

# He Who Began a Good Work in You

Text: Philippians 1:6

By Pastor Trent Boedicker

I enjoy playing with Legos, as you can tell. After we put the kids to bed on Friday, we got out these containers and dumped the pieces on the living room floor and starting building. Shhh, don't tell them. That's one of the great things about being a parent. We get to introduce all the fun toys we had as kids to our children.

There are some amazing lego kits out there that you can buy. Some of them are complex, and come with 10,000 pieces. The instruction manual is like an inch thick. It tells you step by step how to put together whatever it is that you're building (a dinosaur or a racecar or an airplane).

There are times you might get partway through, and think about giving up. It takes a lot of time, and concentration. At first, the progress is slow. It doesn't look anything like the picture on the front of the box, and you have no idea how it's supposed to come together. There are so many blocks to sort through, and it can be difficult to find the right pieces. This work in progress might sit there on the table for weeks only partially built. Every time you see it you wonder, "will I ever finish? Will it ever be complete? Or will it get tossed to the bottom of the lego bin, abandoned, and forgotten?"

If you're like me, you don't like to give up. It doesn't matter how long it takes, or how many steps there might be. If I start a project like this, I want to see it through, all the way to completion. Maybe the kids were wondering along the way, if we would get there, but I was confident. There was no doubt in my mind we would bring it to completion.

Philippians 1:6 reminds us that God always finishes what he begins, and that includes the work he is doing in us. He doesn't change his mind about us, or give up along the way. He will not abandon his people or cast us aside. God is faithful. If he has called us into a relationship with him through his grace, we can remain confident that he will continue to work in our hearts throughout our entire lives until the moment we enter his presence in glory. Sometimes we call that "eternal security." As one author explains, "It means that when a person has genuinely believed in Christ as His Savior from sin he is forever secured by God by His keeping power."<sup>i</sup>

This is so important for us to remember because there are times in life when fear and doubt weighs us down. We may start to focus on all of the things that have gone wrong in our lives, and wonder if that means the Lord has given up on us. Never! There might be times when we are tempted to give up, but God will never quit on us. Believers can live with confidence because God is faithful to complete the work that he has begun in us.

As the apostle Paul opens his letter to the Philippians, he encourages the members of that congregation with these words. They were going through a time of adversity. It was difficult knowing that their mentor and friend was a prisoner in Rome on account of his faith. They may have wondered what was happening. Where is the hand of the Lord in all of this? Has God somehow forgotten us and left us on our own? That wasn't the case. Paul reminded them of

God's faithfulness and pointed to the work that God was accomplishing through them. Their love for him, and their participation in the work of the gospel was proof that God was still very active in their lives.

And he is very active in our lives as well. The passage helps us when we are struggling to look back at the work God has accomplished in our lives, and the work he is doing today, and the work he will one day bring to fulfillment in the future when he returns. This helps us to live with assurance, knowing that we are secure in the powerful grip of our Savior.

## **First of all, we see God's faithfulness in his work of saving us.**

Look at verses 3-6. The apostle writes,

*<sup>3</sup> I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, <sup>4</sup> always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, <sup>5</sup> in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. <sup>6</sup> For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*

Paul was thinking back to the day he first visited Philippi. He was led there by a vision from God, in which he saw a man pleading with him, "Come over to Macedonia to help us." The missionaries didn't waste any time, but immediately found a boat heading to that region. When they arrived in the city, they began sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, and there were a number of people who responded with faith. It was exciting to see lives changed by the power of the gospel. This was the work of God.

God has accomplished a work in our lives as well. Somewhere along the way you heard the message of Christ, and God opened your heart to receive him as your Savior. At that moment your life change forever.

There are many aspects of our salvation that the Bible describes as being a completed work. These are things that are already finished, happening in the past, which can never be undone. You were born again. You were forgiven. Your sins were washed away by the blood of the lamb. You were declared righteous. You were adopted by the Lord and became a child of God. These are all things that Christ has accomplished for us. If you have genuinely responded to his invitation, you are no longer the same person that you used to be.

Colossians 1:13-14 (NASB95) says, "*For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*"

Ephesians 1:7 (NASB95) tells us, "*In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace*"

These are the things that God has done for us in Christ when we accepted him as our Savior. He rescued us from sin. He purchased us with his blood.

If he has gone to such great lengths to redeem us, then he's not going to abandon us now.

Think about something in your life that you worked hard for... maybe it's your car. This was a major purchase that required a great cost. Because of that it has value to you. Think about how you would respond if you walked out the grocery store into the parking lot and were having trouble finding it. That happens to me sometimes. That's when you hit the panic button on your keychain and listen for the sound of the honking horn. But what if you were having trouble finding it? Would you shrug your shoulders and say, "Oh well, it's no big deal. I'll just leave it there and walk home." No. You're going walk up and down the rows, and will not give up, until you find it. It required a tremendous investment, and you're not going to abandon it in the parking lot.

Neither will God abandon us. When we think of the cost that he was willing to pay for our salvation, how he paid the ultimate price, dying on the cross to redeem us. Do we really think he would give up on us now? Not a chance.

This should humble us. We admit, "I don't understand why God would do so much for me, but I am grateful and will spend my life praising him for the work that he has done to save me."

In those moments when we're struggling with doubt listen to what the Bible says about us. In Christ, I am a child of God, I am washed in the blood of lamb, I've been redeemed, I am born again, I am a new creation. This is what God has accomplished for us.

## **We also see God's faithfulness in his work of shaping us to be more like Christ.**

Look at verses 9-11. The apostle says,

*<sup>9</sup> And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, <sup>10</sup> so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; <sup>11</sup> having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*

Paul could look back at how the people of the church in Philippi had grown since he first met them. When he first visited the city, most of them had no knowledge whatsoever of the one true God. But since that day he saw a transformation in their lives as they began to grow in their faith. Now, they not only knew the Lord, but were eager to tell others about him. They no longer living for themselves, but were living for the Lord. The apostle had witnessed firsthand how excited they were to partner with him in his missionary efforts. They had even sent one of their one of their own members to Rome to minister to him while he was in prison. It brought him great joy to see them becoming mature disciples of Jesus.

He prays for them in these verses that the Lord would continue to shape them more and more into the people they were called to be.

- Abounding in love
- Growing in the knowledge of Christ, a personal knowledge that comes from walking in a relationship with him
- Increasing in discernment that leads to godly decisions
- Filled with the fruit of righteousness

This is an ongoing work that God is bringing about in our lives making us more like Christ. It is a process. It doesn't happen instantly, overnight. More and more we begin to reflect his character in our everyday lives.

I think of a sculptor in his workshop molding a piece of clay. At first, it doesn't look like much, just a gray blob. But in the hands of the skilled artist, it slowly begins to take shape. He works at it, cutting away pieces that do not belong, and pressing it into the form he wants it to take. It is a beautiful thing to watch him work, and there are times when you might wonder, "what is he doing now." But eventually it comes together into a work of art.

That's what God is doing in our lives. He is molding us according to his design. He works through his Word, teaching us how we are to live. He works through His Spirit, changing our habits and desires. He works through our circumstances, helping us to rely more on him. At times, we might wonder what he is doing. It may not always be comfortable for him to remove the things that are detrimental to our faith. But in the end something beautiful is produced.

There are some qualities that can only be produced through adversity. As we go through trials and tribulations we have no other choice but to lean on the Lord and rely on his strength. Maybe that is how God is working our lives today, through this difficult season. We would like to get back to our normal routine as soon as possible, but maybe God is working in us through this season. Maybe he is teaching us to slow down... to be more prayerful in our lives... to rely on him. God uses all of our experiences to help us grow, even the trials and tribulations.

This is not merely our efforts to reform ourselves. Paul says in verse 11 this work, "comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God." The Holy Spirit is active molding and shaping us into the people that God has called us to be. But at the same time, we must cooperate with him.

Ephesians 4:22–24 (NASB95) challenges us...

*<sup>22</sup> that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self... and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, <sup>24</sup> and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.*

If you are a child of God you should be able to look back over your life to see how your life has changed as a result of knowing Christ. We will never reach a place where we stop growing, but continue throughout our entire lives to learn and mature and become more like our Savior

until the Lord calls us home. When we how God is molding us more and more to be like Christ, this is proof that he isn't finished with us yet, but is still at work.

## **We also see God's faithfulness in his work of securing our future.**

Go back to verse 6. Paul says, *"For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."*

What is the day of Christ? It is a phrase that we find throughout the NT that looks to the future, to the return of the Lord. One day life as we know it will cease. The heavens will open and the Lord will appear in the clouds to call his people home. That day will bring deliverance for God's people, but for this evil and rebellious world it will bring judgement.

Paul must have spent a lot of time thinking about that day while he sat in his prison cell. In the paragraphs to come, he talks about how he didn't know how much time he had left in his earthly life. There was the very real possibility that he would be put to death for his faith. But if that were to happen, he was at peace. He wasn't afraid to die, because he knew what was in store for him in the future. He was going to enter the presence of his Savior and receive his eternal reward. How glorious that would be! He was ready.

He not only had this confidence for himself, but for the Philippians as well. God was working in their lives, and would continue working, all the way to the end, and one day they would stand together in glory. How could he be so sure? Because God is faithful to bring his work in us to completion.

Do you share that confidence in your life? Do you know beyond the shadow of a doubt that when that day comes you will be there, that there is a place waiting for you in glory? Maybe you never knew that you could have this assurance. A lot of people spend their lives worrying about that day, with a sense of dread hanging over them, not knowing what the future holds. But if you know Christ as your Savior, your destiny is secure.

One commentator writes,

God not only initiates salvation, but continues it and guarantees its consummation. The apostle's thought relates not [only] to the end of life but to the glorious coming of Jesus Christ that will vindicate both the Lord and his people. So Paul is asserting that God will bring his work to completion. Nothing in this life or after death will prevent the successful accomplishment of God's good work in every Christian.<sup>ii</sup>

Maybe you have tried to carry something heavy at some point in your life, and you realized it was too much for you to handle on your own. You are moving furniture from one room to the other, and you see that old TV set that has been sitting on the dresser for a decade. "I can lift that," you tell yourself, but as soon as you pick it up you realize you're not going to make it very far without dropping it.

We're not strong enough to carry ourselves to the finish line, but isn't it wonderful to know that Christ is. There are times in our lives when we struggle to hold onto him, but he is holding onto to us with his powerful arms and will never drop us.

We don't have to spend our lives wondering what the future holds. We can find peace in Christ.

1 John 5:13 (NASB95) *"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life."*

## **Has the Lord Begun this Work in Your Life?**

This is a wonderful passage that gives us confidence for our lives. "He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." Has the Lord begun this work in your heart? Have you responded to the gospel call? Have you come to realize your need for grace, and cried out to the Savior for his mercy? If you have, then you can face tomorrow with unflinching hope because you know we are secure in his loving arms.

This should embolden us to live out our faith, for God's glory.

It should fill us with the desire to draw closer to the Lord each day, knowing that no matter how long we have been a Christian we still have room to grow.

It should inspire us to love God more, thinking about all of the wonderful things he has done and is doing and will do in us. So let us praise his name today and forever.

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<sup>i i</sup> Enns, P. P. (1989). *The Moody handbook of theology* (p. 340). Chicago, IL: Moody Press.

<sup>ii</sup> Kent, H. A., Jr. (1981). [Philippians](#). In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon* (Vol. 11, pp. 105–106). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.