

Philippians Lesson 2 Articles

Vs. 1:6 God began the work in the church. Obviously if he starts something, it will reach completion. Paul easily moved between the tensions of human agency and divine initiative, accepting both in a natural way. The Philippians had a partnership with Paul, but God actually worked it in them. Both the contrasts between these two realities and Paul's comfort with each deserve attention.

What work had God begun? It is likely that Paul saw the Philippians' generosity as evidence of the grace of God in their lives, and in this text he spoke to that grace. In 2 Cor 8:7, a passage that urged the Corinthians to be like the Philippians in giving, Paul urged the development of the grace of giving. *Giving evidenced the maturity of their thought and action.* The good work in 1:6 refers to what lay behind their generosity, the calling and Christian maturity of the church.¹

Christian fellowship is a marvel. People who by nature have nothing in common find a common life in Christ. Think again of Paul's ministry in Philippi. Lydia the slave girl and the jailer had nothing in common until they came to Christ (Acts 16). But the gospel of Christ made them partakers of the same life and partners in the same cause. The bond of fellowship between the Philippians and Paul was so very strong that he earnestly yearned to be separated from them no longer (v. 8). To remove all doubt from their minds about how very strongly he loved them he writes: 'I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ' (v. 8). Paul could go no higher than this. His love for the Philippians was such that it reflected the love of Christ himself.

Paul was very good at slipping little nuggets of breathtakingly glorious truth into the mundane portions of his letters. This verse is one of those nuggets. It tells us the following:

- **SALVATION IS GOD'S WORK.** The Philippians did not begin the work of salvation in themselves only to have God come along and add a little to it. It was entirely his work. God provided the way of salvation through his Son, Jesus Christ, and he even enabled the Philippians to receive that salvation.
- **SALVATION IS A GOOD WORK.** Salvation lifts the sinner from eternal condemnation and ruin and makes that person part of God's family and a partaker of God's eternal glory. Who would dare say that this is not a good thing?
- **SALVATION IS A SURE WORK.** God does not begin it and then abandon it somewhere along the way. He does not pull his people from the flames of destruction only to allow them to slip back and be consumed. God completes the work of salvation. We know what it is to plan a work and undertake a work only to see it fail. But it is not so with God. We must not picture him looking over the redeemed multitude in eternity and saying: 'We did fairly well. Eighty per cent of the saved finally made it home.' God will not have to say such a thing because all his people will make it home. Not one will be missing! The faithful God will faithfully complete his work!²

¹ Melick, R. R. (1991). *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (Vol. 32, pp. 57–58). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

² Ellsworth, R. (2004). *Opening up Philippians* (pp. 17–19). Leominster: Day One Publications.