I am truly grateful for those who have taught me Your Word, and who have taken the time and trouble to disciple me and encourage me to keep going as a Christian. Please show me how I can encourage them; and also help me to work and pray with other believers in my workplace as well as in church. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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COMPLETION ASSURED

Phil. 1:6 ... being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. (NIV)

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

When we have done something successfully before, we might be confident to do it again. But when the job, journey, relationship or study course is new, how do we know that we will be able to carry on to the end. That uncertainty is magnified when we have previously experienced difficulty or failure. Paul had suffered persecution and is writing from prison to new believers who are also facing opposition. None of them knows what each day will bring. But Paul wants to reassure them that, in Christ, he is sure that they will complete God's assignment for them.

Such confidence may appear at odds with their circumstances, with their assessment of their own ability to cope and with their internal feelings. And indeed, if those were the only factors determining the outcome of their faith, they would all fail. So would all of us. Although many try to live religiously by a set of rules, none succeed in satisfying their own consciences, let alone God's standard. But true faith in Jesus does not work like that. Faith does not start because we have a bright idea; we can only begin to believe in Jesus because God speaks to us, convicts us of sin and helps our early steps of faith (see www.crosscheck.org.uk to know more). After that, every covering-over of sin is by His mercy, and every blessing is through His grace. Every day we can receive grace to help us in our time of need (cf [Heb 4:16](#)).

You see, God has been at work in us all the time: will He drop us now? Of course not! He has invested so much in us; He is not going to abandon us when things get tough. And we are not just an investment; we are His children - that should give us even more reason for being confident that He will not forsake us. Jesus is looking forward to the day when He will be physically recognised by all the people who have trusted Him, even though they have never seen Him (cf [John 20:29](#)). Of course He will keep on working in our hearts to get us ready for that great event, and the whole of eternity to come. So be encouraged! The Lord is at work; and He is working in your friends and colleagues who trust Him too. Why not encourage them and find time to pray together, giving thanks that your future is secure in God's hands.

Prayer: *Father God. Thank You for all that you have invested in me, and that you never abandon Your children. Help me to grow in confidence that You will complete the work You have started in me. And help me to see the priority of encouraging my believing friends and colleagues to trust that You do know what You are doing in their lives. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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BOUND IN A COMMON PURPOSE

Phil. 1:7-8 *It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. (NIV)*

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

Real love does not stop when difficulties arise. Despite Paul's pain at being separated from the church that had supported Him the most, the first beacon of gospel light in Europe; he did not forget them. They were not just yesterday's convenience, the means of support for the apostle and his missionary team. They were bound to his heart like blood brothers or comrades in arms.

Paul understood Christian love, because he practiced it. It was etched onto his heart, and fuelled his prayer. He knew that they had given sacrificially, not just because they liked Paul, but because the gospel message he brought had transformed their lives. They wanted to be all-out for Jesus. So they expressed their gratitude by supporting the team who brought the gospel to them. That was not charity, nor pity, but a full-hearted expression for their love and thanks for all that the Lord had done for them through the apostolic team.

Such an attitude was part of God's comfort to Paul. But more than that; it was a token that they would continue the gospel work in their area even if Paul was martyred. And that was what mattered to Paul. He knew that the gospel was God's special tool to bring salvation to the world, and he was confident of that value being embedded in the church at Philippi: so that even if he was killed, they would carry on.

Have you ever thought that whatever you have received of God's grace has involved faithful people who told the gospel to you, led you to Christ and disciplined you. A good question might be, how have you shown your love to them? Has it been all 'take' and no 'give'? They may have sacrificed much for the Lord's sake and the gospel's. What encouragement will you bring to help them continue in ministry until their work is done?.

Prayer: *Generous God. You have shown your love to me in so many ways, through the words and kindness of Your servants. Help me to be grateful for them and to hold them high in my heart. I am truly grateful for their ministry to me, and their love which was probably far more sacrificial than I will ever know. Lead me to show that gratitude in ways which will demonstrate my solidarity in the cause of the gospel. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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LOVE THAT BUILDS

Phil. 1:9-11 *And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ--to the glory and praise of God. (NIV)*

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

Sentimental feelings and nice emotions can be described as love, but they are neither the essence of love nor its purpose. True love only works when it is rooted in a full and clear understanding of the facts. Without knowing what is true, the power of love will become misdirected and fail to achieve its objective - the glorious up-building of somebody else. And this is especially necessary, when it comes to loving somebody as special as God.

Paul loved the people in the Philippian church. They received the gospel, surrendered to Christ and became partners in the missionary work. But they were still 'work in progress'. Their love for the Lord had to be informed by knowing what pleases Him, if they were to make decisions which fulfilled His purpose. And so Paul's prayer is that their love will become hungry to know more of God, and His purposes.

However, there are many competing ideas which circulate in a secular world, seeking to invade the Christian's mind. So followers of Jesus have to test the purity of each thought and impulse against God's 'gold standard'. When we do that, our lives will become full of what is right; they will also become transforming influences for others, and a glory to God both today and when He returns. That is a very big aspiration, but the way to start is to pray: pray these things for yourself, and pray them for others too. As we pray, God works in our hearts to change us from the inside. He also helps us to make the sort of decisions which please Him. This is especially valuable at work. If you have a workplace Christian prayer group, do join in. God's power is unlimited and when we ask him to act, just see what He will do.

Prayer: *Faithful God. Thank You for hearing my prayers, and the prayers of others for me. Help me to learn how to pray with confidence that You will act in the lives of my fellow believers at work and home; and also that you will even hear my prayers for those do not know You as yet. Please help me to recognise the opportunities You send to pray with others who love Jesus, and to make it a priority to join with them. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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OPPOSITION BUILDS OPPORTUNITIES

Phil. 1:12-14 *Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly. (NIV)*

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

The Christian life is no fairytale of undiluted bliss! Problems do come, and they are usually bigger than we want to deal with. So, when difficulties arise, we usually pray for them to be removed. That is natural and even the Apostle Paul prayed like that (cf [2 Cor 12:8](#)). Sometimes God answers our prayer, but sometimes He allows the problems to remain for a purpose. Paul found that out too: [2 Cor 12:9](#) says, "But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."

Today's verses give an example of how the power of Jesus Christ worked through Paul during his time in prison. Far from extinguishing the gospel light, it was burning even more brightly. There was no disguising the fact that Paul, who was a Roman citizen, had committed no crime and was only on remand because he preached about Jesus. Even the guards were curious to find out more; and the local believers in the city found that people were really interested to discover more about Jesus. The reputation of the Lord Jesus Christ had spread like wildfire, and most of the people in the church were glad to answer questions from inquisitive city folk in Rome.

So Paul wanted to encourage the Philippians, that opposition against Jesus actually builds opportunities for the gospel. The issue is not, 'am I safe?' but, 'will the gospel reach more people, so that they may be saved?'. That principle has fired missionary movements for 2000 years; it has given courage to the oppressed and new life to their former oppressors. It may be like that in your office or factory, school or hospital, farm or oilfield. This Word is designed to encourage us not to stop witnessing when the problems come, but to be ready to explain why Jesus is Lord. So, pray with believing colleagues and friends, that you will see and seize the gospel opportunities in every difficulty.

Prayer: *All-knowing God. Thank you for the problems which you allow to come my way, because I know that You intend good to come from it, and especially that the gospel will be heard. Help me to encourage my Christian friends to see these truths, to work with them in sharing the truth about Jesus and to pray with them for Your kingdom to come. Through Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.*

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MIXED MOTIVES IN MINISTRY

Phil. 1:15-18a *It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defence of the gospel. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. (NIV)*

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

It is strange that some of God's people can pretend to love while practicing hate, and even stranger that God might use them. Paul's imprisonment in Rome had opened a whole new debate about Jesus. Not only did it provide the church with new opportunities in personal witnessing, but Christians who were gifted to speak publically found a new platform before an eager audience. Although some identified themselves with the Apostle Paul and spoke out in support of him, others appeared to forget their spiritual family roots: they tried to compete against Paul, who experienced a bizarre hatred from such preachers.

It seems that they wanted to make themselves look bigger or more spiritual than the Apostle, or were trying to avoid being put in the same prison. In order to gain validity for their ministry, they denigrated his. To Paul, the contrast between those with wholesome motives, and those who were seeded with envy, was so great. But greater still was the unique power in the gospel itself. For the Apostle, the most important thing was that the truth about Jesus had to be released. Even the negative publicity Paul received from some preachers just drew attention to the fact that he was in prison because he preached about the living Jesus.

Obviously Paul would have preferred to have been supported (and he certainly did not commend his detractors), but he understood that his ministry was not to promote himself ... it was all about promoting Jesus. And Jesus is promoted when the gospel is preached, even by people whose motives are clearly wrong. So, although Paul could not enjoy fellowship with them and suffered from their slander he was glad that more people were hearing about how to find salvation. Perhaps this principle may help in dealing with people, at work or church, who speak about Jesus with wrong motives. Rejoice whenever Christ is promoted!

Prayer: *Dear Lord. Thank You for the gospel through which I came to know You. Help me to bear with the folly of those who use the gospel to promote themselves, but to pray that people will come to know the truth about Jesus, wherever He is preached. For Your glory's sake. Amen.*

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CONFIDENCE AND REALISM

Phil. 1:18b-20 *Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. (NIV)*

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

Paul is suffering in prison. Although he rejoices that his circumstances have provoked a much wider public debate about Jesus, he is not passive and waiting for the end - as a condemned man. He wants to be released in order to get on with his gospel ministry. But rather than pining wistfully for a better tomorrow, he is rejoicing in all that God is already doing each day. Yet, at the same time, he knows the church in Philippi have been praying for him, and the Holy Spirit has given him confidence that he will be released.

But Paul knows that the immediate future may be difficult; he will need courage to keep standing up for Jesus. And he does not 'put his head in the sand'; he is a realist and knows that death could come at any time. The prospect of fighting with lions was a real possibility, and if that was to be his end, he did not want to disgrace the Lord in his last moments. So Paul is both an optimist, knowing that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him ([Rom 8:28](#)), and a realist. He was confident that prayer would be answered, but also confident that God would give him courage whatever the circumstances. Some might say that he was not fully trusting. He was! But his faith was in the Lord, to give strength for whatever might come; rather than faith in one specific outcome.

Lots of believers get muddled about this. They think that anything less than 100% certainty that something will happen is doubt, and therefore God will not answer. No, faith is in a person and not an event. We trust in the wisdom and kindness of the Lord, trusting that He will only allow what is for our good and His glory. When faith is fixed on a specific solution, it will lose its credibility when God has other ideas. Neither can we force God to do what we want, despite many people praying and encouragements from the Holy Spirit. The key to faith is to present our needs and desires to the Lord, and then trust Him to provide the right outcome. Perhaps a colleague or friend in trouble might be helped by this reading; why not share it?

Prayer: *Dear Lord. Thank You for Paul's wise understanding of how to relate to You in faith. Help me to be both realistic as to the possibilities and yet confident in Your loving mercy to me and Your unseen plans to use my circumstances for Your glory. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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ANTICIPATING LIFE AND DEATH

Phil. 1:21-24 *For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. (NIV)*

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

Persecution brings a mixture of thoughts about the future. Suffering's worst fear is that everything will be lost at death, and its worst delusion is that nothing in life is worthwhile any more. The Apostle Paul robustly contradicts both. He says that for the follower of Jesus, it is a win-win situation: until death we have the constant presence, provision and protection of Christ; and after death there is so much more of Him, and all the glory to come. Before our life is taken, we are here to work for the Lord, and even when death ends that period of ministry, our life with Christ can never be taken away.

If Paul had to make a choice for himself about living or dying a martyr (and none of us can, because neither we nor others have been given the right to decide our lifespan: our times are in God's hands - see [Ps 31:15](#)) he is almost unable to decide. Both this life and the afterlife are wonderful privileges for those who follow Jesus. But Paul knows that he is not the only person involved. Others depend on him. God had given Paul the responsibility to preach the gospel and build up the churches; and he had no evidence that the job had been completed. So, he concluded that it was better to stay and serve.

Hard times often encourage us to hope for a way out of the uncertainty for our own sakes. Although it is not wrong to seek God's blessings for ourselves, we are not just here for ourselves. Paul is clear about his obligation to serve others for the Lord's sake. Service for Christ will bring suffering in some way or another, but that is no reason to shrink back: Jesus didn't (cf [Heb 12:2-3](#)). So we may well need these verses to strengthen our resolve; or to help others who need the steadying effect of God's Word, when they feel tossed about by their circumstances.

Prayer: *Dear Lord. Thank You for not giving me the right to decide my future; that secret is safest in Your hands. Please help me to realise that You have set me in this world to serve others for Your sake, and that You will continue to give me the strength to do that each day. Give me wisdom to know how to help friends and colleagues at work as they go through hard times; may I point them to the Lord Jesus and seek their blessing in His Name. Amen.*

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W@WPhil10

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WORKING TO WIN

Phil. 1:25-26 *Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me. (NIV)*

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

Confident realism marked Paul's view of his uncertain future (cf [Phil 1:12-24](#)). He was not afraid to look at the worst, as well as the best, of what might come (in human terms); he was settled that whatever God allows is safe. Neither life nor death frightened him because Christ is central in both. However, Paul knew there was much work still to do. While not discounting the possibility that the Lord may call him home, he had been encouraged by the Holy Spirit to anticipate more gospel ministry.

Paul longed for the church to grow in Christ, and to enjoy their partnership in the gospel (cf [Phil 1:4-5](#)) once more. But, interestingly, he does not minimise the potential effect of his own ministry, out of some false modesty. He fully expects that God will work through him - and he wants to be part of God's answer to their spiritual need, producing progress in their faith and overflowing joy in the Lord Jesus.

This was no arrogant claim based on personal ego: it was born out of a proper understanding of the nature of ministry. When God calls His servants, He expects them to produce spiritual results. Because of this, the Apostle wrote in [Col. 1:28-29](#), "*We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labour, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me*".

Christians, who have no expectation that their labour for God will make a difference, have missed the point of ministry. Faithfulness is essential, but without a conviction that gospel ministry will radically transform hearts and lives, it is incomplete. We must not let yesterday's disappointments or today's discouragements become a prescription for ineffective ministry. Yes, the final results are all of God, but the work is in our hands: unless we are convinced that the Lord has called us to work with Him, we will be half hearted or give up. So be encouraged to keep working and keep expecting God to bring in the harvest (cf [1 Thess 5:11](#)). And encourage another believer too; look out for your opportunity today!

Prayer: *Dear Lord. I do not feel worthy to work with You, and am often disappointed in myself, but thank You for choosing me to be Your servant. Please reset my mind with the confidence that You will provide all the resources so that I will be fruitful in everything You have given me to do. Through Jesus Christ. Amen.*

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LIVING OUT FAITH TOGETHER

Phil. 1:27-28 *Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved--and that by God. (NIV)*

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

True Christian faith produces action. The gospel is not just a nice story, it is a call to radical change of personal life and interaction with others. Lifestyle matters to God: the gospel calls us to reject ungodly behaviour, control our worldly passions and live to honour our Redeemer (cf [Titus 2:11-14](#)). The role of spiritual overseers is to remind those who believe in Jesus, to live knowing that Jesus is present (because we keep forgetting and drifting). Whenever believers get diverted away from gospel priorities, they become vulnerable to other voices from the world, flesh and devil, and are easily diverted away from practising their faith in Christ.

Aesop's famous quote, "United we stand, divided we fall" is an accurate description of the danger of independence. Temptation and persecution are hard to resist by ourselves, but the prayer support and accountability to other Christians help us to stand for Christ. Of course, it is impossible for some believers to go to church, but they can join with others through media such as Word@Work - with its encouragement to meet with Christians in the workplace or on [Facebook](#). Without fellowship and preferably joint witness (such as through a church or workplace Bible/prayer group), every believer will be easy prey for spiritual attack; and the fear which will override faith.

But when followers of Jesus worship, study, pray and witness together, something special happens. Not only are individuals encouraged to trust the Lord and not be frightened; but the quiet confidence of the Christian group (in a college or workplace) starts to be noticed. When they speak of Christ, they can support each other and reinforce the potency of the message. Those who ridicule Jesus and oppose the cross, will start thinking again when they see their mean derision fail. Indeed, the settled assurance which should radiate from believers reveals that they march to the beat of a different drummer, and clearly see a farther horizon. Those who know Jesus are certain that He is their accompanying light through every dark tunnel: and that confidence is a serious challenge to those who reject Him.

Prayer: *Faithful Father God. Thank You for not leaving me alone, but giving me Your Holy Spirit, Your Word and Your people to walk with me through life. Help me to seek out those who love You, to support their witness and encourage their godliness in life. And help me to be accountable to those who Pastor me; and to encourage them in their ministry too. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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W@WPhil12

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SUFFERING BY APPOINTMENT

Phil. 1:29-30 *For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have. (NIV)*

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

Paul has just spent 16 verses (see [Phil 1:12-28](#)) explaining his personal reaction to suffering for the sake of Christ. Now, in conclusion, he gently stated that suffering is as integral a part of following Jesus, as believing in Him. The word 'granted' means 'given freely as a favour!' Clearly this is true about our ability to trust the gospel and to respond in repentance and faith - it is a definition of grace. But to apply that same idea to suffering might take us by surprise.

Paul knows that his own experience of suffering, and that of the Philippian church, were not identical in the actions taken against them by unbelievers; but the principle was the same. Jesus first spelled it out: "*If the world hates you, bear in mind that it hated me first*" ([John 15:18](#)). That has been the experience of the church through the ages too. So true faith, in the Saviour of the world who was rejected by the world He came to save, will also bring the rejection to us. But why is this rejection a gift to receive, or even an appointment to keep?

It is all to do with standing together. When we stand with Jesus, what comes to Him comes to us; which is why we must take up our cross daily (see [Luke 9:23](#)). It also means that, one day, He will share his glory with us. But it must be a package: the cross always precedes the crown. If we are not willing to die to our old life, why should He grant us glory? But if we endure the suffering He allows ('suffering' is an old English word that means 'allowing') we shall also reign with Him (see [2 Tim 2:12](#)).

So whatever the Lord allows is a privileged gift; because it enables us to have the joy of relying on His grace. As we endure, it shows that He stands by us as we stand by Him. There is no need to fear, only to praise! When Paul and Silas were in prison in Philippi, they prayed and sang praise because they felt the privilege of being identified with Jesus (see [Acts 16:25-28](#)). So, when you are under pressure because you are seen as Christ's representative, give thanks; and then trust Him to bring about a glorious outcome.

Prayer: *Dear Lord. Thank You for suffering for me, and enabling me to receive Your grace. Help me to stand with You, even when that involves suffering, because I know that it is such a privilege to be counted as Your representative. And may I perform my role to Your glory. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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OUTPUT MATCHED TO INPUT

Phil. 2:1-2 *If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. (NIV)*

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

If somebody asked you, "What difference does belonging to Jesus Christ make to your life?" how would you answer? Paul asks the same question to the church in Philippi; but helps them with some suggestions. He wants them to consider if their Christian faith has brought them any encouragement, comfort, fellowship or kindness. He is not asking if they never have weakness, disappointments or even personal threats or violence; but have they known God's presence and power? The way the question is framed in Greek presumes that they have. Even though hardship or persecution brings new daily challenges, we know that God's mercies are renewed every day (see [Lam 3:19-27](#)).

So, how should we react when the Lord focuses His tender love to strengthen our frail humanness? Of course we should give thanks, and express our praise. But there is more: when we were brought into God's family, we acquired many other brothers and sisters too. If our unity with Christ is real, it ought to be matched by a united outlook in the church; if we have the Holy Spirit, we ought to enjoy loving fellowship with others who are also marked by the Spirit; if God is gently remaking our broken lives, we should be working with other believers so that Christ's rule and blessing will come to our community, colleges and workplace.

Human relationships are designed to mirror our relationship with God: indeed we have no other perfect role model. That is why broken fellowship is as painful as when a broken marriage. False motives and empty promises are useless to mend the relationship; but godly sorrow, repentance and humble love are God's way. However, prevention is much better than cure. If you are with believers, invest in them through praying, giving and serving in love. Share with them in gospel outreach and support each other's witness. Do not allow yourself to become an isolated follower of Jesus; pray and receive God's Word together, so that you may all become stronger in faith and more useful to the Lord.

Prayer: *Dear Lord. Thank You for the blessing You have brought into my life, and for the way in which You have been transforming my heart. Please enable me to encourage other believers, as you have strengthened me; and to find purposeful fellowship with those who follow Jesus wherever I encounter them, and especially in my workplace. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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THE ATTITUDE OF CHRIST

Phil. 2:3-5 *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: (NIV)*

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

Attitude is not a private thing. It is always displayed by external relationships. The 'attitude' of an aircraft describes how it lines up with the horizon, flight path or glide path. The 'attitude' of a ballet dancer is a classical position in which the body and legs are held in a particular position relative to each other. Personal attitude shows in a combination of body language and manner of speech when interacting with another individual or a group.

Although attitude is an observed end result, it is formed by deep desires. Selfishness, ambition, vanity and conceit are invisible, but they produce recognisable attitudes - none of which characterised the Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed the opposite was true; He demonstrated such a sacrificial love for others that He willingly submitted to crucifixion in order to atone for people's sins. That was the attitude which showed His deep desires and exposed our shallow pretence of niceness.

The world outside of Christ does not work like that. Have you seen the business where 'dog eats dog'; offices where people are frightened of being 'stabbed in the back'; friendships which last as long as people get what they want; and the sweet charade which masks a throbbing hatred? Needless to say, (but Paul thinks it is really necessary to say it), the followers of Jesus should never be like that. Indeed, the believer in the office, factory, farm, airport or theatre company should be identifiable by their attitude. And when Christians get together at work, their attitude of mutual caring, support and cheerful, hard-working endurance is a primary witness to the Christ-like love in their hearts. So, today might well be the time to ask the Lord to work His grace into your heart, so that the life of Christ might be seen where you live and work.

Prayer: *Gracious God. Thank you for all Your love for me, displayed in the attitude of the Lord Jesus. Please work in my heart to root out all those things that make me seek my own advantage at the expense of others, and give a deep desire to love others as You have loved me. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*

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THE MODEL OF HOLINESS

Phil. 2:5-7 *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. (NIV)*

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

If there was anyone who had the right to be treated as God, it was Jesus. But His attitude showed how the 'image of God' should really look in a human being. You may recall that the Holy Trinity created mankind in their image (see [Gen 1:26-27](#)), but after the fall, human nature was so spoiled that it was only fit for death. But Jesus was born as a human being without any of our inherent corruption; he had the undiluted nature of God. Therefore His attitude is the perfect model of what God intends us to be.

For Jesus, submission was not a sign of weakness, but of glad fellowship with the Father. He had no interest in boasting of his Divinity, because He was totally secure: He knew who He was. Jesus had no problem of pride in lowering Himself to touch lepers, teach social outcasts or go to the cross. Indeed, He willingly gave up the glory of heaven so that He could be born in a stable, live as a carpenter and then die to pay for our sins: and buy us back from the authority of Satan. So He had no need to make a name for Himself (He already knew that His Name had almighty power), nor did He grasp glory for Himself, but delighted in submitting and serving: because He loved Father God and the human race.

When a person is born again by God's Spirit (see [John 3:3-8](#)), he/she becomes a new creation (see [2 Cor 5:17](#)), with a new desire to be the person God had always intended us to be. Pride is to go out and submission is to come in. Grasping greatness should no longer rule the agenda, but willing service should become the norm. As we start to realise who we are in Christ, these attitude changes grow within us. When we understand that we are children of the Most High God, the saved and redeemed inheritors of heaven, worldly fame seems rather pathetic. The insecurity which drives us to self-assertion will only shrink away once we know how safe and treasured we are by God; as Christ knew in His relationship with the Father. Most of our attitude problems find their solution in knowing our identity; and only then we can serve joyfully in love. A few people like that at work or in the neighbourhood would make all the difference ... and you should be one of them!

Prayer: *Holy God. Thank you for the attitude of Jesus which revealed His total security. Help me to live today in the confidence that You have given me Your Spirit to assure me that I belong to You as a treasured child. May I live today with a fresh desire and gladness in serving others for Your sake. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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DEADLY DEMANDS

Phil. 2:8 *And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross! (NIV)*

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

Most people accept that Jesus was crucified. They may not understand the significance of this death, or think it has any personal relevance, but the historical evidence that the event took place is overwhelming. This verse gives an extraordinary insight into what happened to God the Son at Calvary. Although Jesus was God in a human body, He chose to place Himself under the curse which had afflicted mankind ever since the fall. He chose to do the one thing which eternal God cannot do ... to die.

But, extraordinarily, the verse says that He 'became obedient to death'. It was as if death itself was demanding His life: the inevitable consequence of accepting the liability for the sin of the world. But more accurately, Jesus was obeying God's law which says that the punishment for sin is death (see [Numbers 15:30-31](#), [Rom 3:23](#)). More specifically, He was obeying Father God's commission to be the Saviour of the world (see [1 John 4:14](#)). By this action, Jesus demonstrated the sort of obedience which stripped Him of every rightful advantage, and willingly accepted the shameful and degrading public crucifixion.

None of us can in any way atone for our own sins; leave alone the sins of others: Christ has done that for us. But the purpose of this verse is to remind us that, in Christ, our lives are not our own (see [1 Cor 6:19-20](#)). We have no right to cling onto our 'rights', but are obliged to accept every commission - even if it ends in death. The Apostle Paul fully expected that he would need to make that sacrifice (see [2 Tim 4:6](#)) and knew that many other believers would too (see [Phil 1:29](#)). With the prospect of martyrdom, the obedient example of Jesus Christ was the inspiration to remain steadfast until the end (see [1 Peter 5:9](#)). And suffering is inevitable if we follow Jesus (see [2 Tim 3:12](#)). As we endure, we show how closely we identify with our Saviour (see [Col 1:24](#)).

So keep your eyes on Jesus (see [Heb 12:2-3](#)) and keep being obedient to His will. If life is hard at home or work, know that it was harder for Him, but also that He knows how to bring justice in the end (see [2 Pet 2:9](#)). So encourage the other believers at work, on your travels and in the church. They may really need that strengthening support today.

Prayer: *Dear Lord. Thank You that Jesus was obedient in completing the cross-work of salvation for me. Help me to be obedient today so that I will endure suffering and fulfil Your purpose in my life. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*

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MASSIVE REVERSAL

Phil. 2:9-11 *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place, and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (NIV)*

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

The word 'therefore' refers back to [v5-8](#) in which the humble servanthood of Christ is the example for normal Christian behaviour. In His obedience to the Father's will, the cross came as no surprise, and neither did the glory which He was to receive. Jesus went from the lowest place, as the substitute for sinners, to the highest place as the supreme ruler of all creation.

The shame which surrounded Him on the cross was to be replaced by the Name of 'Almighty God' (see [Is 9:6](#)); and the stumbling journey to Calvary would be replaced by every human being bowing before Him. From being the victim of the "Crucify Him" cries, He is now awaiting the day when every voice will cry out that He is Lord. Such a mighty reversal was planned by God, and it was the reward for His obedience and endurance. Of course, Jesus could see through the cross to the crown which awaited Him (see [Heb 12:2-3](#)); and He knew that the ultimate shame was temporary. Nevertheless, He still had to endure all the agony; but not hopelessly. Instead He endured purposefully, both for our sakes, and for His.

Those who despise the Lord Jesus now will have a big shock when he returns in glory (see [Matt 24:30-31](#); [1 Thess 4:16-17](#)). On that day they will know that they were so wrong about Him, which is why worldly people will mourn (see [Rev 1:7](#)). But it will be a great day for those believers who have been downtrodden and despised because of their faith; for they will see the glorious future they will share with their Lord. So, be encouraged; in God's hand, big reversals of justice do happen ... it was like that for Jesus and it will be for all those who endure for His sake too.

Prayer: *Father God. Thank You for giving Jesus the highest place, and for promising that one day everybody will see Him as He is. I pray for my friends and colleagues who have not submitted to Him as yet: I ask that you will help me to be faithful to Jesus in my lifestyle and gospel proclamation so that they may gladly receive Him while there is still time, before it is too late. In Jesus Name. Amen.*

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WORKING TOGETHER WITH HIM

Phil. 2:12-13 *Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed--not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence--continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. (NIV)*

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

Obedience is important. It demonstrates the value you place on your commander as well as on the command. Paul, as an Apostle, had the right to command obedience to the gospel: Christians are not only to respond with joy at the knowledge of sins forgiven; but if they value Jesus and all that He has done, they should put everything into pleasing Him. The Philippian church had started well, while Paul was with them, and he has now heard good reports of their faithfulness to Christ: but they need to keep going, whatever the cost.

So Paul reminds them that they don't just follow Jesus out of habit or because they think it is a good idea; they are empowered by God Himself. It was the Holy Spirit who convicted them of sin, and helped them trust in Jesus, and he had continued to motivate their desires and strengthen their wills. Indeed, without this Divine help, none of us could sustain living as a believer. But we have to cooperate. We have to choose to shun all that God hates, and delight to do whatever God loves. Both God's enabling and our out-working is necessary for spiritual growth. It is similar to an athlete's coach who gives motivation and encourages discipline so that the technical training can produce medals: but the athlete has to cooperate and commit him/her self to following the coach's instructions, with every thought in their mind and muscle in their body (see [Col 1:29](#)).

So it is with us. However great your joy at starting the Christian race, you have to get to the finishing line. The same Jesus, who started you running, will meet you at the end (see [Heb 12:1](#)). He wants to be able to greet a winner who has overcome in his Name. So, start this day by remembering that He who calls you is faithful and He has the power to see you through (see [1 Thess 5:24](#)). But also remember that you personally have to walk through each day and work through each challenge to His praise and glory. Perhaps a friend or colleague might be encouraged by this reminder that we cannot live the Christian life alone, but neither can we be passive. Charles Spurgeon, the 19th Century English preacher said, "The Christian should work as if all depended on him, and pray as if it all depended on God" (see [1 Cor 15:10](#)).

Prayer: *Almighty God. Thank You for working so powerfully in my life. May I not presume that Your grace will remove my obligation to live for you each day, in obedience. Help me to rely on Your power and also to exert myself to the utmost, so that your grace will not be in vain in my life. And help me to encourage weaker believers to trust that you will act in power as they step forwards to serve You in faith. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*

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PURE LIGHTS IN THE DARKNESS

Phil. 2:14-16 *Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life--in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labour for nothing. (NIV)*

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

This world is a dark place, where people cannot see beyond the fog of corruption and obsession with their own selfish ambitions. But Jesus came to be the Light of the World. When people get to know Jesus, they start to be able to see themselves in God's perspective. Inevitably they will notice the sin that has ruled them, and the Saviour who wants to deliver them from its power. As they repent and trust Jesus He changes them, bit by bit from the inside, so that they too can shine truthful lives and words into a corrupt society.

So Paul reminds them what kind of people they ought to be. Complaining and arguing have to go. They were never a part of Jesus' life and should not characterise ours either. Instead, we are to accept God's will and trust in His power to lead to a right solution instead of having to fight to defend ourselves. 'Blameless' and 'without fault' may seem impossibly high standards, but once we know the gracious forgiveness of God we can start to live without fear of condemnation. We have been set free from our guilt so that we can put all our energy into pleasing the Lord.

Our role is to radiate the Light (the truth about Jesus) and, by explaining what He has done for us, hold out the lifeline of gospel hope from His Word. We followed Jesus because someone else told us about Him and how to follow Him ... but now, we have the baton and must pass it on to others. The church could have died out within a generation of Paul's death; but despite (or perhaps because of) persecution, they kept shining out the Jesus-character and speaking out the Jesus-truth. Paul did not run in vain, nor did the person who told the gospel to you. But who will have been introduced to heaven because of your life and witness? You can start the process by deciding not to complain and refusing to argue. You can be sure that somebody will notice, and eventually ask you why!

Prayer: *Holy God. Thank You for calling me to become like You, and for helping me to change so that I can learn to live a new life. Help me to recognise and accept the privileged responsibility you have given me to be Your representative where I live and work. Give me fresh courage today, to resist the urge to complain and argue; but instead to trust that you will fight for me and that I can accept whatever You allow without grumbling. Through Jesus Christ. Amen.*

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ANTICIPATING GLORY

Phil. 2:17-18 *But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me. (NIV)*

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

True Christians understand more than they see. They know the people and places they observe in everyday life; but they also know the reality of God's presence, with His love, help and comfort, which are invisible. Each day believers are right to expect that God will involve Himself in their lives, and especially as they engage with the business of His Kingdom. So, even before we pass through death, we learn to appreciate what we cannot yet see and to anticipate the glory to come. Meanwhile, we live with confidence because the Holy Spirit assures us of the validity of God's Word so that we can fully rely on His promises.

Although Paul did not know his human fate, he was quite certain about his eternal destiny. But he was also clear-minded about his responsibilities until he saw the Lord. Life with Jesus, meant living for Jesus. Receiving His grace necessitated a whole hearted commitment to serve Him. Such service was the sacrifice of their lives - either in daily obedience, the deprivation and pain of persecution, or the willingness to be killed for their faith in Christ. Paul anticipates his own ultimate sacrifice but considers it equal to the living sacrifices of the believers in Philippi. He encouraged them that they were both making spiritual sacrifices of their own lives, whether in life or death.

In some parts of the Western world, faith in Jesus is seen as a 'soft' option where church is a leisure activity, or a retreat from reality. That is so wrong. While our fellow believers suffer greatly for confessing Christ, how can any Christian stand passively on the touchline of the church. No, we are all called to serve: called to give up serving ourselves in order to serve Him. This is not just the occasional offering of money or help on a duty rota: it is the daily commitment to gladly put Jesus first in every part of home or work life, and to do so even when others hate us for it. Jesus said, *"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."* ([Matt 5:11-12](#))

Prayer: *Gracious Lord. Thank You for the Apostles, the early church and many generations of believers who served You faithfully even though at great cost to themselves. Thank You that they counted it a privilege. Please forgive me when I shrink back from confessing Christ or stop shining for Jesus because of fear of opposition. Help me to desire to be a living sacrifice every day, until I see You and receive Your reward. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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