

GOD FINISHES WHAT HE STARTS

(Philippians 1:6)

Series: "Philippians: The Joyful Letter" (Part 4)

...Philippians 1:6 is perhaps one of the three greatest verses in the Bible that teach the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, the teaching that no one whom God has brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ will ever be lost. The other two passages are: John 10:27-30 and Romans 8:35-39.

...People lack perseverance. People start all sorts of things then drop them. But God is not like that. God never starts anything that He does not finish. He is the ultimate finisher. God perseveres.

...Has God begun something in your life, has He saved you from your sin? If so, you need never fear that you will ever be lost. Your confidence is not in yourself, neither is it in your faith, but only in God. It is He who has called us as Christians, He leads us on the journey, and He will most certainly lead us home.

THREE QUESTIONS THAT FORM THE FOUNDATION OF OUR CONFIDENCE THAT GOD WILL FINISH HIS WORK IN US.

...For each of us is a part of God's great story of redemption. A story with a beginning, middle and an ending.

I. All Of God: What Part Did God Play In My Salvation? (1:6) "He who began..."

...It is essential to understand that salvation is of the Lord from beginning to end.

A. Many people despise this, thinking human beings are responsible for their own salvation. Often it is believed that we can be accepted by God on the basis of our good deeds, and that our final salvation depends more or less on how faithful or persevering we can be. This is wrong!!!

B. Radical depravity: Since we are all born in sin, we are born lost, separated, and hostile to God. We, by nature, love the darkness, and refuse to worship and serve our Creator. (Romans 3)

...If we are saved, God must come to us first in grace. He reveals to us through His Word His standard of righteousness, He opens your eyes, and gives you the faith to believe, and draws you to Himself. Note C. S. Lewis' conversion testimony: "I came in kicking..."

C. Did you seek God? Of course you did not. You resisted Him, and He had to beat down your resistance until you yielded to Him like a vanquished enemy.

...And if ever there was a moment when you seemed to seek Him, it was only because He was there beforehand moving you to do it. "Salvation is always of God."

D. If you are a believer, it is only because you were beloved by God before the creation. He who knew all about you even before you were born, chose you, and saved you and did so that one day He might make you like the Lord Jesus Christ in love, knowledge, and holiness. (Romans 8:29-30)

...He did it this way, so that there would be no boasting in heaven. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

II. Good Work: What Is God Accomplishing In My Life Through Salvation?

...God's purpose in saving you is to transform you into the likeness of His Son...this is "The good work."

A. If you are a Christian, God has not just saved you to save you. He has a purpose in doing so. He is completing His "Good work" in you.

1. God will keep whittling away at you until He accomplishes His purpose in you, whether...

2. God is determined to do good in us. What is that good work? Romans 8:28-29 tells the goal is "Predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son..."

3. God is so delighted with Jesus that He has called millions of sinful human beings to Himself in order that Jesus might reproduce Himself in them.

- B. This also means, our growth in His likeness will also mean growth in the knowledge of our sinfulness. Sanctification means discovering how sinful we are and learning to turn to Jesus for hourly forgiveness and cleansing. As time goes on, we begin to see how sinful and ignorant we really are. Paul, "I am the chief of sinners." (1 Timothy 1:15) "O wretched man that I am." (Romans 7)

III. Leaning: What Is The Purpose Of This Saving Process In My Life?

...All of this leads us to rely on God alone, and we will never do so until we learn not to rely on ourselves.

- A. God wants you to become like Christ, and He is going to insist on it. He will teach you to live by resting on Him. We fail often, trusting in ourselves, but God will keep at you; He will not let you quit. "He will carry it on until completion until the day of Christ Jesus." (v.6)
- B. Perhaps you are saying that you will run your own life, pick your own goals, and choose your own purposes. If so, then know God may have to break you until you learn that He is determined to accomplish His purpose in you. Instead, be willing to rely upon Him for everything...

SO WHAT? WHAT DIFFERENCE SHOULD THIS MAKE IN YOUR LIFE?

1. If you know Jesus as your Savior and Lord sing and rejoice for God has called you to Himself and will finish the work of saving you. You are presently a construction project, but one day, and soon, you will be totally like Him in character.
2. Did you start off the Christian race quite well, but now find yourself off the path? Has God been dealing with you? Has He taken His joy and blessing from your life? If so, fall upon your knees and confess your sins. He will keep whittling away at you until Christ is formed in you. Don't resist, He will do His work in you. You belong to Him.
3. As you mature in your faith, you will be overwhelmed by His love and your utter sinfulness. What you initially thought was a sin here or there, will increasingly be replaced by the awareness of your sin. As you grow to be like Jesus, you too will learn to despise your sin.
4. Has God been calling you to receive His Son as your Savior and Lord? Today confess your sin, repent of it, and run to Jesus. He will save you today.

Life Group Discussion Questions

1. When thinking about the sermon on the Perseverance of the Saints, what did you find most challenging, most helpful, or troubling?
2. When the Lord was calling you to saving faith, how long did it take before you confessed Christ? For some it may take years, while others may instantly be converted. What about you?
3. What real difference does knowing that God will finish His work of salvation in you make in your life? Is there room for laziness? For pride?
4. How have you realized Christ being formed in you? How have you changed from what you once were?