

Word notes Sunday 24/06/2012 Tony Hodge
Church Without Walls
Philippians 3

Summary (read this bit out to remind cell members what was said on Sunday)

Key Text: Philippians 3

(Tony read only a few selected verses on Sunday so it would be good to read the whole chapter first)

People “live for” different things. For some Sunday’s loss by the England football team in the Euro 2012 quarter-final against Italy will have been a crushing blow to their hopes and dreams. For some their aim in life is to get that dream job, to amass wealth, to wield power or establish a great work. On a smaller scale it might be local social action or public service. Whatever we “live for” whether small or grand can define us, give us identity, direction and self worth.

Paul was just such a man - “a Hebrew of Hebrews” educated and dedicated to protecting Jewish culture and religion, persecuting and watching them killed if not actively involved in the killing himself. A Zealot – or possibly in today’s language a fundamentalist bent on Jihad. And then we read that he counts this as loss, the things he did as “rubbish” (NIV – the KJV is more accurate in translating this as “dung” – excrement and detestable things). What has changed his mind, what does he now use all his energies to pursue?

Remember Paul is writing to his friends at Philippi, urging them in chapter 1 not to get caught up in selfish ambitions but in chapter 2 to be like Christ. Now in chapter 3 (remember these chapter divisions have been added later by translators) he tells his friends (and us) to give their all in coming closer to Christ by truly following in his steps – see verses 10 & 11. He doesn’t see himself as having “made it” yet but keeps his eyes forward, forgetting the stuff he’s left behind, and straining (using strong effort) towards what is ahead – the prize in Christ. All who are mature should feel the same and if not, well God will make that clear to you. Don’t have your mind on earthly things; remember your citizenship is in heaven, that’s where you should be building for the future. Jesus said similar things in Luke 12:29-34 and 9:23-25.

Application (this is the bit where cell members get to participate. Lead discussions around these points)

What things do you “live for”, those things that “get you out of bed” in the morning, that you chase after or have as goals in your life?

Which of these are building into your future in heaven?

Paul says all mature Christians should have this same view - how do you measure your maturity in Christ?

Read verses 10 & 11. NB that “attain” means to accomplish or to arrive at as if on a journey. Where is your journey taking you, this week, this year, in the next 5 years?

Take time to review (privately in silence or briefly discussing in pairs) which of your answers to the first question are “earthly things”, maybe the result of a bit of selfish ambition. Is the Lord asking you to change your mind about these things and to give them less or no prominence in your life? You could start in prayer right now to put these at His feet and take up the ambitions and goals He has for you.

Witness (this is the bit where the cell talks and prays about how to share the Good News)

Relaxation and having fun is not ungodly. Even better is to include our faith-lives in those things. What things do each enjoy doing or are good at and how can they be ways to build relationship with other people and hence allow us to be a witness to our faith in Jesus?