

OUR CONFIDENCE IN GOD
Philippians 1:6

Intro: In looking for the Golden Texts of Scripture, the epistle of Paul to the Philippians where we will find several of them. Think for example of Phil. 2:12, 13. Then of Phil. 3:10, or any one of the verses which is nearby. We could hardly overlook Phil. 3:20, 21. And, of course, we would have to include Phil. 4:6, 7. We may not get to all of these, but the book of Philippians is one which we as the Lord's people turn to frequently to find encouragement and blessing for our souls. Phil. 1:6 is one verse from chapter 1 which I could not pass by.

As I have been telling you, one purpose I have in this series is to show how important the context is when considering any verse of Scripture. We can see immediately that verse 6 was not a complete sentence when Paul wrote to the Philippian church. The NASB does punctuate verse 6 so that it stands by itself, but the NKJV follows the old KJV, and the NIV includes verses 3 through 5 with verse 6, although it does end the statement with verse 6. However, even if it stands alone, the context is still important.

John Eadie, in his commentary on Philippians, had this to say about the context:

He thanked and he prayed in this confidence, a confidence which at once deepened his gratitude, and gave wings of joy to his supplications (p. 10).

In other words, if you and I can say this about others, it is going to prompt us to give thanks to God for them, and to continue to pray for them. Paul had been instrumental in founding the church at Philippi. He had seen God at work in their lives. Doubtless he had kept in touch with them, and he rejoiced at the report that the work of the Lord was continuing. He had been encouraged with them, and he wanted them to be encouraged. There are always things to discourage us in the Lord's work; we need to be on the lookout for those things that will encourage us. Nothing is more encouraging than to see evidence that God is working in the hearts and lives of people. Whatever may lie behind this statement, we can see that Paul knew that a genuine work of the Lord was going on in Philippi.

Verse 7 added to Paul's confidence. That church was involved in the same work that Paul was doing, "defending and confirming the gospel" (NIV). So it was not a vague hope that Paul had about them, but a genuine, abiding hope based upon the evidence that he could see, or had heard about, which was manifest by the way the people in the Philippian church were living and serving the Lord. It gave Paul great joy, which

he expressed to the Lord in thanksgiving, and it encouraged him to keep on praying for them. This is actually the reason for the prayer requests which he wrote out in verses 9, 10, and 11.

— So you see the context is important.

But now let us look at the verse to see what it was that Paul was writing about. First of all, let me direct your attention to the expression,

I. "A GOOD WORK."

I don't think that the context leaves any doubt but that Paul was speaking about their salvation as "a good work."

But what did he mean that it was "a **good** work"?

He meant that it was "good" as opposite to evil, and "good" because by it they had received great benefits, benefits which could never have been theirs in any other way, nor from any other source.

— In Romans we are going to see how really "good" salvation is. In the passage which I read this morning Paul was telling Titus (2:11-14) how really good it is to be saved. We have another passage in Eph. 1, verses 3-14, which tell us how "good" it is to be saved. People who do not know the Lord have a hard time believing that the message of salvation through the Gospel of Christ is "good" for them, but that is because they are blinded and ignorant because of their sin.

How "good" it is to know that our sins are forgiven! How good it is to be a child of God, and to be able to call God our heavenly Father! How good it is to be delivered from the power of sin! How good it is to have fellowship with God and with the people of God! (This also delighted the Apostle John's heart when he wrote 1 John.) Whatever you can say about the Gospel and salvation, it is all good! There is not a single thing about being saved that is bad. I have only mentioned a few of the blessings, but they all fall in the "good" category.

But notice also that it is "work," "a good work," to be sure, but still "work."

— This means that it just did not happen; it required that someone do what was necessary for salvation to be even a possibility. Who did the work? Who was Paul talking about when he said, "He which hath begun a good work in you."

His language clearly shows that the Philippians were not the ones who did the work; Paul spoke of it as a work which had been done for them by someone else.

We are told in Tit. 3:5 that our salvation is "not by works which we have done" that we are saved. And Eph. 2:8, 9 tells us that we are saved "by grace, ...and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."

But then Paul went on to tell the Ephesians, "But we are his workmanship." The Worker in salvation is God. In fact, it takes all Three Persons of the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The work of salvation is too great for any person ever to undertake it, or to complete it. This "good work" is God's work!

There would be no salvation if God had not determined that He would work to do everything necessary for our salvation. That is why we can call it "a good work," because it is God's work, and anything that God does has to be good! It couldn't be anything else but "good"!

But now, having seen that Paul was talking about salvation, and that it is "a good work" because it is God's work, let us notice the three things that he had to say about:

II. SALVATION AS THE "GOOD WORK" OF GOD.

A. The first is: He started it.

Paul speaks of God as the One Who had "begun" it. He made it possible by His electing grace, by the death of His Son, and by the convicting work of the Spirit, or we would never have been saved. We did not take the initiative with God; He took it with us. We were not seeking Him, but He sought us, found us, and brought us to Himself. That is how it got started with every one of us. The Lord Jesus told His disciples that they did not choose Him, but He chose them.

But where did He start it? Paul said here that God began this good work "in" us. It was not that He did something for us; He has done something in us. He made us different. He gave us eternal life. He made us new creatures. He changed our hearts so that we would love Him, and want to live for Him, and devote our lives to serving Him. No person has experienced this "good work" of God until they are different within.

But notice a second thing about this work:

B. He "will perform it."

As far as what God is doing in our lives is concerned, it was not finished when God began it. The work continues. The changes increase. He is performing it. That is, He is perfecting His work. We are changed, but the Lord still has much to do in our lives. We need to grow. We are saved, as the Word tells us in many places, to become like the Lord Jesus Christ. He has not left the finishing of the work to us, but just as He started it, He is going to see it through until the work of salvation is finally completed. He never quits working in our hearts. He never gives up on us. We may be inclined to give up, but He won't let us. He deals with us about our sins. He brings us to His Word. He teaches us what He wants us to know. He causes us to pray. He makes us seek out the fellowship of His people. He makes us grieve when we sin so that we will seek His forgiveness. The story of every Christian's life is a story of God at work, perfecting, completing what He began when He first brought us to Himself.

To God belongs all of the glory for all of the progress we may have made as Christians. He continues tonight His work of salvation in all of us.

One more thing:

C. The time when the work will be completed: "the day of Jesus Christ."

I don't profess to have every detail of prophecy put in place. There are many things about the future that none of us knows for certain. But I do not agree with those who say that we cannot tell when "the day of Jesus Christ" will be. It has to be the day when the Lord Jesus comes back for us. Even for those who have died, the work is not completed because their bodies are still here on earth. Look at what Paul wrote to the Philippians in the last two verses of chapter 3. He spoke of that time when even our bodies would be glorified. And the Apostle John gave us a Golden Text when he wrote those wonderful words which we find in 1 John 3:2, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God..."

This work of salvation which God started in us when He saved us, and which He has been carrying on every day since then, will finally be completed for us when the Lord Jesus comes to take us to be with Himself. What a glorious day that will be!

But now let me take you back to the beginning of this verse where we see:

III. PAUL'S CONFIDENCE.

He said, "Being confident of this very thing." This is a very strong statement.

— He was thoroughly convinced. He entertained no doubt whatsoever, but that what God had started, He would gradually perfect, and finally complete it.

One writer I consulted spoke of this verse as the perseverance of the saints. I didn't agree with him. It seems to me that Paul was talking about the perseverance of God! I believe that a person who is truly saved will persevere in his salvation to the end but only because God is persevering in the work of salvation in him until the work is finally and perfectly completed.

Concl: What an absolutely marvelous text this is! This ought to keep us praying for each other. And this ought to keep us praying for ourselves. We move ahead a little, and then we fail. And then we get up and move ahead a little more because God is continuing what He started when He saved us, and He is not going to stop until the job is done and we are safely home in heaven, made like our blessed Lord. A Christian is not self-made; he is God-made.

— We are being encouraged in these day to buy products made in the U.S.A., and told to look for that label, or that marking. The Christian has a label, too. You may not be able to read it in so many words, but it is there: "Made by God." How this ought to cause us rejoicing every day that we live.

If you are one who is without Christ, we are commissioned by God to proclaim to you this Gospel of the grace of God. It is not a message of what God wants you to do for yourself if you are to have your sins forgiven. It is a message of what God will do completely for all who come to Him in repentance and to the Lord Jesus Christ in faith, trusting them to cleanse you and change you and make you fit for heaven and glory. If Christ is not your Savior, come to Him tonight, believe on Him, trust Him to do this "good work" in you.