Exegetical Outline

Shongzan Wungramthan 23 Nov. 2015; CIC, Singapore

Philippians 1:6

*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.*

[NIV]

Q & A:

Context What is the literary context of the passage? What does the author say just before and after this verse?

Just like the Greco-Roman custom[[1]](#footnote-1) of letter writing in Paul’s time, verses 1-2 are the threefold salutation – The Writer (Paul with Timothy), to the Addressee (all the saints in Philippi including the overseers and deacons), and Greetings. This is occasionally followed by thanksgiving and prayers, before the body, and eventually the closing and the benediction. Paul normally follows this outline as his epistolary structure using the introductory paragraphs as “tools for bringing the grand themes of his theology”[[2]](#footnote-2) to bring the message across which he intends to do for the particular audience. Verses 3-8 are the thanksgiving passages skillfully written with such intention.

3-5 is Paul’s thanksgiving to God and his joyful prayer for the Philippi Church because of their partnership with Paul in the gospel.

7-8 is the expression of Paul’s feeling of oneness with them in the gospel and in God’s grace.

In the middle is verse 6, the reason of his being confident and joyful, which is the basis of the profound theme of God’s faithfulness in salvation.

Purpose Who were the original readers of the book and why was it written?

The book was written to “all the saints in Philippi including the overseers and deacons” (1b), the first church Paul established in Macedonia 12 years before during his second missionary journey from August-October AD 50.[[3]](#footnote-3) Apart from expressing his affection and thanks for the church’s generosity (1:5; 4:10-18), and explaining why he sent back Epaphroditus to them (2:25-26) and thereby informing them about his circumstance (1:12-26), Paul’s purpose of writing this letter was mainly to encourage perseverance (1:6; 1:27-28; 2:12; 3:13-15; 4:1) against false teachers (3:1­–4:1) and disunity (4:2-3).

Why is this passage in the Bible?

Many believers who have participated in the work of the gospel face a lot of challenges because of temptation, confusion, disunity, legalism, false teaching or any kind of the devil’s attack to the church. Some even fall away from their faith. Paul’s epistle to the Philippians is one of the most encouraging books in the Bible for the believers to persevere rather than fall, by imitating Christ’s attitude of joy, humility and peace, which come from God.

Background What historical context helps us understand this passage?

1. Originally known as Krenides (“The Little Fountains”) because of the numerous nearby springs, Philippi received its name from Phillip II of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great. Attracted by the nearby gold mines, Philip conquered the region in the 356 B.C. but it later become Roman colony (Acts 16:12) when Antony and Octavian defeated the assassins of Julius Caesar, Brutus and Cassius in 42 B.C.[[4]](#footnote-4) Many veterans of the Roman army settled there.
2. Philippi had a high status as a Roman colony – autonomy from the provincial government, same rights granted to cities in Italy including the use of Roman law, exemption from some taxes, Roman citizenship for its residents (Acts 16:21), Latin as their official language, and Roman customs, which were all sources of civic pride.[[5]](#footnote-5)

How was the church in Philippi established?

1. It is the first church founded by Paul in Europe during his second missionary journey (AD 50; Acts 16:12-40). Paul’s typical meeting at a synagogue when he entered a new city was not possible here as there were not enough men to form a synagogue (at least 10 Jewish men were required). But there were some devout women who met outside the city at a place of prayer (Acts 13) and Paul preached the gospel to them. A wealthy purple cloth merchant dealer, Lydia, became a believer (Acts 16:14-15) later in whose house the Philippian church met.
2. Another girl, who was a demon-possessed, fortune telling slave girl (Acts 16:16-17) also became Christian as Paul cast out the demon from her. This enraged the girl’s masters, as they lost their business of using the girl’s fortune telling, and that led to Paul and Silas being beaten and imprisoned (Acts 16:22-24).
3. But this also eventually led to the conversion of the jailor and his family (Acts 16:30-31) through the famous miracle of the earthquake and unlocking of all the prison doors as Paul and Silas were worshiping inside the prison cell. After this, Paul and Silas were asked to leave Philippi by the authorities, but these were the first believers of the Philippi Church which eventually grew into numbers.

How was the relationship between Paul and the church in Philippi?

Paul apparently returned to Philippi after six years for a few days (between June- Nov. AD 56; Acts 20:1, 6) and wrote this letter after another six years.[[6]](#footnote-6) He had a good relationship with them all this while. The Philippians had generously supported Paul (4:15-16) and had also contributed for the needy at Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8:1-4). Now, on hearing that Paul has been imprisoned, they sent another contribution to Paul (4:10) along with Epaphroditus to help him.

Text What is the “good work” referring to?

Fee observes that although the financial support in the context is not ruled out (though viewed as a narrow sense), it is unlikely that Paul is referring exclusively to their grace of giving.[[7]](#footnote-7) He didn’t say “good work *through* you,” but the accent instead is on what God is doing *in* or *among* them, not what he is doing *through* them. The “good work” would then be the action of God at the time of their conversion that points to their “salvation in Christ.” This is confirmed by the way in which Paul often refers to the time when God’s grace began to work in the lives of his readers (1 Cor. 1:4; Col. 1:5; 1 Thess. 1:5-6; and especially Gal. 3:3 where the two verbs of this verse “has begun” are used.)

Dillow, however, views the “good work” not referring to sanctification or regeneration, as some Reformed scholars claim, but to “financial contributions or a more general assistance and partnership, including financial help, in the cause of Christ.”[[8]](#footnote-8) Looking at the context of the meaning of “fellowship” (*koinonia*)in verse 5, which is “sharing” financial contributions, Dillow also quotes Harthorne to be saying *a good work* “cannot be shaken loose from its immediate context and be interpreted primarily in terms of ‘God’s redeeming and renewing work’ in the lives of the Philippians.”[[9]](#footnote-9) Dillow thus concludes that the phrase is referring to the sharing of resources.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Therefore, I will understand the “good work” as referring to the practical assistance the believers provided for the advancement of the gospel, which stands as a confirmation that God is at work in the salvation of their lives.

What does it mean by the “day of Christ Jesus?”

This phrase is not to be confused with the “Day of the Lord” that describes final divine judgment and wrath (Is. 13:9; Joel 1:15; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10). The *day of Christ Jesus,* also called the “day of Christ” in 1:10 and 2:16, is the final salvation, reward and glorification of believers (1 Cor. 3:10-15, 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:9-10). It is the time “when the salvation of believers, already inaugurated, will be consummated,”[[11]](#footnote-11) which is the hope of every Christian to be fulfilled at the rapture of the church (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

Prologue: Paul’s epistle to the Philippi Church is an encouraging letter to the saints and the leaders of the Church to persevere in Christ by imitating his joy, humility and peace in the midst of false teaching and disunity. This theme of encouragement in having confidence in God is captured in this introductory verse 6 – God has begun the good work, he will also carry it on to completion.

Exegetical Idea: The reason the Philippi Christians should be confident was because God began the good work of salvation in them and would keep working through them until the return of Christ.

Exegetical Outline:

1. The reason the Philippi Christians should be confident is because it was God who began the good work of salvation in them (6a)
2. The reason the Philippi Christians should be confident is because God will continue his working through them until the return of Christ (6b)

Homiletical Outline

Confident Completion

Philippians 1:6 *(Cyclical Inductive)*

*He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus*

(Purpose: The listeners will be encouraged to live confidently through their giving.)

Introduction:

1. Arouse interest: Do you have any unfinished job today? (ILL: A building that never was finished).
2. Need: It is usually easier to begin than to finish well. Many quit halfway. And there is a greater likelihood of quitting in the face of opposition and challenges.
3. Subject: Why should we live confidently through our giving both now and in the days to come?
4. Background: The generous, devoted church at Philippi was facing opposition through false teachers and disunity. There was a high chance for the believers to stop financially supporting the works of the gospel, not to mention the tendency to fall away from their faith in Christ.
5. Preview: Paul, concerned about this danger, affirmed his affection and joyful prayers for them because of their partnership in the gospel from the first day until now (v 4-5). And then, in this verse, Paul states *two reasons believers should be confident in giving* for the work of the gospel both now and in the days to come.

(Today we will look into verse 6 to see these two reasons. The first reason to be confident is…)

1. God began the good work of salvation in you (6a).

It is God who saved you [R]

1. God established the Philippian Church—not Paul (Acts 16:11-34).
2. God brought Lydia, the slave-girl fortune-teller, the jailor and his family to Christ*.*
   1. God brought three different layers of society together (high, slave, middle-class).
   2. God brought three difference nationalities together (Jewish, Greek, Roman).
3. God built the Church in his sovereign and unique way.
4. God touched these believers to support the work of the gospel
5. “Good work” is manifested in the financial giving of the believers
6. The Philippian church supported Paul (4:10, 15-16) and the needy in Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8:1-4). They also sent Epaphroditus to encourage him (2:25).
7. God saved you too.
8. How did you become Christian?
9. Who enabled you to give to God’s mission?
   1. Athan rightfully credited God for his support at SBC from a church he never met.
   2. We need to see that ultimately God supports us.
10. How can you manifest the good work through your life and giving?

(Will God ever stop this work in us? No…)

1. God will complete his salvation work in you (6b).
2. God will continue his work until Jesus returns (6b)
3. God will continue even in the face of false teaching and disunity.
4. The false teachers “dogs” as they fought against the truth (3:2).
5. Two women were fighting against one another too (4:2).
6. Christ’s return is the hope that will keep us confident.
7. Trust God’s promise that he won’t give up on you!

1. Where is your hope? Is your hope in an insurance plan?

2. Live by faith in God’s assured future for you (give examples).

Main Idea: Be confident, for it is God who begins and completes the good work in us.

Conclusion:

1. We should be confident in our salvation manifested through our giving, because it is God who began the good work of salvation in us. He initiated, but didn’t abandon or stop there—he continues to work in us and will carry it through until Jesus returns [MI restated].
2. Have you ever quit in life? Are you worried or fearful of not being able to make it till the end? [ILL: My story]
3. Think of a “good work” that God has begun in your life as the manifestation of your Christian life (give at least 2-3 examples here). Pray for it and be assured that God will complete it.





Wungramthan Shongzan

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Singapore

Confident Completion

Philippians 1:6

*Being confident of this very thing that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

Introduction

1. Do you have any \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_unfinished job today?
2. Why should we live \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ confidently in our Christian life?
3. Paul gives two reasons in Phil. 1:6 why believers should be confident in giving for the work of the gospel both now and in the days to come.
4. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ God \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ began the good work of salvation in you (6a).
5. God established the Philippian church – not Paul (Acts 16:11-34).
6. God brought Lydia, the slave-girl fortune-teller, the jailor and his family to Christ*.*
7. God built this church in his sovereign and unique way too.
8. God touched these believers to support the work of the gospel (Phil. 4:15-16).
9. “Good work” refers to the practical actions of *sharing* resources.
10. The Philippian church supported Paul and the needy in Jerusalem.
11. God saved you too and enabled you to do good work.
12. How has God enabled you to give to God’s mission?
13. How can you manifest the good work through your life and giving?

II. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ God will \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ complete the good work of salvation in you (6b).

1. God will continue his work until Jesus returns.
2. God will continue even in the face of false teaching and disunity.
3. Christ’s return is the hope that will keep us confident.
4. Trust God’s promise that he won’t give up on you!
5. What challenges do you have in continuing what God has begun?
6. Live by faith in God’s assured future for you.

Conclusion

1. Be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ confident, for God who \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ sustains and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ completes the good work in us (Main Idea). If God brings you to it, he will bring you through it!
2. Where is your confidence today? Do you know the “pilot” of your life?
3. Think of a “good work” that God has begun in your life and commit it to him.

* It may be your studies or learning curve in your life God initiated.
* It may be a relationship or a marriage that God wants you to work on.
* It may be a ministry or a job God called you to do.
* It may be a commitment to serve God in a certain area.
* It may be a commitment to give to a cause that God has impressed upon you.
* Or it may be your new Christian life to follow Jesus Christ closely.

Thought Questions

1. Read Philippians 1:1-6 and also Acts 16:6-34 and find out as much information as you can about how the Church at Philippi began. Compare it to your own conversion experience.

I feared death until the day I trusted Christ at age 13.

1. What is “a good work” in verse 6 referring to? Share a good work God began in your life.

Most think of it as salvation—but 1:5 just before it refers to their partnership in the work of the gospel. The church’s involvement in this would continue until the Rapture.

1. What are your challenges in doing that good work? How do you find your confidence in God?

I need to continue in faithfulness to those who themselves are not faithful.

1. Gordon D. Fee, “Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*,*”in *New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Frank Thielman, “Philippians,”in *New International Version Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Rick Griffith, *New Testament Survey*, class notes, 2 vols.,Singapore Bible College, 2:182. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. F. F. Bruce, “Philippian*s,*” *in New International Biblical Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989), 1-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid., 1-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Griffith, 182. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Fee, 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Joseph C. Dillow, *The Reign of the Servant Kings: A Study Of Eternal Security And The Final Significance Of Man* (Miami Springs, FL: Schoettle Publishing, 1992), 205. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Gerald F. Harthorne, “Philippians,” in *Word Biblical Commentary* (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Dillow, 205. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Bruce, 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)