

**W@WPhil21**

**Word@Work from BeaconLight**

**RELATIONAL ENCOURAGEMENT**

**Phil. 2:19** *I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about 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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One of the great blessings of knowing Jesus Christ is that we are never alone. Even though we may be posted away from home without like-minded company or Christian fellowship, the Lord is with us. But it was never His plan for us to be permanently isolated. When we come to Jesus, we come into His family: we have brothers and sisters, role models and those who take their example from us. The church is not a building but a vast international company of people who honour Jesus and love each other. And almost wherever you go, you will find family in Christ.

So it was natural for Paul to want news of the church in Philippi. They were his family. In those days, without email, phone or even a postal service, most written messages were couriered. Better still, the courier went as a representative; and that was to be Timothy's role, while Paul was detained under house arrest. Some have suggested that Paul's faith was weak in needing reassurance as to how the Philippian church was doing. No: what good parent is not concerned about their children? And we are in the wrong when our 'faith' in God's care of other people becomes so professional that we cease to care deeply.

But Paul did not flap and panic, sleeplessly anxious until he received news. He had put the matter into God's hands. It seems that he had prayed for the opportunity to send Timothy, but, as yet, the time was not quite right. Paul hoped that the way might be open soon, but he was content for the final decision to be the Lord's. How wise we would be to follow Paul's example: trusting yet concerned, caring but waiting, praying but not panicking. We too should prize the presence of God above all else, but never abandon our commitment to others. Preserving these balances is an essential part of healthy Christian living; but it may need a bit of practice to change the old patterns of behaviour. Ask the Lord to help you.

**Prayer:** *Dear Heavenly Father. Thank You for the great joy of knowing You through the salvation of Jesus Christ. Please help me always to enjoy my fellowship with You, but not to ignore my spiritual family. Help me to choose to invest in relating with my brothers and sisters in Christ as a priority, caring for them and serving them wherever possible; and trusting You to open doors of relationship in Your will and time. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*

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**W@WPhil22**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

### **HIGHLY COMMENDED**

**Phil. 2:20-21** *I have no-one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. (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 secular world seems to have fallen in love with commendations. After centuries of demanding obedience as a duty for the privilege of being employed, many hospitals, offices, factories and retail outlets have walls decorated with plaques and certificates to the finest workers. 'Highly commended', 'best salesperson', 'most productive assembler', 'excellent customer relations' are some of the plaudits. Of course, it is right to recognise and advertise such people. Hard work, loyalty, enterprise and long service all come with a price tag - self sacrifice.

Paul's commendation of Timothy was both the obligation of an employer and the privilege of a colleague. But it was more than that: it was the generous affection towards a brother, and appropriate honour of a faithful servant of God. Paul's purpose was not for Timothy to have an inflated ego. He wanted the Philippian church to learn how to treat the ministers of the gospel, who served them; and to learn to serve others for the same reasons. They needed to realise that Timothy's heart was full of love and personal concern for them; that he was not like so many travelling philosophers of the day, out to make money and a name for himself. He was God's servant for their sake. He ministered to them because they mattered so much to Jesus.

This passage assumes that, while such honour should be normal in the church, it is not automatic. That is why Paul is making the point. Like children who will be intrinsically selfish unless taught to respect others, so every new believer needs to learn that self-centredness must go out as Christ comes in. That should be modelled in the sacrificial service of others in the church. But alas, some Christians set a bad example by their self-seeking, and criticism of their ministers. It should not be like that. And those with authority have no right to 'feather their own nests' at the expense of their congregations. However, a church community where Christ is at the centre, and selfless service is normal, is a brilliant demonstration of the Kingdom of Heaven. So too are school, college and workplace Christian groups for Bible study and prayer. Don't forget that Jesus commends faithfulness (see [Luke 19:17](#)), so we should live knowing that the Lord's eye is on us; and we should take every opportunity to honour everybody who serves well.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord. Please forgive me for failing to honour others as I should, and for ignoring the watchfulness of Your eye upon me. Help me to serve You with a selfless and sacrificial heart, to honour those who are devoted to Your service, and to teach new believers to do the same. In Christ Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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**W@WPhil23**

**Word@Work from BeaconLight**

**SUCCESSFUL APPRENTICESHIP**

**Phil. 2:22** *But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. (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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Although the fashion for apprenticeships comes and goes, the principle of 'learning on the job' while being overseen by an expert, is very good. In Britain we know that plumbers, electricians, builders and bakers who have served an apprenticeship will usually have a better understanding of their trade and knowledge of how to deal with unusual problems. After more formal academic training, the same learning style exists in medicine, law, surveying, architecture, aviation and seamanship. It should also be the normal pattern of Christian discipleship.

The word 'disciple' means 'learner' or 'pupil'. Paul had chosen Timothy to travel with him, help him practically and learn the job of church leadership. In the same way that trades or crafts were passed from father to son by working together, Timothy learned from Paul by observing and assisting in the work of gospel ministry. Timothy's credentials were firstly a willingness to learn, followed by faithfulness, integrity and service. His experience equipped him to know what to do, but his character was shaped by submission to the Lord in gospel service so that he could be trusted by Paul and the churches.

Proof of trustworthiness does not come through academic degrees but by observing godliness of character. Timothy's advantage was in seeing how Paul lived a godly life despite many trials, and then being willing to be sent out to serve without Paul's immediate support. Likewise, today's spiritual leadership needs to be in the hands of godly people who grow in holiness of character as well as in ministry skills. Ideally every believer should learn the importance of both Christian character and ministry competence from an 'old hand'. That sort of spiritual mentoring is the only effective way to develop credibility in the present generation of believers, and will encourage the next generation of servant-hearted saints. So, it is worth asking, "Who is my example of godly living and gospel service, from whom I can learn?" and, likewise, "Who could learn from me?" These people might be in the workplace or community as well as in the church.

**Prayer:** *Father God. Thank You for the people who have taught me from the Scriptures, and who have shown me what a godly life looks like. Help me to be grateful for them, and to encourage them. May I always be ready to learn more of how to live like Christ and serve Him faithfully; and please help me to recognise those people whose example I can follow. Also Lord, although I feel unworthy, please allow me to be an encouragement to another believer in Jesus. In His Name, Amen.*

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**W@WPhil24**

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**RELATIONAL MINISTRY**

**Phil. 2:23-24** *I hope, therefore, to send him [Timothy] as soon as I see how things go with me. And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon. (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 churches mimic corporate business in the scale and complexity of their programmes. And it may be necessary. Larger or more diverse ministry settings demand a higher degree of organisation in order to get the right people in the right place at the right time. But there is a dangerous illusion which accompanies that style. Bigger and busier does not always mean more blessing. God's blessing is a mark of His relationship with us, and often comes to us through people rather than projects per se - brothers and sisters who He sends in Christ's Name. Without them, there is no church; or at least no organic church where people are joined to each other, and to the Lord, by love.

Paul longed to send Timothy back to the church in Greece at the right time. He had an inner confidence, from the Holy Spirit, that he would soon be released from prison, but Paul did not want to presume the course of his future. He wanted to see what the Lord would do, and how He would lead. Then, Timothy would have really encouraging news for the Philippians, which would strengthen them to keep steadfast as followers of Jesus. How wise! And how timely a reminder this might be in our busy world ... to stop, reflect and wait and see how God will move His hand. Faith is essential, but rash presumption owes more to the inner urges of fleshly impulses, than to the quiet voice of the Spirit.

The message from Gethsemane was "*Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.*" ([Mark 14:38](#)). Alas the disciples failed; but we do not have to copy them. The steadying art of watching how God is at work in His world should give a little humility to even the most impetuous Christian; and praying will prevent us from rushing ahead so that we miss God's sovereign appointments while we substitute our own futile ideas. This is not just a ministry matter, for those who 'work for the church'. This is a Christian lifestyle issue; and may be as critical in the hospital and hotel as in the mission office. It is one of the great spiritual disciplines, without which much energy will be spent uselessly, and many hours wasted without any benefit. The time to start is today, and the place to start is where you are right now. Stop, watch and pray: if you have a workplace fellowship - share this and perhaps agree to be accountable to each other as well as to the Lord, so that you will keep each other up to the mark that Paul had made his starting point for every decision.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord God. Please forgive my habit of deciding what is the right time and the appropriate relationship, without stopping to watch what You are doing, or to pray. Help me to take even a little time today to watch what is happening and to commit it to You, before I rush off to futility or disaster. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

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**W@WPhil25**

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**GOSPEL CARE**

**Phil. 2:25** *But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow-worker and fellow-soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. (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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Gospel words and loving care should not be separated. Epaphroditus had come from Philippi with gifts to sustain Paul during imprisonment (see [Phil. 4:18](#)). In modern terms, he might appear to be an aid worker; but he came with a heart for the Lord, the commission of the church (he must have been trusted to convey valuables), and a genuine concern for the apostle. However, the heart of this man is revealed by Paul as his 'brother', 'fellow-worker' and 'fellow-soldier'.

The word, 'brother', says that he was a born-again believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, not a cultural believer (there was no Christian culture in those days; indeed Christianity was definitely counter-cultural) but one whose life was at risk for the sake of the gospel. Hence 'fellow-soldier': he fully identified with the imprisoned apostle and understood the rigours of the spiritual battles around them ... how they must have prayed together! And that was not all: house arrest allowed Paul to welcome visitors who came to hear the gospel, and Epaphroditus was clearly involved in gospel ministry too as a 'fellow-worker'.

In the Bible, there is no such thing as 'just an aid-worker', any more than 'only an evangelist'. Although the pastor, teacher or evangelist must not be sidetracked from their main tasks, uncaring or loveless ministry is a mockery of the gospel. Likewise, those involved in 'mercy ministries' must not assume that care is the horizon on their service for God: all are called to bear verbal witness to Christ, and to be ready with a gospel response to the question, "Why do you care?" That kind of integrated ministry should be a normal part of every believer's lifestyle and visible in the office, hotel, workshop or market. We are all intended to wear God's love, share God's care and bear testimony to God's gospel: this trio of responsibilities are for us all; the ratio of particular activities is at the Lord's command.

**Prayer:** *Gracious God. Thank You for those who have shown me kindness, because they love You. Thank You for those who explained the gospel to me so that I could belong to You. Help me to be so full of Your love that I will be eager to show mercy to the need I see, and to be ready to explain the gospel to those who want to hear. And help me in my workplace, as well as in my home community, to serve Your purposes in other people. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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**W@WPhil26**

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**HEALTH AND WELFARE**

**Phil. 2:26-28** *For he [Epaphroditus] longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. (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 people are very concerned when loved ones are unwell or left alone. Normal Christians feel like that about God's family in difficulties, wherever they may be. Sickness had overtaken Epaphroditus after arriving to help Paul. Word got back to believers in Philippi that their 'special envoy' was unwell, and as Epaphroditus heard of their concern, he was distressed to have caused them so much grief. And at that time they did not know that he had almost died. Paul was deeply concerned for him too; and attributes his recovery to God's mercy - otherwise he would have been devastated at the loss of a brother, who had travelled so far to meet his needs.

Paul clearly loved this brother and was greatly encouraged by his visit. But the Apostle also respected the needs of his family in Greece to be reunited with their brother. Indeed, that separation alone caused Paul great concern, not for his own sake (although he relished the comradeship and fellowship in ministry), but he was aware how much comfort Epaphroditus would bring back home. So you see, everybody in this little story gave themselves sacrificially to meet the needs of others, yet everybody was deeply concerned for the other people and wanted to bring practical solutions to reunite loved ones.

True gospel heartedness does not ruthlessly pursue ministry projects at the expense of loving relationships. These relationships are a special part of God's grace to us, for our strengthening and encouragement. But, possibly more importantly, these people are part of God's way of loving us, and letting us love others for His sake. Some believers are so trapped by people pressures that they do not see ministry opportunities in the middle of their encounters. Others are so project-driven that they have no time for weakness in others. But Jesus (in [Matt 25:31-46](#)) identified the critical importance of demonstrating loving care in His Name. Paul, Epaphroditus and the Philippian church could teach many of us a useful lesson. God often uses our caring to show His love to others. We should never minimise the importance of this teaching: perhaps we should find some way to practise loving care with somebody we are concerned for, today.

**Prayer:** *Loving Father. Thank You for the many times in which I have been helped and comforted by other believers. Sometimes they have given their time and hospitality most generously, and yet I have not shown my gratitude to You by helping others. Please forgive my slowness to care for Your people beyond the point of my own convenience. Help me not to be self-indulgent in wanting others to put me first, and to love others as You have loved me. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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**HONOUR THE BRAVE**

**Phil. 2:29-30** *Welcome him [Epahroditus] in the Lord with great joy, and honour men like him, because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me. (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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Brave people should be honoured. Those who put their own life on the line to save others are wonderful examples of selfless courage in the face of danger. Of course, not all risky activities are 'brave' in that sense. Some extreme sports are simply foolhardy. Their goal is death-defying personal achievement: it is essentially selfish (although we like those sorts of role models, and honour them too). But those whose personal risk saved another's life, ought to be highly commended.

Paul was no stranger to danger. [2 Cor 6:4-10](#) and [2 Cor 11:22-33](#) detail his extraordinary lifestyle of beatings, shipwrecks, hunger, and imprisonment as he lived under suspicion and threats. He went through it all to preach the gospel, establish Jesus-communities and rescue souls from the grip of hell. Others were strongly motivated to be a part of that missionary movement of people, including Epaphroditus. He had travelled from Greece to Rome bringing gifts from the church, and was eager to help Paul in gospel ministry. He like, many Christian missionary workers subsequently, almost died from disease. But his loyalty and desire was to see Jesus welcomed into hearts, homes and communities - so he felt the risk was well worth taking.

Who do you know who risks their life for the sake of Jesus and His Kingdom? Do you? Or are we somehow conditioned to avoid risk at all costs. Today, around the world, more people than ever before are being persecuted for their faith. They may not be high profile ministers, but they have the gospel-desire of a 'Paul' and the sacrificial care of an 'Epaphroditus'. Many never become a statistic, but they bravely continue to love, worship and serve Jesus even when their workplace despises them, their communities ignore them and their families disown them. Others travel, in response to God's call, encountering all sorts of difficulties while deprived of familiar comforts, friends and family. Many still fall ill, while some have accidents and some die. Paul's advice to believers is to find these people, honour them, look after them and support them in whatever way we can.

**Prayer:** *Gracious God. You have been so kind to me, and yet I confess that I dislike stepping outside my comfort-zone, even for Your sake. Give me a heart for the 'lost' and a compassion for Your servants in need, so that I will dare to risk more for Your sake and the gospel's. And please set a special duty of honour into my heart - to respect and support those who serve faithfully in Your Name. For Christ's sake. Amen.*

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**W@WPhil28**

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**REMINDER TO REJOICE**

**Phil. 3:1** *Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for 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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Glad hearts are a tonic for everybody. Nobody really wants to be surrounded by grumpy, morose, complaining, anxious or angry people. Yet it is easy enough to become like that ourselves. All we need is a little trouble of any kind, and we can spiral down into self-preservation mode, denying our security in Christ. Paul is in prison, but he instructs 'free' people to rejoice in the Lord! He does not apologise for repeating himself (see [Phil 1:8](#); [2:17-18](#); [4:4](#); [4:10](#)), because he knows that rejoicing is an essential spiritual protection.

Joy protects our hearts but only if our joy is 'in the Lord'. 'In the Lord' describes the reason for being glad: it is because of our Father's love, our Saviour's sacrifice and the Holy Spirit's work in our hearts. As we fix our attention on God, and His care of us, joy will start to flood our hearts, displacing fear and shame. Naturally we will tend to self-assurance based on what we can see. Supernaturally we can be certain that God will keep His promises and work powerfully by His Spirit.

Paul experienced this himself when he and Silas were in jail in Philippi (see [Acts 16:25-26](#)). Humanly-speaking the prospect was not good. But they sang praise to the God who is in charge of everything, and were not surprised when the doors burst open and they were free. Praise expresses the joyfulness of confident hearts, which are certain that God will be kind and active. So, why not sing God's praise? Sing and speak out gladly about His love ... on your own, in the family, with the children, when travelling and at work. If you have a workplace fellowship, please practise rejoicing together - especially if things are not going well!!! You will be surprised what happens when you declare your confidence in the unseen God.

**Prayer:** *Wonderful Saviour. How much You have done for me, and how great You are in every way! Please help me to keep my mind and heart settled - that You will fulfil all Your promises, in Your word, concerning me. Help me to praise You every day, and to honour You with praises - by myself, at home and at work. For Your glory's sake. Amen.*

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**W@WPhil29**

**Word@Work from BeaconLight**

**MARKS OF INSECURE RELIGION**

**Phil. 3:2-3** *Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh ... (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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Despite many attempts to dispose of religion, human beings have an inbuilt urge to seek out the God who made them (see [Ecclesiastes 3:11](#) and [Acts 17:27](#)). Even those who scoff at the idea, find it will not easily leave them ... as their atheistic challenges betray. But for those who want to securely identify themselves with their religion, permanent physical marks, including circumcision and tattoos have been common for centuries. Of course, God commanded circumcision in the Old Testament, as a way to remind His people about their special national identity. But when Jesus came as the final revelation of God's love, everybody could be saved irrespective of nationality or past religion, and so circumcision was redundant to faith.

Christians do not have to wear anything physical to identify themselves to Christ. Instead we remember the crucifixion wounds of Christ in our temporary encounter with bread and wine, and identify with Him in baptism; but there is no permanent physical mark on our bodies. We live by faith in the Son of God who loved us and died for us (see [Gal 2:20](#)) - the marks were on Him and not on us. However the church has always been pressured to think that faith is not enough. Paul repudiates that idea. Indeed he says here that those who follow Jesus have chosen to cut out from their inner desires everything which offends God - not an external mark but a radical internal spiritual surgery.

Whatever pressure you may be under to adopt external religious identifiers, never forget that the Bible does not require any of them. Even the wearing of a cross or fish badge is not essential. No, the real mark of believers is that they have the Holy Spirit ([2 Cor 1:21-22](#)) who enables them to worship and look confidently towards a glorious future when Jesus returns. We cannot do that by ourselves, however religious we are. We need the Holy Spirit to work in us, stirring our faith, so that we learn to rely on the promises of God for our salvation and sanctification; and nothing else. And we need a clear head, lest we get trapped by human inventions which purport to support our faith, but which really deny it.

**Prayer:** *Father God. Thank You for sending Jesus so that I could be saved. Thank You for Your Word of Truth which I have believed with the Holy Spirit's help. Forgive me when I wander into thinking that physical reminders will strengthen my faith, even though the Bible does not agree. Help me to be clear sighted so that I can identify traps which would drag me away from my freedom in Christ: and help me to gently assist my friends who have got caught up in such diversions. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*

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**W@WPhil30**

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**IRRELEVANT SPIRITUAL CLAIMS**

**Phil. 3:4-6** ... though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. (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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Pride gets everywhere: it is the essence of sin which has infused the whole human race. Pride says that, "It is from me, of me, due to me and the glory goes to me". No wonder that pride will always try to exclude Jesus, because, "From Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory for ever! Amen" (see [Rom 11:36](#)).

It should not be surprising that the real Jesus is unwanted when pride is encouraged in education, congratulated by recruitment agencies and fostered in every society. We envy the success of people who achieve (or whose family have money or power) and desire their confident lifestyle. Alas that confidence of self ability is embedded into Christless religion too. It may be the excellence of self discipline or the fervour of good works. In Paul's case it was also his family background and religious education. His pride drove him to the pinnacle of blindness, in thinking that he was perfect: and therefore surely God must be very pleased with him.

The three accounts of Paul's conversion (see [Acts chs 12, 22, 26](#)) all show Paul as a broken man before Jesus. His heritage had meant nothing and his zeal was misplaced. He had missed the point because he was blind to the truth about Jesus. He had no concept of grace until his pride collapsed and he started looking up to Jesus. But that end-point to his pride was also the start-point to a real relationship with Jesus. You cannot have both self-pride and Jesus: one will displace the other, depending on which you love best.

Alas too much Christless and proud religion has wormed its way into the church, defeating its joy and immobilising its mission. The Lord Jesus Christ has been replaced by strategic thinking, secular ideology or self-contented laziness; but all dressed up in a spiritual veneer which fools most people except God. It is time for God's people to turn from such stupidity and accept the Lordship of Christ over themselves, their families, their money and their church. Then they will be the breath of fresh clean air in the office or factory, the fields, markets or the docks.

**Prayer:** Holy Father. Thank You for Your Word which teaches me not to place my confidence in human thoughts and energy. While I thank You for the privileges I have received, I know that they are all irrelevant in the face of knowing You through Jesus Christ. Please forgive me for the sin of pride which has invaded my life deeper than I know, and give me faith to look to You alone, dependant on Your grace day by day. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

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**W@WPhil31**

**Word@Work from BeaconLight**

**WASTE DISPOSAL**

**Phil. 3:7-8** *But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ ... (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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Spiritual pride is dangerous rubbish. Paul's pride in his privileged family background and religious education had not made him a servant of God, but an enemy of Jesus Christ and a menace to the church. Having listed his 'religious qualifications' (see [v 5-6](#)), he now puts them in the same category as animal manure and rotting household waste. He calls them dung ('rubbish' in this translation). That is a very strong condemnation of what most people would think was very good.

Rubbish is a problem in itself, but it creates even more problems if left alone. Apart from its uselessness, rubbish soon becomes a breeding ground for dangerous germs and food for vermin. Untreated, it will create a nauseating stench, pollute water supplies, infect the young and vulnerable elderly, and spread disease. The sick people then pass disease to others and whole communities can be contaminated as by a plague.

That is how Paul sees his past sincere, devout, active leadership role in Christless religion. Indeed, instead of spreading the truth, he had broadcast lies about Jesus and disgust for His people. Far from doing good, he had actually encouraged a plague of wickedness against the church, and many had suffered. But when he came to know Jesus Christ, he realised just how worthless all his religious zeal had been. So much so, that he renounced his religious credentials and pledged himself to live and work for Christ alone.

Today's believers need to complete that transformation too. There is no place to be proud of any position in the church or Christian fellowship; it will only breed spiritual disease in you and others. There is no place for arrogant claims of spiritual knowledge or power; it is useless and will get in the way of God's work. Yet we are all naturally infected with pride, and we will contaminate others (see [Heb 12:14-15](#)) until we choose to deposit all our rubbish at the cross of Jesus. He died to pay for it all, so be sure you give it all to Him.

**Prayer:** *All-seeing God. Thank You for highlighting, so starkly, the danger of spiritual pride. Forgive me for my pride, and the wrong motives for serving You. I repent of my sin and ask Your Holy Spirit's help in learning to love and serve You in such a way that You alone get the glory. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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**W@WPhil32**

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**COVERED BY CHRIST**

**Phil. 3:8b-9** *I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. (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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It is not enough just to repent of wrong. We need to have a new kind of righteousness from God. If we don't, then we will go back to inventing our own ideas of what is right, and get it wrong yet again. Repentance is the first step. Receiving God's righteousness is the next. In the same way in which a failing business is taken over by a successful company, so those who believe in Jesus are incorporated into Christ. They become part of His 'company', and share in all the benefits of heaven. All the past debts are gone and all of Christ's righteousness is ours (see [www.crosscheck.org.uk](http://www.crosscheck.org.uk) to find out more).

In the same way that insurance cover relieves the policy holder from fear of disaster, so the righteousness of Christ is our permanent 'legal' protection in the courts of heaven. Trusting that Christ died for our sins, puts believers in the right with God. We could never achieve this by our good works, because we could never reach His demand of perfection. It is by His grace alone. However, if we cling onto the idea that our religious observance is somehow necessary to get right with God, it is like saying that we consider Jesus' sacrifice as inadequate. Either we rely on our own righteousness or on Christ's: one of them will be treated as rubbish.

Of course, it is vital that we should do good, but not to win God's favour. If we think we can influence God's assessment of us that way, we have already discounted the sufficiency of the cross. It is like the employees of a failing company continuing in the same old work practices and ignoring the new company procedures, even after it has been rescued. Instead, we should show our gratitude for being rescued, by living as released members of the new 'company'. That kind of lifestyle not only validates your faith but also advertises that you have been saved by Jesus. The brave-hopeless around you at work, who are looking for the possibility that life can be different, will find hope in your confidence of being right with God through Jesus Christ.

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father. Thank You for sending Jesus to the cross so that I can be forgiven for my sins as I trust in Him. I am so relieved that You accept me because of His sacrifice; and that there is nothing I can do to add to what He has done. Help me to live the life of a freed person, with gladness and hope, giving a window of hope to others. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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**IN-DEPTH RELATIONSHIP**

**Phil. 3:10-11** *I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.(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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Paul had met the living Lord Jesus on the Damascus road (see [Acts 9:1-9](#)). He knew Christ's presence and had suffered many things because he followed Jesus (see [2 Cor 11:23-29](#)). He had prayed that believers in Ephesus would know Jesus better (see [Eph 1:17](#)); and yet he now says that he wants to 'know Christ'. Of course, as with every relationship, there is so much more we might learn about the other person. Even long-time married couples still learn about each other's character, likes and dislikes, years after the wedding. That is even truer with getting to know the infinite God.

Saying, "I want to know Christ ..." does not mean that he has no previous relationship: rather, it is a passionate heart-cry of hunger to go on wanting to know more of Him. Paul had many experiences of Christ's power, but he wants more. Likewise, he has suffered for Christ but is hungry to suffer more, and even to die for His sake. These are very strong emotions inspired by the Holy Spirit, propelling Paul's walk with the Lord to the ultimate depth of identification. Nevertheless, Paul's goal is to be made alive again when Jesus returns: he does not know how that might be done by God, but he is confident that death is not the end.

In the fast and furious world of target-driven business and virtual relationships, many are hungry for real friendship and intimacy. Too often God himself is squeezed out, and our search for meaning is easily focussed on people who will give us time to be ourselves. Alas, many of those relationships reach frustration point as greater self-revelation brings increased vulnerability and disappointment. But there is no disappointment in getting to know Jesus better, and in allowing Him to see every part of our lives. On the contrary, Christians who have no hunger to know the Lord better are in a very dangerous place. They are a prey for Satan; and the stronger they feel in themselves, the more vulnerable they are. So Christian, dare to be totally open with Jesus; dare to search the Scriptures daily to discover more of His character; and dare to risk all so that you might know His power. That is the sort of Christian your colleagues hope they might see; and so does Jesus.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord God. Forgive my feeble love and weak desire to know You better. Forgive my satisfaction in knowing You so little. Please give me a fresh hunger to know You more and more; and to identify strongly with You at work and home, whatever the cost. Until then, help me to keep looking forward to seeing You and serving You wholeheartedly. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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**WORK IN PROGRESS**

**Phil. 3:12** *Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. (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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No Christian, in their right mind, would dream of comparing themselves with the Apostle Paul. He was given such wisdom and courage, and even dared to hold himself as an example to the churches. Few of us have such self-discipline, endurance and cool-headedness in pioneering gospel work, under persecution. Yet Paul had no delusions of spiritual grandeur. He knew he was not perfect. No doubt that was a great encouragement to his readers. And it was important for them to know that even the great Apostle had lessons still to learn; and so they could be learners (that is what 'disciple' means) too. And so can we.

Paul's statement in this verse was no false modesty: it was simply the truth. Every believer is a 'work in progress' because we are all human and still inclined to sin and selfishness. Interestingly, the Bible does not minimise the defects in each of the Old and New Testament saints. If it were otherwise, we might be tempted to think that we could earn our salvation, and 'bribe' God with our good deeds. Or we might be so discouraged that there would be no point in continuing to follow Jesus. But Paul's testimony here shows us that even the great Apostle was not perfect, yet he wanted to press on to trust the promises of Jesus and fulfil his mission.

Satan's two great lies try to convince us either that God is pleased with us because we are so good, or that we can never reach His standard and so we give up. Paul knew that he was accepted through God's grace alone, and that he was called to follow Jesus and to serve Him in obedience. So his imperfections did not stop his ministry - he relied on God's grace for that too - nor did he stop trying to please the Lord. He knew that the Lord Jesus had taken hold of him on the Damascus road, and that Christ was still guiding and empowering him. As a consequence, out of gratitude and privilege, Paul was determined to keep loving, keep serving and (if necessary) keep suffering for Jesus' sake. Whatever you think about yourself, or whatever lies Satan throws at you, keep going with Jesus; because He keeps going with you!

**Prayer:** *Father God. Although I often feel that I am a failure in Your eyes, help me to be encouraged to keep on following Jesus. Please reassure me that You have intervened in my life for a good reason, and that You will help me to reach the goals You have set for me. Please forgive me when I feel like giving up, and give me Your strength to serve and please You each day. For Jesus' sake. Amen.*

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**STILL ON TRACK**

**Phil. 3:13-14** *Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus. (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 great Apostle Paul admitted that he had not yet grasped all that Jesus Christ wanted for him. Unlike the travelling religious teachers of his day, Paul did not claim perfection or a superior spiritual lifestyle; but neither had he given up. He was still on track for the finishing line in the 'race of faith'. The 'race' of the Christian's life is not a competition to exclude all other runners. Like modern day city-marathons, everybody who completes the course according to the rules will receive a prize (see [2 Tim 4:7-8](#)).

'Pressing on', demands that we look ahead, and not backwards. Although there is a proper sense in which we look back to Calvary in gratitude, Jesus is not still on the cross. The work of redemption is done and He is now raised and fully alive as King of kings and Lord of lords. Although Jesus was the person who started us in the faith, He is also at the finishing line waiting to award us the prize of being with Him forever, with the rewards for faithful obedience. So Paul is telling the church that it is normal Christian living to put everything into daily obedience, because Christ gave everything for Him. The Apostle fully expects to meet the Lord and to be well received.

Every believer should look forward with the same expectation: and live each day as if it were their last. This visible world is certainly not the ultimate in experience. Yet we often live as though it is. Our hopes and fears are pinned to it, and our eyes are glued to it. However we should be looking towards the day when we meet Jesus, with the same expectation of the bride longing for her wedding. Our daily programme is deficient when it focuses only on the financial return, or prospects of promotion: we need to anticipate Christ's daily encouragement and the welcome Jesus wants to give us into His Kingdom. That kind of 'long view' will set the rest of family, work, leisure and church life into perspective. It will make us bold to do what is right and courageous to resist temptation; and each day will be filled with purpose - to please the Lord. When Christians live like that, the world notices!

**Prayer:** *Almighty God. Thank You for Paul's encouragement to persist in our life of faith, trusting that Your leading is right and that our responses will be rewarded. Forgive me the tendency to allow diversions to drag my attention away from pleasing You; and please help me to accept Your Word as my daily instruction. For Yours alone is the power and the glory. Through Jesus Christ. Amen.*

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**STILL 'ON MESSAGE'**

**Phil. 3:15-16** *All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained. (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 advertising industry and politicians have learnt that inconsistent communication does more harm than good. They need to be clear about what they believe, and get everybody in the team to know how to express it in such a way that there is no confusion. The Apostle Paul was well aware that people might not agree with what he was writing. Of course, those who resist the Lord will also dispute the Apostle's teaching, because sinfulness hates righteousness. But accepting truth is also about maturity, relationship and experience.

New-born believers enter a radically different world, but start off with their old habits and ways of thinking about things. Without teaching, and the example of more mature believers, they will not know how to live their new life. Enthusiasm alone will lead to disaster. Those who have learned how to accept God's truth and put it into practice, become mature. And maturity shows wisdom by agreeing with the Bible instead of arguing against it! Maturity also develops through relationship with God. As we obey the truth, the Holy Spirit encourages us to be hungry to know more. When the immature disagree, they think they are right and reject the truth; but when the mature think differently, they pray about it and ask God to show them what will please Him and build their relationship.

But for most of us, the problem is not maturity or knowledge but of experience. Most people who follow Jesus have far more information about what is right than they ever put into practice. So the Apostle urges the Philippians (and us) to live up to the mark of our place in Christ, the companionship of the Spirit and our information about what pleases the Lord. In the same way that some people are addicted to gaining degrees and qualifications, others love to acquire more spiritual information, for its own sake (see [2 Tim 3:7](#)). But gaining more knowledge does not make us more holy, if our lives are unchanged. That would deny the truth we already know, and show that we do not relate properly with God, if we refuse to live in obedience. However, today could be a healthy new start: thank Him for your privileged place in His family and Kingdom, agree with His Word and decide which of the next truth to obey.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord. Thank You for this reminder to start where I am, to trust what You say and put it into practice. Please forgive me for arguing and grumbling, and for refusing to obey You. Please help me to learn from those who are more mature than me, and to be an encouragement to new believers at work and church - by showing that I am obedient to what I know, and hungry to know more so that I can obey You more. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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**W@WPhil37**

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**APOSTOLIC EXAMPLE**

**Phil. 3:17** *Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. (NIV)*

---

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

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Christian maturity does not come automatically, nor simply with the passage of time. Three essential inputs are required: teaching, example and discipline. Without seeing the Jesus-way-of-life in others, it is difficult to appreciate the radically different style of living which comes through the Spirit's power. But without teaching we will never be able to understand how to engage with God's grace in order to live differently. Many try to 'live a good life' by copying good examples, but that is all it is - imitating 'in the flesh' but without the power which comes from the Spirit. But even the Spirit's work is frustrated unless we discipline ourselves in obedience.

Paul had just given them God's explanation about this way of life (see [Phil 3:7-14](#)). All Paul's letters have two parts, the 'theory' and then the 'practice'. And he is very specific in instructing husbands, wives, children, employers, employees, rich, poor, refugees, city folk, the suffering, the persecuted, the old, the young. He talks about business and money, sex and relationships, the church and the world, heaven and hell: but all in the context of knowing Jesus. Now he says that God had enabled him to put his own teaching into practice. Despite his personal weaknesses (see [Rom 7:18-25](#)) the way he lived, was an example to others, and they become a model for others too.

Although teaching without example is sterile (it is unable to reproduce spiritual life), when the teaching and the example match each other, the gospel is validated. Despite the sin in every believer, there are plenty of good examples to follow, and much opportunity to be a role model to others. Take time to observe those who are following after Jesus, and be encouraged that you can also live with their confidence, peace and joy. Abandon the careless which gives Jesus a bad name. Follow Him as the Apostles did; knowing that the Bible gives you understanding, the Holy Spirit gives you the strength and wisdom, and your decision to keep cooperating with the Lord helps to establish the necessary disciplines in life. That kind of believer is literally the 'salt of the earth' (see [Matt 5:13](#)).

**Prayer:** *Father God. Thank You for giving me examples of godly living in the Bible and in the church. Help me to understand how to live for You, and then obey You, relying on Your Spirit's help as I discipline myself to live to Your praise and glory. May I become a good example to other believers and to those who are looking to see the gospel lived out authentically. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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**W@WPhil38**

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**DANGEROUSLY LOW HORIZON**

**Phil. 3:18-19** *For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. (NIV)*

---

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

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It would be nice to think that everybody is a friend of God, but alas that is not true. Whatever people say, everybody is either living as a friend or an enemy of the cross of Christ. There is no middle ground. Clearly it deeply concerned the apostle, as he had passionately warned the church about the dangers of drifting from the cross as the only valid spiritual anchor point. Today, despite a plethora of spiritual ideas circulating the globe, the cross of Christ is still the only access point to sharing eternity with God.

Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sins, to redeem (buy back) those who have been taken hostage by Satan so that we may receive God's righteousness. Yet millions refuse to accept that the cross was necessary for them personally; and their lives show it. They are either proudly self-reliant or miserable victims of life; they cannot accept God's free gift and insist on making their own way (see [Jer 2:13](#)). And some of them go to church too! But they do not really trust Jesus because they substitute their own appetites as gods to be satisfied. There is no good spiritual future for such people, only destruction: and no joy-filled lifestyle, only shame.

Their essential problem is that they have rejected Calvary as the solution to a sinful world, and have lowered their horizon to the ground at their feet. Their mind is full of feeble worldly fixes to classic spiritual problems. They may be characterised by high energy projects, high grumbling inertia or hopeless apathy. No wonder Paul was in tears over them. Many are seduced into dutifully caring for family or making money, but without ever wondering if their lives honour the Jesus who died for them. So, in a busy world with many pressures, we must remember that righteousness that does not come through Christ's cross is eternally useless. We who claim to know Jesus, must have a heavenly horizon and navigate there through the cross of Christ (see [www.crosscheck.org.uk](http://www.crosscheck.org.uk) to know more). Those who love Jesus because of the cross will stand out from the crowd, and some will be persecuted; but that is infinitely better than to be an enemy of the cross of Christ.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord. You know the many pressures which I face, and how easily I think of worldly solutions instead of seeking Your grace. Help me to find cleansing through Your blood shed on the cross, and to move from my earth-bound mindset - so that I will not be a disappointment to You. Although others may scorn the cross, help me to grow in my love for my crucified and risen Saviour to whom I am accountable. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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**GREAT EXPECTATIONS**

**Phil. 3:20-21** *But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. (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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True Christians are only temporary residents on earth; but while they are here, they have already been accepted as citizens of heaven. In comparison with eternity, our lifespan is pitifully short, and so believers in Jesus ought to be focussing on Him. Because we belong to God's heaven (see [www.crosscheck.org.uk](http://www.crosscheck.org.uk) to find out more), we should be investing in what Jesus will reward when He returns (see [Matt 6:19-21](#)).

In contrast with the world-lings around us who have no option but to set their minds on earthly things, and invent unreliable solutions to the world's corruption; we expect Jesus Christ to reveal Himself and exercise Kingly control one day. The first transformation He will make is to give us new bodies, like that of Jesus after His resurrection. Even those who have been long dead will be given physical bodies with which to rise (like Jesus did at the ascension), so that they can meet the Lord in the air (see [1 Thess 4:13-18](#)). Those who are still alive when He comes will join those who have 'fallen asleep in Christ'.

The shackles which hold our sinful bodies to the pain and shame of this world, will be snapped, and the power of God will liberate the church first; and then the whole creation (see [Rom 8: 18-23](#)). If that is true, and it certainly is, what sort of people should we be (see [2 Peter 3:11-12](#)). A heavenly perspective will also transform our daily ambitions as we live in the 'transit lounge' of earth. No longer will we need to keep proving how great we are at work, because we will want to proclaim the greatness of our Saviour. Our appetite for self-glory will diminish as we anticipate the privilege of sharing His glory. The proud, pushy assertion and the subtler manipulation which spoil business relationships, and serve no eternal purpose, can be discarded. Not only will Jesus be pleased, but your colleagues will be very grateful for a little taste of heaven as you start to live as though you are going there!

**Prayer:** *Almighty God. Thank You for the privilege of belonging to You and the Kingdom of Heaven. Help me to remember to live as a temporary resident in this world, not investing in my own honour but Your glory. And please help me to have a ready answer to those who ask me why I hold lightly to all this world offers. Through Jesus Christ. Amen.*

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**W@WPhil40**

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**POSITIVE ENCOURAGEMENT**

**Phil. 4:1** *Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends! (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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Like wise parents wishing their children to excel as they grow up, the Apostle Paul is watching over the church in Philippi. He longs for them to be the best possible representatives of Jesus. Paul had great affection for those people because they loved the Lord Jesus, he has seen them grow in faith and confidence in the gospel; and they have been the most faithful supporters (financially and in prayer) of all the churches he has planted. Few pastors or missionaries could have enjoyed such warmth of devoted and sacrificial giving. Indeed, that church is still a model of how to honour ministers and overseas partners.

In describing them as his 'joy and crown', Paul is likening them to the laurel wreath given to winning athletes in the original Olympic Games. He is saying that he could not have achieved so much in faith and ministry if they had not been such loyal encouragers, supplying his needs and praying for him. I wonder how many church members realise that their ministers, if they are to excel as pastors and evangelists, really need the wholehearted encouragement of the church. Faithful supporters are as essential to ministry and mission as those who serve 'on the front line'.

But Paul is keen to urge them on further. He wants them to stand firm (against the world, the flesh and the devil) for Jesus. He knows that they can only resist temptation, wrong reactions and bad decisions if they remain in Christ. Jesus had said, "*I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.*" ([John 15:5](#)). He does not want them to fall short of victory; either for their own sakes, his, or especially for the sake of Jesus. The previous verses ([Philippians 3:12-21](#)) describe how we can all win through; not relying on ourselves, not blackmailed by the past, looking straight ahead to the prize of heaven and always grateful for the cross.

So, don't think that 'ordinary Christians' are irrelevant to the ministry and mission of the church - they are essential. But like those in the 'front line' they also have to be equally close to Jesus, and equally committed to pray and give and share. If they fail in their support role, God's work is held back: if they are obedient, God's work advances to His glory.

**Prayer:** *Gracious God. Thank You for giving me so much help through those who have taught me how to obey Your Word, and supported me in learning to become a follower of Jesus. Help me now to play my part in encouraging those who strengthened me, and giving so that Your work can be completed, and not held back because of my apathy or disobedience. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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