

The Good Work in You

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Preacher: Don Coleman

[0:00] I want us to focus on a single verse of Scripture.

And it is Philippians chapter 1 and verse 6. And so you can be turning to that. And you remember, I'm sure, that on Sunday mornings I have started a series of sermons through the book of Philippians, this marvelous letter, this love letter of the Apostle Paul.

And last Sunday I touched on this verse, but really as a part of the whole, part of a larger text, verses 3 through 11.

And we looked at that last week. And I did not spend really any time on verse 6. It's a powerhouse verse of Scripture. But I didn't spend any time on it, really.

Because my plan was to return to it this Sunday morning and to allow it to prepare our hearts, again, for our worship together. When we worship together, celebrate together, memorialize together this very holy supper, the Lord's Supper, this holy ordinance.

[1:16] And this is how it will prepare our hearts, I think. It helps us understand, if we don't already, or at least to further fortify our understanding, of why we observe this supper.

And what it is that we are memorializing. It is the memorial supper of the Lamb in that sense. What it is we're memorializing. And not just memorializing, because it's more than a memorial.

The Lord's Supper is a celebration. And so this, I hope, will help us understand or highlight the basis for our celebration.

The celebration of this supper. And, of course, the answer to all of those questions, the whys and the what-fors, the answer is Jesus, our Savior.

And, specifically, our salvation in Him. And this is what we're going to be memorializing and celebrating. And so, look at the text. And I want to begin reading with verse 3, though verse 6 is going to be the focus of the sermon this morning.

[2:26] I want to begin with verse 3. And so, if you've found it there, chapter 1, verse 3. This, again, is Paul describing the substance of his prayers for the Philippian church.

And he says this, I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always, in every prayer of mine, making requests for you all with joy, he says.

With joy. Now, why with joy? Well, verse 5. For your fellowship. That's why. For your fellowship. That's koinonia. Fellowship or partnership in the Gospel from the first day until now.

So, stopping right there for just a minute. What was the source and substance of Paul's joy when he thought about and prayed for the believers at Philippi?

What was the source and substance of it? Simply this. That he and the Philippian believers were partners in something big.

[3:37] Really big. Something huge. It was something, Paul is going to tell us here in verse 6, that God had done in each of them.

It was something that God was doing in each of them. And it was something God would one day complete in each of them.

A masterwork. A glorious work. It was the work of the Gospel. A work that they were participants in. What Paul is saying here. Something that they were participants together in. They were serving in the Gospel. That was the source of his joy. They were serving together.

Paul and the believers there at Philippi. They were koinonia. They were partners. They were participants. Fellow participants in the Gospel. In serving the Gospel.

[4:38] Like many of you, by the way. Right here this morning. Be it a Sunday school teacher. Or substitute teacher.

Or working in the nursery. Or going to youth camp. Like Wes over there. Fellow participant.

I tell you these things bring joy to a pastor's life. This is what Paul is saying. See, he's saying we're all participants in serving the Gospel.

This was the source of his joy every time he thought of the Philippians. If you're going to go to Colorado and be a part of that mission trip there. You're participants in the Gospel.

Many of you have signed up and are already preparing to serve in our vacation. Bible school this year. You will be participants in the Gospel.

[5 : 37] And so this was the source of his great joy. The work of the Gospel. A work they were participants in. But more significant to our thoughts today, this was also a work they were recipients of.

We must not miss that. In fact, really this comes first, doesn't it? The source of Paul's joy in regard to the Gospel was that the people he was writing to were participants, but also recipients of the Gospel.

That is, they were saved. I mean, that's a source of joy. He thought of the people there at Philippi. He thought of Lydia. He thought of that demon-possessed girl that was saved.

And he thought of the jailer that was saved. And many, many others. And the households of some of these that were saved there. And all became a part of this new church at Philippi.

And he thought of them. And he thought of them in regard to the Gospel. And it was a source of great joy that they were recipients of it. They were saved.

[6 : 47] And being saved, as he's going to explain in verse 6. So, this was the source of his joy. Because Paul was rock-solid sure about the work of God in them.

Verse 6. Being confident, he said. Being confident of this very thing. Being confident. Confident. And that word just simply means that Paul was fully persuaded.

In fact, the King James Version, I think, uses the word persuaded as a translation. He was fully persuaded about this work of God in their lives. As well as his own life.

Or we could put it this way. He was absolutely convinced. Of what? Convinced of what? Persuaded of what?

Confident. Confident about what? The saving work of God in their lives. In his life and in the life of those he was writing to.

[7 : 50] A work, Paul says, God had done in them. A work that he said God is doing, is doing in you.

And a work that he will finish. That was his confidence. Verse 6. Look at it as we put it all together. Being confident. Now look closely. Because I'm going to point out a few words along the way here in verse 6.

And then we'll flesh this out. We'll dig deep. Being confident. Sure. Convinced. Of this very thing. That he who has begun.

Now mark that. Has begun. A good work in you will complete it. Take note of that.

We'll complete it. Until. Notice that. Until the day of Jesus Christ. Now the good work of course is salvation.

[8 : 49] It's the good work of salvation. I don't need to spend time explaining that. That's obvious. And there are three words. And I have emphasized them. I said mark these here.

There are three words in the Greek text. Though more words in the English. But three words in this text. In the original text. That help us understand what Paul was so sure about.

In regard to salvation. Let me point them out to you. In this way. First. Has begun. Has begun.

Or if you have an ESV or NASB. It's just the simple past. Began. Began. He began something. And this verb. Points to a work.

Started in the past. At a particular time in the past. That's what. Has begun. Or began. And refers to a work that. Has begun.

[9 : 47] Has started in the past. All right. Very simple. Second. Will complete. Or perform. Or perfect. In some other translations.

This verb. Points us to the work. A work. Being done right now. Present tense. But not yet completed.

Not yet done. Not yet finished. And third. The word. Until. Until. Or at the day of.

In the ESV. Because I know some of you have that translation. Until. Or at the day of. Now. This is a preposition. In the Greek text. And it points to a time.

When the work will be completed. All three of those things are right here in this verse. Now. All three. Refer to the same work.

[10:44] All right. It's not. We're not talking about three different works. We're talking about the same work. We're not really even talking about phases of a work. Although. It would be easy for us to.

Conceptualize it in those terms. But it's the same work. And it is the work of salvation. And it is a work. That we should understand. In these three tenses. Past.

Present. And future. Past. Present. Future. I. Have been saved. I. Am. Being. Saved. I.

Will. Be. Saved. Past. Present. Future. All three of those are right here in this one single verse. In verse six. Now.

Having said that. Here's what I want you to think about this morning. Each and every one of you.

This is what I want you to think about. This morning.

[11:41] When we work. As we work through this verse. This is what I want you to think about. Paul was absolutely convinced.

That God's work of salvation in his life. And in the lives of the believers of Philippi. He was absolutely convinced about that work. Are you?

This is the question I want you to consider. Are you as convinced? Are you as convinced. It's not about the work of Philippi. But about the work. In your own life.

Do you have that assurance? Do you have the same confidence? Are you. Sure. That what is going on here in verse six. Is going on in your life.

I'm serious about it. This is a serious question. First. And seriously consider this question.

[12:43] Are you sure God has begun. This good work in you. Are you sure about that? You may profess to be a believer here this morning.

Baptized. Member of the church. But I ask you right now. Are you sure. Paul was sure. Are you sure.

God has begun this good work in you. Now of these three truths concerning the work of salvation. The three tenses of salvation. That Paul highlights in this one verse.

Verse six. This is the one you better be sure about. You better be sure about. This is the one you must know has taken place.

And you can know. You ought to know it. God gives true believers assurance. Of their salvation.

[13:46] Do you have it. If you do not have it. Then may I say to you. It is not safe. For you.

To believe that you're saved. It's not a safe thing to believe that. If you have no assurance. If you're not sure. That God has begun this good work.

We're talking here about the new birth. We're talking about salvation in the one tense that we normally think of it. We're talking about the new birth.

When Jesus says you must be born again. We're talking about when you were birthed from above.

We're talking about your conversion. Your salvation. When God graciously saved you.

When you repented of your sin. When you placed your faith in Jesus Christ. When you became a follower. A disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. When you received a new faith.

[14:40] A new forgiveness. A new freedom. A new father. A new family. A new future. We're talking about that event that took place in the past. When God began this good work in you.

Are you sure that God has begun this good work in you? Now let's understand a few quick things about this work of salvation.

That God has begun. Let's understand three things very quickly. In the first place and foremost. It is a work of God. It is a work of God.

Paul said he began this good work. He did it. Not you. We need to understand that first and foremost.

Ephesians 2. 1. And you. He made alive. Who were dead in trespasses and sins. In which you once walked according to the course of this world. Salvation is the work of God.

[15:41] And this work is done. It's done. But it's not finished. He said, wait a minute. How can something be done at the same time unfinished?

How can that be? Because as we shall see, the work of salvation in another sense is an ongoing work of God. But you say, now wait a minute. Is salvation really done if at the same time it isn't finished?

Yes. How? How? Because it's the work of God. That's how. And because it is the work of God, salvation's completion is as certain as if it were already accomplished.

Let me move to the second truth concerning the work of salvation that has begun in those who have believed in Jesus. The second thing. It is a work of God.

Yes. He did it. Not you. Second. It is a work of grace. It is a work of grace. If he did it.

[16 : 54] And not you. Then it is a work of grace. Right? As opposed to a meritorious work. Something you earned. It's a work of grace.

Ephesians 2, 8 and 9. A very familiar passage. And I want to read it in a different translation. Kind of bring it out. For by grace. For by grace. Grace.

What is that? That's God's riches at Christ's expense. You ought to just remember it that way.

G-R-A-C-E. God's riches at Christ's expense. For by grace.

You have been saved. That's past. He began this good work. For by grace you have been saved. Through faith. Faith.

Faith is forsaking all. I trust Him. That's how you ought to remember faith. Forsaking all. I trust Him. For by grace you have been saved. Through faith. And this is not your own doing.

[17 : 52] Not your own doing. It is the gift of God. Not as a result of works. That is. Not earned. In any way.

So that no one may boast. You're not going to get to heaven. And get there. And be able to boast about anything you did in life. To get you there. In fact.

If you're boasting in your ability to get there. You won't get there. Simple as that. Romans 5.6 For while we were still weak.

Or helpless. Or without strength. Spiritual strength. Of any kind. At the right time. Christ died for the ungodly.

God demonstrates His own love toward us. In that while we were yet sinners. Christ died for us. You see the work of salvation is a work of grace.

[18 : 51] And Paul said here in Philippians 1.6. He began a good work. If He did it. And not you. Then it is a work of grace.

It is grace. In Romans 11.6 says. But if it is by grace. It is no longer on the basis of works. If by grace. It is not works. Otherwise grace.

Is no longer grace. So the work of salvation is a work of God. He did it. Not you. And the work of salvation is a work of grace. He did it.

If He did it. And not you. Then it is grace. And then third. It is a work of glory. It is a work of glory. And get the clear logic of this.

If He did it. And not you. If He did it. Purely on the basis of grace. Then He gets the glory. He gets the glory.

[19 : 49] So then are you sure God has begun this good work in you? Are you sure? Paul was sure. He was sure. Are you? If not, why?

And if not. If you are not sure. Then it is not safe for you to believe that you are saved. Second. Are you sure? God will complete this good work in you? Are you sure that God will complete? This is what Paul said. He will complete it.

Are you sure? Paul was sure. Are you sure that God will complete this good work in you?

Remember I said that the words will complete point to a work that has been started.

But not yet finished. And that is salvation in this sense is an ongoing work. It is an ongoing work. Paul said it this way.

[20 : 45] And let me give you a little different translation. He said, I am sure of this. I mean you can just sense the emotion behind this.

The confidence behind this. Paul said, I am sure of this. That he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion.

That's confidence. And there are two implications here. First of all, this is clearly a process he is referring to. It's a process.

He will complete it. It's ongoing. It's a process. The Bible calls it sanctification. First John 3.2.

Beloved, now we are children of God.

That's a reference to what he began. It's a done thing. Your salvation. We are children of God right now. But then he goes on. It has not yet been revealed.

[21:46] What we shall be. We are not going to be the same. There is going to be some growth. There are going to be some things happening.

And ultimately, we are going to be something we never dreamed of. And it's not yet been revealed. We don't know at all yet. Because it's ongoing. It's out in the future.

It's a present process. But we know that when he is revealed, that is when Jesus does come. And this gets us on into the future. And we'll get to this tense in just a moment. But he says, we know that when he is revealed, we shall be like him.

For we shall see him as he is. And so there is a process taking place here. This suggests something else about this ongoing work of salvation.

This is clearly a process. But also, this is clearly a plan. It's the plan of God. This is the plan of God. The process to make us more and more like Jesus is the plan.

[22:52] And it's a very deliberate plan. It is a very methodical plan. And indeed, it is foreordained. Foreordained.

Paul said, he will complete it. He will complete it. It's going to happen. You know, you and I might start things whenever we finish.

But God never starts anything he doesn't finish. And he's going to finish this. It will be complete. This salvation will be complete. But it's a process. And it's part of the plan.

Romans 8.29, for whom he foreknew, he also predestined, predetermined to be conformed to the image of his son.

That he might be the firstborn. That is, the son might be the firstborn among many brethren. I love that. Among many brethren. That's me. Jesus is the firstborn among many brethren.

[23:50] That's talking about me. Is he talking about you there? I hope so. So, are you sure God has begun this good work in you?

And are you sure that God will complete this good work in you? Are you confident about that? As confident about that as Paul was?

See, with Paul, this is not just talk. It's not just religious talk here. He meant it.

Paul said in Galatians 2.20, I have been crucified with Christ. And it's no longer I who live. Something began.

It started. But it's not me living now. This ongoing thing in my life. But Christ lives in me. He lives and is living day by day in me.

[24:47] And the life then which I now live in this flesh, that is in this body, I live by faith, by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

See? Do you hear Paul's confidence here? This is assurance that Paul had.

Do you have it? I'm serious. This is an important question to answer. I can't answer it for you. Do you have this assurance?

One more thing. Are you sure that when Jesus comes, God's work in you will be complete?

It will be done. It will be finished. It will be accomplished. Are you sure about that? Paul was. Now remember, has begun points to a work started at some particular time in the past.

[25:55] It points to our conversion. Well, our regeneration. Conversion to Christ. Our justification before Him.

That's what it points to. It's a work that has been done. Will complete points to work being done right now in the present tense, but not yet completed.

It points to our sanctification. Until points to a time when the work will be finished. Gloriously finished.

And it points to our glorification. Our glorification. That hasn't happened yet. It won't happen in this life, by the way. When will this happen?

Does Paul tell us? He says it will happen at the day of Jesus Christ. The day of Jesus Christ.

[27:00] That's an important phrase. And don't confuse the day of Jesus Christ with the oft-repeated phrase in the Bible, the day of the Lord.

They're not the same. The day of Jesus Christ is not the same as the day of the Lord. The day of the Lord will be a day of judgment. And that's not for you.

Or me, if you're in Christ. The day of Jesus Christ refers to a different day. It refers to the day when Jesus returns.

And He returns for His church. That will be a glorious day. That's when this last tense of salvation will occur.

That He's going to complete. And He's going to keep on working on that until the day of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 1.3 really puts all this together.

[28:07] Listen to it very carefully. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Exclamation point. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Why? According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope. Born again. That has passed.

Has begun. Born again. But we've been born again to a living hope. That's right now and from now on. This is in the present.

A living and ever living hope. Born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we get to the future.

To an inheritance that is imperishable. Undeified.

[29:07] Unfading. Kept in heaven for you. It's right there for you. It's being kept for you.

In a sense under lock and key, under guard for you. It cannot be violated. It cannot be defiled. It's not going to dissolve or corrupt or get stale.

It's kept there in heaven for you. For you. Who, by God's power, Peter said, are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time when Jesus comes.

and then he says, in this, in this you rejoice. Do you? You do if you have this assurance. You do if you are as rock solid, convinced, and sure as Paul was.

And you say, well that's the apostle Paul. No. No. No. That should be true of every born again believer. This kind of assurance that God has begun.

[30:30] He's working and will complete it and work on that all the way until Jesus comes. And when he comes that work will be done. it will be done.

That's real comfort. Now dear people, again, what God starts, He always finishes. Always finishes. Are you sure that you are part of that right now?

Thank you.