

Paul's Great Confidence

Philippians 1:6

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Let's go back to Philippians 1:1-6. Paul says, "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons," and we spent quite a bit of time on that introduction last Wednesday night. In verse 2, the salutation, "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ." This is Paul's greeting, verses 1-2. Then, we looked at Paul's gratitude, verses 3-5, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, 5 For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now." Paul was grateful for them and did these things. He prayed for them and thanked God for their "...fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now."

I failed to mention it last week in verse 5. When Paul talks about their "...fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now," not only was he in sweet fellowship and koinonia with the believers in Philippi, but as I mentioned, they supported him financially so I'm convinced that behind his words here are the idea, "You supported me in gospel ministry." The book of Philippians is a missionary thank-you letter. Paul was supported by that church and so he thanked them for their support and that they were together getting out the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul was thankful, thoughtful, and prayerful for others; and he was thankful for their participation.

The word "fellowship" is that Greek word koinonia, which means joint participation. As believers, we have fellowship in the Father and in His Son Jesus Christ, but we can also together participate in getting out the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. Then, notice he says, "...from the first day until now." It had been ten years since that church was birthed in Philippi on Paul's second missionary journey. If you followed my instruction last week, you went home, read Acts 17, and got the background of the birth of the church in Philippi. For ten years they had supported Paul in gospel ministry, and he was thankful for that.

In verse 6, Paul turns and expresses his confidence in God for the Philippians. He is thankful to God for the Philippians and was thankful to the Philippians that God was working in them, that God would work through them, and that God would complete His work. Look at verse 6, "Being confident," there's our theme, "of this very thing, that he," referring to God the Father, "which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

Paul's confidence was not in man nor in the believers in Philippi, Paul's confidence was in God. This is a verse that expresses Paul's confidence in the Lord. It's an indication that we should put our trust and our confidence in God. When we think of our salvation, we need to realize that it's God's work from beginning to end. In the book of Jonah it says, "Salvation is of the LORD," so from beginning to end, it's a work of God's divine grace; and Paul was confident that God, working in them, would complete that work which he hath started.

This verse, I believe, is in the category of one of the strong, clear verses in the New Testament that indicates a very important doctrinal truth that when God starts a work in the heart of an individual, that God brings it all the way to completion. If there is salvation, He does sanctification and it leads to glorification. Just the topic itself, I'll just kind of introduce it and won't go into it, is a controversy for some believers. I don't know why, it's not for me. It was something that years ago I held a different view, but as I studied the Bible year after year—studied the epistles of Paul, studied the book of Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians—I actually became, at the time somewhat reluctantly, convinced that once we are in Christ, we can never be lost and can never lose our salvation. Some say you can give it back to God, but I don't see any indication of that at all in the Scripture as well.

Christians are divided over this idea of you can be saved, then if you don't walk close to the Lord or stay true to the Lord or maybe you apostatize or turn back from the Lord, that you can lose your salvation. You've heard me talk about it many times, and I've touched on them. I'm not going to go into all that today, just to say that I believe that once you are saved, and I'm not embarrassed or ashamed to use the expression, once you are saved, you're saved, which means you're always saved. Once you've been born again...the important point is you must be born again. If you're just professing and not possessing, then you never were really saved.

When we talked about apostasy, I pointed out that they were never really saved, that they went back because they were professors not possessors. I think the whole New Testament bears that out. I think the passages that cause people problems, sometimes called the "warning passages," are warning us to make sure that we have it, not warning us that we can lose it, and there's a big difference. Those passages are warning us, "Make sure that you are saved; make your calling and election sure," not warning us that we could lose it.

Now, for me to lose my salvation, I would have to become unregenerated. When you're born again or saved, you are given new life by the Holy Spirit, you're given spiritual life. It's called regeneration. So, to become lost or unsaved, you'd have to unregenerate yourself. God regenerates you, and you cannot unregenerate yourself. There's no clear teaching or passage or any indication on what I would need to do to unregenerate myself. If I believe that I could lose my salvation, then it's kind of impossible to ever be fully assured that I'm going to get to Heaven, "I hope I'll get to Heaven. I might get to Heaven, but I may not. I may backslide or turn away from the Lord or fall into sin, a sin so grievous that God wouldn't forgive, and I'll be lost." None of that is true scripturally. But there are those who feel like if you teach you cannot lose your salvation, that you are giving license to a sinful lifestyle. Again, I argue biblically that if you're truly born again or truly regenerated, you're not going to want to sin, dishonor God, grieve the Holy Spirit, or lose your fellowship with Him.

Sin in the life of the believer breaks fellowship, but it doesn't mean the loss of sonship. That's what 1 John is all about. Are you a child of God? If you confess Him, you "...walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship," with Him, "...and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." If we sin, and "we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

When Jesus washed Peter's feet, He said, "If I don't wash your feet, you have no participation with Me," and Peter said, "Well, give me a complete bath!" Jesus said, "Whoa, whoa, whoa! Cool your jets, Peter." He said, "He that has already been bathed only needs his feet washed." That is a great illustration of what it means to be born again, you've had a bath, or the washing of regeneration and the renewing in the Holy Spirit. As we walk through life daily, we get our feet dirty, and we need them washed so that we can have fellowship, participation. We don't need a bath again. There's no indication in the Bible that you're born again, again and again and again. "Well, I've been born again three times." You can only be born once. If you ever had eternal life and lost it, then you didn't really have eternal life (underline the word "eternal.") Once you have it, you cannot lose it. Again, I could go on, on this subject, for quite some time. Now, I don't think that we should divide over, be angry with others, fight over it, or say that it's unorthodox to hold one view over the other and say they're not Christian, but I do believe that there are some important implications for you as a Christian to be able to be assured that what God starts in your life, God will complete, so that you can have absolute assurance.

In the epistles of John he talks about, "These things have I written unto you...that ye may know the ye have eternal life," and I believe it's important to be able to live the Christian life to know that, "I am going to Heaven. I have assurance." I believe that this verse is a marvelous verse of assurance for the true believer that what God starts in their life, the work of salvation, and we're going to talk about that more, that it ends with glorification—complete it, finish it—until the day of Jesus Christ. He was confident in God, not in man, and that's what it means to be assured—knowing that my sins have been forgiven, I'm a child of God, I've been taken out of the kingdom of darkness and translated into the Kingdom of Light, I have the Holy Spirit, I've been born again, I'm regenerated, and that I'm secure and kept by the power of God until that day when I'm with Him face to face.

The word confident in verse 6 refers to a settled persuasion of mind and will. I think that would be a pretty good definition of assurance. It's a settled persuasion of mind and will. Paul's confidence was that God started working in their lives and that God would finish what He began. Now, you can twist this Scripture every which way you want, but the verse by itself stands alone. It's pretty clear that God starts, God continues, and God completes the work; that He will bring it to completion. Paul knew what God had done and was doing in his own life, but he also knew that God would do the same in the lives of others as well.

Just real quickly, when I think of my salvation, and when I say, "my salvation," I mean me personally, John Miller, what God did for me many years ago. I think of how God has kept me, preserved and watched over me, and brought me back when I started to wander. I think of the song, Prone to wander, Prone to leave the God I love, yet He, the Good Shepherd, leaves the 99 and goes after the one that is lost and brings us back. I look around at how good God has been to me personally. I read this verse, and it just rings so true that God started a work in me and God will finish that work in me.

There are those times where the darkness comes in and we have doubts, fears, we wander, and Satan whispers in your ear, "You're not really saved. You're not going to Heaven. God

didn't forgive you. You're not a child of God." To be able to say confidently, "I know that God will not let me go. I know that I'm in His strong arms, His strong hands." It brings great assurance and love for God. I believe personally that this doctrine is not only biblical, but essential to a healthy Christian life so you're not walking in fear and you can be effective as a witness to others knowing that you're saved, that you're a true child of God.

I certainly know that this verse has been an encouragement to me personally over the years to know that God will take me safely home. I love the stanza in John Newton's "Amazing Grace,"
Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, And grace will lead me home, and that's true of every Christian, every child of God.

Now, there's only two main points, if you're taking notes, that I want to bring out for verse 6. The first is God began a work in them. Notice three things. First, Who did the work? God. God began a work in them, God's personal involvement in their lives. When you think of your salvation, you need to realize that God sought you, He bought you, and He's keeping you by His grace, mercy, and love.

Again, I think of my salvation. I was not seeking Him, He was seeking me. When I was seeking Him, it was Him seeking me to seek Him. Did you write that down? I don't very often share my testimony, but I was a senior in high school just getting ready to graduate. All of the sudden I just began to realize, My life is empty. I'm going nowhere. I'm a sinner. I need Christ. Somehow, someway, I got a Kenneth Taylor, Living Letters Bible for the book of Ephesians (my sister actually left it in my bedroom), and I started to read it. As I began to read it, I began to weep. I hadn't read the Bible since I was a little boy or ever really read the Bible. I'm a senior in high school, and here I am crying in my bedroom, anticipating my high school graduation where everybody's going to party and get wiped out, do drugs, and spend the night doing crazy stuff. I just came under this deep conviction. I remember the night of graduation, I left all my friends, all of the crowd, all the parties, and I went back home. I shut the door in my bedroom and just read this Bible again. I couldn't believe it, like, "What's going on? Why am I doing this?" Here I am crying. I'm repenting. I'm turning back to God.

When I was 8 years old I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I remember the night vividly—walking down an aisle, praying the sinner's prayer. Leaving church that night, stars were bright and brilliant, and I just felt changed in my heart—a little 8-year-old boy. Then, I wandered away from the Lord, but He always came to reach out to me. It was just a miraculous, wonderful, amazing time in my life where God just reached down and got ahold of me. To this very day, I realize that He pursued me, He sought me, He reached out to me. Your story may be a little bit different circumstantially, but if you're a Christian, it's the same fact—God came to you, God reached out to you.

God had done a work in them by four things, if you want to write them down. First, God chose them, Ephesians 1:4, "...before the foundation of the world," that's the doctrine of election. Again, I have no problem with that doctrine that God chose us by His grace—not because there's anything in us or reason in us, but He chose us by His grace. Secondly, God called

them. He did that through the work of the Holy Spirit convicting us. You can't become a Christian unless the Spirit convicts you, so you don't just say, "Um, you know what? I'm kind of tired of being a sinner, and I want to get convicted, and I want God," it's God convicting you. The "hound dog of Heaven" comes after you and convinces you that you're a sinner and you need Christ. That's what was happening to me those few months leading up to my high school graduation, "I'm a sinner," I realized, "I need to get right with God." He chooses us, then calls us, then He saves us by His grace. He chose them, He had called them, and He saved them by His grace. Fourthly, God was keeping them. The four points are: God chose them, God called them, God saved them, and then God was keeping them by His grace. It was all the work of God.

I remember as a young Christian just being overwhelmed with this concept, God actually came to me and saved me by His grace! Now, I'm going to get there in just a moment, and I realize and understand that we must believe, we must repent, we must trust Christ, but no one is going to pursue Him unless God first pursues them.

The second thing I see here about this passage, not only God began a good work in them by working by God's divine side, but it was "a good work," notice that. This is still under my first point, "God began a work in them." God did the work, secondly, it was a good work. It was the work of salvation, it's the work of sanctification, and it's the work of service. God not only saves us, which is the doctrine of justification, and justification is the act of God, it's not a process, where God declares the believing sinner to be righteous; and He does that on the basis of the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. If you are a Christian, God declares you righteous, and the righteousness of Jesus Christ is imputed to you. This is what's called the believer's standing. Salvation is His work for me. Sanctification is His work in me, which is progressive. The moment I'm justified, He begins to work in me again, and He begins to change me into the image of Jesus Christ over a lifetime process. That's His work in me. That's progressive.

Thirdly, is service. This verse involves that as well. It's not just a verse on the security of the believer, it's a verse on that God has a plan for you, that God has a purpose for you, that God starts working in your life to fulfill His purpose through the process of sanctification. I found my life's purpose, my calling, and my ministry by responding in faith to Christ, but it started with salvation, it was the work of sanctification; and then service, you might say, is His work through me. So, it's salvation for me, sanctification in me, and service through me. A person becomes a Christian because God has begun a good work in them, not because they are doing a good work for God.

Write down Ephesians 2:8-10 where Paul says, "For by grace are ye saved," you have been saved. It's a present possession. "...Not of works, lest any man should boast." He then goes on to say, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works," that's God working in us. We're His poiema, His work of art, His workmanship. It began in time when we put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast." God did the work, the work was good, and the work was begun—notice this—in you, "...in them." It's a work of

God in our hearts and in our lives.

I want you to look at Philippians 2:12-13. It's a famous verse as well that is a great commentary on verse 6, "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence," notice the statement, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Notice verse 13, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." You can't work out what God hasn't worked in. It's God working in you, and then you live it out—you live out to the fullest what God has done. That word "work out" is the same word that we use for working out a mathematical equation. You start with the numbers on the board, you work it out, and come to the conclusion; so God is working out that which He worked in you. It's the same thing going back to Philippians 1:6, what Paul says God is going to do. Genuine salvation involves a human response to divine beginnings. The faith that brings salvation happens in time, but it starts with God's election in eternity past.

Here's my second main point. I hope I haven't thoroughly confused you with my points, if you're trying to follow them. The second main point is God will finish the work in them. The first is God began a work in them, and the second is God will finish the work in them. Notice what Paul says, "...that he which hath begun," there's the beginning, "a good work in you will perform it," the word means complete or bring it to completion, and He'll do that, the date of it is "until the day of Jesus Christ." I love that!

Write down 1 Thessalonians 5:24. Paul says, "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." One of the reasons why I love not only this verse and these other verses that support the security of the believer, but because they focus on the faithfulness of God and it focuses on God, which should be the right focus when it comes to salvation. Salvation is of the Lord. What God calls, God does.

Notice Paul's certainty, He will complete it. He speaks of absolute certainty. This "completion" is a reference to your glorification. We have God's election, God's regeneration, God's sanctification, how does it end? Glorification. These might just seem like theological terms or biblical words and you're like, "Uhhh, I don't understand any of this." If you're a Christian, you need to understand this. You need to understand what it means to be elected, what it means to be justified, what it means to be sanctified, what it means to be glorified. I've preached it a thousand times. Salvation has three tenses: past, present, and future. I've been saved, justification; I'm being saved, sanctification; I will be saved, glorification. You can go home and look in the mirror and obviously know that you're not glorified yet, but you're going to be.

One day you will be absolutely like Jesus Christ—no more sin, no more sickness, no more weakness, no more fatigue, no more naps on Wednesday afternoon before you preach. What a glorious day that will be; but until then, we wait for that completion. I know I'm saved, I know I'm not what I should be, I know I'm being saved—He's changing me as I surrender, yield, and walk in the Spirit and trust, believe, and obey His Word—but I know one day I'm going to be glorified. All of it is the work of God by His marvelous, marvelous grace. He will complete it or bring it to conclusion. God will powerfully, purposefully, completely do the work which He has

chosen for to do, and nothing can stop Him.

What can thwart or hinder the purpose and plan of God? Is God not omniscient? Does God not know the beginning or the end? Do you think God would save me...I'll give you the date, it was 1971. Do you think God would save me in 1971? What happened when I was 8 years old I don't understand, but I had my salvation go back to that time, and then God would go, "Man, it's such a bummer! I really had some plans for John Miller. I really just wanted to do a work in and through his life, and it's such a bummer. Ah! Got away. Oh well. I got a lot more out of this to work with." No. What God purposefully and powerfully plans to do, God will complete, God will fulfill. His purposes cannot be thwarted. It will be brought to completion.

Notice the completion date. It's given to us in the text, "...until the day of Jesus Christ." What is that? I believe—I could be wrong—it's the rapture of the church because when the rapture happens, two things take place: The Christians who have died and they're with the Lord but their bodies are in the grave, or maybe they've been incinerated, will be resurrected, "...the dead in Christ shall rise first," and then there will be a translation of the living saints. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, "...the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up," harpazo, snatched up, "...to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." That's the day of the Lord Jesus when He comes back for His church. The believer then will get his glorified body whether it be by resurrection or whether it be by translation, and that glorious conclusion of our salvation will have taken place. Read also 1 Corinthians 15:51-53 where Paul says, "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep," or die, "but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye...53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 "...then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." Paul's talking about the rapture of the church, and it's a marvelous truth that is to comfort the believer in Christ.

I said we were only going to look at one verse, but we're going to look at some other verses, just read them. I don't want to just quote them. Turn in your Bible to Romans 8:28, and I am going to wrap this up. Before I even read verse 28, some of you can quote it, right? It sounds pretty confident to me, "And we know," I don't think Paul had his fingers crossed and his rabbit's foot in his pocket, "that all things work together for good," doesn't God start a good work in our lives? "...to them that love God, to them who are the called," there it is, "according to his purpose." He's got a purpose. God's purposeful in our salvation. God didn't just save us to save us, God saved us to sanctify us. God saved us to make us like Jesus. God saved us to use us for His glory.

Notice Romans 8:29, "For whom he did foreknow," that word "foreknow" means set His love upon them, "he also did predestinate," which means to predetermine, "to be conformed to the image of his Son," that's what Paul was referring to in Philippians 1:6 when he said, "...will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ," we will be like Jesus, "...that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." Look at verse 30, "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also

glorified.” That’s another way in verse 30 of saying what he said in verses 28-29.

The working together for good all things is what Paul describes in verses 29-30. He doesn’t mean that if your car breaks, you’re going to get a better one; if your house burns down, you get a nicer house, “Oh well, it all worked for good.” No. He’s talking about our salvation here, “... and whom he called, them he also justified,” sanctifies and glorifies. It’s our salvation. I love Romans 4:17, God “...calleth those things which be not as though they were.” God calls what is not as though they were.

Let me just give you a couple more references that shed light on Philippians 1:6, John 10:27-29, where Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me,” and they are in My care and in My keeping, “...and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” Then, John 17:24, where Jesus said, “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory;” and Jude 1:24, “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.”

Then, believe it or not, there’s a whole host of more New Testament references, but write down Psalm 23, “The LORD is my shepherd,” I have everything I need. “He maketh me to lie down... he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness...Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,” of deepest darkness, He is with me, “...thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over...goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.” What more can you say? Psalm 23 is Philippians 1:6, “The LORD is my shepherd,” I have everything I need. All praise, all glory, all thanks, all honor be to God of our salvation. Amen?