

- Reflect on the personal relationships, good and bad, that characterised Paul's life and ministry. cf Pete Greig and his five year plan for 24-7 prayer (Red Moon Rising, postscript)

Paul needs friends (v.9-13)

- Do we know our need for Christian compatriots?
 - or do we pretend - even to ourselves - we are able to be independent...?
 - who do we trust, who do we pray with, who do we open ourselves to their scrutiny?
 - hard as this is for me, beginner though I am, if we are not at least beginning into these kinds of relationships, there is a problem...
 - are we greater than Paul, that we don't need such friends?

Paul suffers harm (v.10,14-15)

- Personal let downs and attacks do more than just hurt, they harm:
 - those let downs and hurts that assail us, and that sometimes we cause others, are actually an affront to the gospel, to the new life it is meant to be building within us...
 - its more than just "I said something I shouldn't have, I'm sorry, no lasting damage done..."
 - our words, our betrayals, our insecurities, our let-downs, our not stepping up to the mark when others hoped we would, all those actually damage the life of Christ between us...
- Relationships are both potentially hugely supportive and valuable, but they are so partly because they also have the potential to be hugely destructive...

Paul knows the Lord's support (v.16-18)

- Despite human failure, the Lord still supported Paul:
 - but the sense is that the support should have come from his fellow Christians...
- Situation is trial, probably in Rome
- Note that the Lord's rescue isn't necessarily from death!
 - v.18 - will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom... safely there is either through death or at his second coming!!

Paul values fellow-workers (v.10-12,19-22)

- Greet: go out of your way to affirm their value to me
 - note also Paul's awareness of and concern for all that his fellow workers are up to
 - do we, without slipping into gossip or feeling the need to know everything that is going on, seek to pay attention to what is happening in the lives of our fellow believers so that we can support them?

Do we?

- Need and value and cultivate relationships of mutual support and dependence?
- Know what it is to suffer harm...
 - and do we go out of our way to avoid causing harm?
- Do we look to the Lord for our ultimate support?
- Do we value other labourers
 - including the one who are part of different churches, who do things differently?