

FINISHING WHAT HE BEGAN

Philippians 1:1-11, text v. 6

April 11, 2021

Introduction: How do you see this coming year? Do you see it as rock-bottom with a basement? Is it too late for America? What about the American church? What about our church? Is there hope for us? Is there hope for me?

I. Confidence and Hope In Spite of Our Circumstances

A. Paul had every reason to despair

1. He was in prison in Rome, awaiting trial, perhaps for his life.
2. And it wasn't the first time he was imprisoned; he had even been imprisoned in Philippi.
3. It seemed like he was always in trouble for preaching the gospel— he had been beaten, stoned, and left for dead. (see 2 Corinthians 11:25)
4. And then after he sacrificed so much, many who came to Christ as a result of his preaching didn't act like Christians.
 - a. Even in this letter, Paul had to correct two women who were feuding. (see Phil. 4:2)
 - b. Some didn't even respect his leadership anymore. (see 2 Corinthians 10)
5. In Philippians 2: 17, Paul speaks of being poured out like a drink offering, words he would later repeat in 2 Timothy 4: 6.

2 Timothy 4:6 (NIV) For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure.

B. And yet, Paul's tone in this letter is not the tone of one who is discouraged but of one who has confidence and hope

Philippians 1:6 (NIV) Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

Questions:

- 1) What in my life and in the world causes me concern? What reasons do I have to despair?
- 2) Who or what gives me hope and confidence and why?

II. Finding Hope and Confidence in What God Has Done in and through Us His People

Philippians 1:6 (NIV) being confident of this he who began a good work in you.

A. God began this good work through Paul when he preached the gospel to them.

1. The gospel is the good news that Jesus came to take away their sins and reconcile them to God.
2. And it is the good news that he arose, so that they might arise with him as new people who belong to God.

B. The Holy Spirit worked in their hearts so that they believed the gospel and had become God's people.

1. That is why Paul calls them saints (verse 1), which means those who belong to God.
2. In John 1:12, John uses a different word for those belonging to God, children.

John 1:12 (NIV) Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

C. But not only is Paul encouraged that these people belonged to God by faith, he also was encouraged that they are beginning to act like God's people.

1. Specifically, Paul is filled with joy because they'd become partners with him in living-out the gospel through acts of hospitality.

Philippians 1:4-5 (NIV) In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

- a. In the book of Acts we read about Lydia, who opened her home to Paul and the other missionaries.
- b. We read about the Philippian jailer who after coming to Christ, washed Paul's and Silas's wounds after they were beaten and imprisoned.
- c. Later in this letter we find that this church gave him a gift to support him while he was again in prison.
 - i. In those days the Roman government didn't feed and care for prisoners.
 - ii. That was the job of their family.
 - iii. The Philippians were in Christ Paul's family.
2. So by their gifts and hospitality they strengthened Paul's faith and reminded him how God had changed their lives and was working through them.
3. When we similarly show love and hospitality we also can show hurting brothers and sister that despite their circumstances God is at work in and through us.

Questions:

- 1) Do I find hope and confidence in the fact that God brought me to faith in Jesus?
- 2) Do I find hope and confidence as I experience God's love and compassion from other Christians? Why or why not?
- 3) Do I try to give others confidence by showing them love and compassion? When have I done so recently?

III. Finding Hope and Confidence that God Is Continuing to Work in Our Lives

A. But God has not completed his work.

1 John 3:2 (NIV) Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

1. This verse tells us that even though we belong to God as his children, what we will become has not yet been made known.
2. God is in the process of making us into the people he would have us be.

B. Paul also finds confidence by trusting the second part of our text that God is completing the work he began in the Philippians.

Philippians 1:6 (NIV) being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

1. The day of Christ Jesus is the day when he will take us to live with him forever on the new earth.
2. As God the Holy Spirit helps us gradually to fit into God's family, we are filled with greater hope that we will be his for all eternity.

3. We don't always know how God is doing his work in us, but we must trust him.
 - a. Joseph didn't know ahead of time that God would use him to save people's lives from famine.
 - b. Did David know that evils he faced would enable him to be used of God's Spirit to write Psalms that help us in our suffering?
 - c. Did Paul realize his suffering would be used by God's Spirit this morning to call us to confidence and hope?

Questions:

- 1) How has God been completing his work in me?
- 2) How can I know that God is doing this, when I really do not know his plan?

IV. Finding Hope and Confident in Knowing What God is Accomplishing in Our Lives

- A. Paul explains his hope for the Philippians in his prayer in verses 9- 11, a hope and prayer that helps us see what God will accomplish in our lives.

Philippians 1:9-11 (NIV) And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

- B. First, God is working in us that our love might grow.

1. Love is the greatest virtue God helps us attain.

1 Corinthians 13:13 (NIV) And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

2. By helping us to become more loving, God helps us to truly know him and become like him.

1 John 4:7-8 (NIV) Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

- a. In the Old Testament prophecy of Hosea, God told the prophet to marry a wife who was an adulteress, and so he married Gomer.
- b. After she bore some children, she left him, and became a sex-slave to another man.
- c. Then God told him to pay-off that other man and buy her back for himself.
- d. God commanded him to do this so that he could prophesy to Israel that they had become adulterous prostitutes by worshipping false idols and not staying true to the God who still loved them.
- e. As we think of that prophesy, let us also think of the times when others have betrayed our love.
- f. Perhaps God brought such pain into our life that we might learn to love like him.

- C. Secondly, as Paul prays, God wants us to be pure and blameless.

2 Corinthians 11:2 (NIV) I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.

1. To be pure is to be fully committed to our Lord and Savior Jesus.
2. Sometimes to be fully committed to Christ God must strip away the things we hold most dear.
 - a. Sometimes it's our possessions.
 - b. Sometimes it can even be those we love.

Matthew 10:37-38 (NIV) Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

- D. Finally, we must learn to fully trust that we are right with God only because of Jesus and his sacrifice.

1. Paul prays that the Philippians be filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.
2. In order to teach us to trust in Christ alone, there are times when God will compel us to do that.
 - a. A good example of this can be found the Apostle Peter
 - b. Peter thought he could walk on water, but taking his eyes off Jesus he sank almost drowned, until Jesus lifted him up.
 - c. And later after he put his trust in his own loyalty to Jesus, and then denying him three times, Jesus restored him.
 - d. God sometimes can use our worst failures to mold us into those who trust Jesus alone for our righteousness.

Questions:

- 1) How has God been helping me to love like him?
- 2) How has God been helping me to be pure and blameless in my commitment to him?
- 3) How has God been helping me to trust in Jesus alone for my righteousness?

V. Finding Comfort in God's Plan for All Who Believe

- A. We don't know God's plans for the United States, or even our denomination or congregation.
- B. But we know his plans for all who believe and are part of his one people, his church.

1. We were not only saved to be his children, but to be his children through Christ.
2. When God welcomes all of us as his church into his family and his home, he will welcome us as the bride of Christ.

Revelation 21:2-3 (NIV) I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

- C. Today through all the ups and downs of our lives, he is preparing us for our wedding day that he might open his home to us.

Questions:

- 1) How have I last been unfaithful to Jesus? How does it make me feel that in spite of this God has chosen me to be a part of the church that is the bride of Christ?
- 2) How does being part of God's family as the bride of Christ help me to realize that my hope rests solely on his love that I do not deserve? How am I responding to that love?