

# What God Begins Shall Be Fully Done

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*Confession of Faith*

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**Bible Text:**                   Philippians 1:6  
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## **Grace Protestant Reformed Church**

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We read the word of God as we find it in Philippians 1, Paul's letter to the Philippians, the first chapter. The text that God gives to us tonight is the sixth verse of this chapter. Philippians 1.

1 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: 2 Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, 5 For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; 6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: 7 Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace. 8 For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. 9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; 10 That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; 11 Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God. 12 But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; 13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; 14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. 15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: 16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: 17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. 18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. 19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with

all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. 21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. 23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: 24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. 25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; 26 That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again. 27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; 28 And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. 29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; 30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

May God bless our reading of his word and apply it to us.

Verse 6, Philippians 1:6 is the text that God has given to us.

6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

When Matthew made confession of his faith before the consistory, then we asked him what were some passage of Scripture that were very special to him and this was one, and it's understandable that it would be for him even as it is for many of us. We live in the midst of a lot of uncertainties. What's going to happen? What will it be like in 5 and 10 years? Uncertainties because of circumstances. Uncertainties because of opposition. We pray that he would manfully fight against sin, the devil and his whole dominion. That foe is greater than any one of us or all of us together. That creates uncertainties, the opposition.

Then, what about ourselves? How strong are we? How strong are you? We're like the flower of the grass that is here today and gone tomorrow. How spiritually strong are we? If God let's us go, we fall into sin immediately, deliberately. So for us to know the truth of this passage, that it's God's work, and that work that he began, he will keep doing all the way until the day of Jesus Christ.

Often I've used in counseling and for myself, the necessity of the use of that little phrase, two words, "look up." Just look up. Look away from the circumstances. Don't look horizontally at opposition and people, look up. Look at God. And that's what we want to consider. Even though the opposition is fierce, even though the uncertainties are many, and even though we are so weak, our confidence, our confidence, we don't doubt, it's not

right to wonder, we may be confident that he which has begun will perfect it. Look up. What God begins shall by his grace be fully done.

First of all, we consider the beginning of that work, what he begins. Secondly, we'll consider the perfecting, and that's an interesting use of the word. He will perform. He will perfect it. And then finally, we'll look at the resulting confidence.

A good work he has begun. He's done a work. What's that work? Very simply it's the work of salvation. What's that work of salvation? It's the work and here's a simple way to define it: it's deliverance from the greatest evil and giving to and bringing to us and giving us the greatest good.

Now, maybe we have our own definition of what's the greatest evil, but the Scriptures say the greatest evil is to be trapped in the bondage of sin; to be a slave to sin; to be addicted to sin and not able to be delivered from it. Into that sphere we've been born, conceived. To be delivered from that, from that position of constantly hating God and then being brought into the knowledge that we begin every service with, God's declaration to us, "Beloved, in Jesus Christ, the greatest good."

So often over and over in the midst of all the difficulties of this life, we lose that perspective. We get overwhelmed and we forget he's established a relationship with us. God has. That's the work that he's begun. He's done a work for us, the text says, in us. Let's look at the work he's done for us. He's begun to do a work, that work of saving. That work began for us when God before the foundations of the world, chose us, and now using the language of the Canons of Dort, out of the fallen human race and placed us into the arms of Jesus. When he put us into a relationship with Jesus that was so tight from all eternity that nothing can separate us from him, he put our names in what he calls the Book of Life. He gave us to be the object of his Son's care, Shepherd's care, "I've lost none."

In time, God did a work for us when he sent his only begotten Son into this world, into our flesh and blood, placed upon him the weight of all of our sins and sinfulness and made him responsible for bearing the punishment of his wrath, of his holy, divine, eternal wrath, on all of those sins. God began that work for us when, through Jesus, he paid that price. He swallowed the whole of that cup of the bitter wrath of God, drank it to the last drop.

God works for us when he raised Jesus from the dead, brought him to his own right hand, gave him the book of the plan of all of the new dispensation so that now Jesus throughout the whole of our lives is performing that work that God planned in us, so that there's not a hair that falls from our head but by the will of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who now for the sake of the church, rules every part of the economy, all politics, everything in the history of the world, and who is now at the right hand of God, is praying for us. He's doing a work for us.

Now, the text says he does a work in us. He sends his irresistibly powerful Spirit whose first work in every one of those that have been given to him, is to give them a new life. He regenerates. He takes what's conceived as a heart of stone and he immediately makes it a heart of flesh, makes it soft to God. He works in us by that Spirit so that new heart now is able to identify sin for what it really is. He sees sin not as something delightful to do, but something that is repulsive to God. He identifies it correctly and accurately as that which is wrong, a violation of the person of God. Now he doesn't look at sin and say, "Hey, I got away with it." He looks at sin, his own, and he feels guilty. He recognizes what he's done to the holy God and he begins to be repulsed by the thoughts that he is able yet to think. He sees, he sees his need for Jesus and he runs to him over and over and over because he believes that Jesus is able. He embraces what God says in his word about Jesus and about what he's done so that when God says, "I have justified you in the death of my Son," then, though our conscience accuses us, yet we say, "Yes, that has to be true. The Bible tells me so." He believes that.

God through his word, through the preaching, is constantly working to call us and that new heart, that work of God inside of us, we get pricked. Just this morning when we got to that last part, what's a real response to the forgiveness of sins, did you notice how quiet it got? And if some were sleeping before, they weren't then. The Spirit was working. We saw ourselves but we saw the cross and we saw the work of God for us and we grasped it. And if we left here ashamed because maybe we remembered, yet we could go out and with one leg say, "I am repulsed and I'm sorry," but with the other leg say, "But I'm forgiven. I'm forgiven. God says so. The Bible tells me so." And you could have that assurance. God works in us a sense of that forgiveness.

God works in us so that we not only hate that which we do wrong, but we totally understand that principle part of the doctrine of holy baptism, that we're obliged unto new obedience. And it's not just forsaking the world and crucifying our old nature but it's cleaving unto this one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, trusting in him and loving him; that inner work so that we want to embrace Christ. Even as we know his arms are constantly around us, we want to return that embrace, cleave unto him in true faith, firm hope, ardent love. That's the prayer. God works a change and that change is that we want to walk in that new obedience. We want to do that which would please him. We don't want to do that which displeases him and that's what characterizes our prayers every time we go before that throne of grace. God has begun a work.

Now, what's very very interesting is the adjective that the Holy Spirit inspires Paul to write. What kind of a work? It's a good work, and what's very very interesting is that in the Greek, the use of the word "agatha" or you've heard somebody with the name Agatha, it comes right from that Greek word that's translated "good." And the Bible uses that word "good" in two ways: it's morally right over against morally bad, but also – and here's the important part that we have to get ahold of right now – when God calls it a good work, then good also means this: it's accomplishing that which it's designed to do. It's good because it accomplishes what it's designed to do. Now think about that. He's begun a good work in you. Well, God's performing a work that he's designed and now

he's working. He's working. His work. He's begun a work. He's at work and that work accomplishes and works to the end that he had designed it, purposed for it.

So in a way by adding that word "good" he could have written "he's begun a work in you," but by calling it a "good work," we're already prejudiced to know it's going to be good. It's going to accomplish its purpose. It won't fail. Good. It accomplishes the purpose for which it's designed.

If God begins that work, you will perform it. That Greek word is translated in various ways. Listen to them: he will perform it; he will bring it to an end; he will accomplish; he will perfect; he will execute; he will complete; he will perfect. That's why we entitled the second point: a perfect work. The work he begins, the work he perfects.

Let's not forget that this is very obviously God's work. Now maybe we don't have to tell a Reformed group in church that very much because we all know that, but let's emphasize that. There is not a single part of Matthew's life that God didn't work. He didn't start working when he brought him to Doug's Bible study group in prison. God started a work when he was conceived in the womb of his mother. Everything was God's work and it all fits the purpose.

Now, we have to say, "Why did he not start right at the beginning? Why did he wait? Why did he have to commit a crime for which he would be imprisoned for over 20 years?" Can't answer that now, but we know it's good. Every part of it is good, and we can't wait for that judgment day that we talked about a couple of weeks ago because that's when God will explain to every single one of us, specifically concerning Matthew, why everything had to be done just the way it was, and we're going to stand there with our mouths wide open and say, "It couldn't have been better. It was the best."

Now, your lives and all the pain, and I've gotten to know you well enough in these last eight years, God is at work in every single one of us, according to his plan. Perfect. He doesn't make mistakes. He doesn't do second best. It's always exactly right and he's working in every little event and every big one, and when it comes to the work of saving, it all fits saving. God doesn't do this and this and this, and save. No, God's work of saving, that work, that good work that he's begun for us and in us, and everything fits inside of that good work that he's performing. But it's God's work. It's not God doing 50%, 51%, he's got the majority shares and we have to do the rest. It's God's work all the way. He doesn't begin it and then we do the last little bit to finish it.

The continuation of this work is that it's God's until we are brought into heaven. The beginning and the end and everything in between is of God so that even, now Philippians 2:12-13, when we want to do something and don't want to do something that's wrong, we're going to say, "God's at work in us to will and to do of his good pleasure."

This is the truth that is called the perseverance of the saints. No one, no one of those in whom a work of grace is begun will ever perish or ever fall away. Every one of them will persevere through every difficulty, every uncertainty, and in the face of every opposition

until the day of Jesus Christ. One who is alive in Christ now is going to be alive forever in glory. If Christ is in you and with you today, he will never leave you. He is faithful. If he said your sins are forgiven, he'll never say you're guilty.

Look up. Don't look at yourself. Don't guess what other people might think of you. Look up.

He is faithful. When David received from God the promise about Solomon and his children always sitting upon his throne and he said, "My mercy will I keep for him," your Son, "forevermore and my covenant shall stand fast with him. If his seed forsake my law and walk not in my judgments, if they break my statutes and keep not my commandments, then will I visit their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him nor suffer my faithfulness to fail." Remember, it's God's work. God's faithfulness will not fail. Psalm 89:33.

How about that which is sometimes called the most well-known verse in all the Bible, John 3:16, "whosoever believeth in him will never perish"? Will never perish. Jesus said it in John 6:37, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." John 10:28, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall," if you didn't get it the first time, "never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." "Whom he did predestinate," Romans 8, "them he also called, and the ones that he called," not a lesser number, "them he justified," and whom he justified, the same number, "them he also glorified." The chain of salvation is for all of those, starting with predestination and ending with glorification so that, now verse 39 of Romans 8, nothing, nothing, can "separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Concerning his calling: the calling of God is without repentance, Romans 11:29. A work that he's begun shall be fully done. 1 Peter 1, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy," began a good work, he "hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by," nothing less than, "the power of God." Jude verse 24, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." One more. At the end of 1 Thessalonians, chapter 5, verse 24, so simple, "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."

Scripture just floods us with that confidence. Look up. If you look here, you look at yourself, you look in the mirror, I'm afraid. But you look up, he began it, he'll perfect it. The Bible tells me so. Therefore we may be confident. We've been persuaded. May the Holy Spirit take every one of these verses that we just read and the truth that we've just explained and make and persuade you. That's the word "confident."

Now, sadly there are those who take away this comfort of the believer by teaching us that the work of salvation begins with man's choice. There are others, who just as sadly, say you can be a covenant breaker, and if you have faith and you don't continue in works, you

can lose it. One more time: look up. Our confidence is not in us, our confidence is in God.

Now listen to four things about that God. He is an eternal God who eternally chose us, Ephesians 1:4, who works all things after the counsel of his own will. He's an eternal God.

2. He is an unchangeable God. Malachi 3:6, "I change not." His counsel and everything that he does in that counsel will come to pass. Isaiah 46:10, "He declares the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure," my good pleasure, another name for his counsel.

He's eternal. He's unchangeable. He's sovereign. All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing. He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth and none can stay his hand and say unto him, "What doest thou?" He's sovereign. His grace is irresistible. The work of calling us is irreversible. His promises are sure.

He's eternal. He's unchangeable. He's sovereign. And his love is everlasting, Jeremiah 31:3. In love he predestinated us. It was the ones he foreloved, foreknew, them he did predestinate and that love isn't like ours, praise the Lord, it's constant. It's always burning. It's fervent. It's hot. And it's forever and that's why it's until the day of Jesus Christ. What an interesting way to put it, it's until the day of Jesus Christ. That's the day when Jesus Christ will be glorified, when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father. The day of Jesus Christ is when all the credit of every saved one and the whole of the church and the whole body of truth being preserved, when all the credit of it and all the glory of it goes to Jesus. Not to us. Not to some great John Calvin. Not to some other Reformer. But to Christ and to Christ alone. And you may be confident, you young ones may be confident that he which began a good work will perform it.

It is said, we've said, when men put salvation to be partly ours as well as God's, whether we've got to start it or whether we have to end it, it is just as said when the knowledge of God's work leads to what the Catechism and the Canons call not only presumptiveness, we've dealt with that this morning, but remissness. Remissness. Remissness is, "It's all God's work. Don't be so loud about good works. Don't tell me that I have. Don't put 'musts' and 'must nots' and 'shalts' and 'shalt nots' in my life. I will inevitably."

What keeps us looking up, what drives our eyes upward, is not only the uncertainties in this life but it's because we know that in us yet remains an old man that I must put off and not once a day, once a week, twice a week, Sunday morning, Sunday night, but I have to be admonished as well as promised so that the Canons of Dort says God uses admonitions and threatenings and promises and I need those threatenings and we need those admonitions and those promises over and over and over. I must be told what I must

do, I must be told what I must not do because the danger is ever-present that I am in. Look up and fear the Lord.

This assurance and this confidence springs from the faith that God has given to us in his promises. It arises and is ours and ever-present because the Spirit assures and witnesses with our spirit, and this: there is a holy desire to preserve a good conscience and a holy desire to perform good works, Canons 5, 10. Satan wants us to doubt but God declares, "I've begun a good work in you and I'm going to perfect it." It's that good so instead of producing presumption and remissness, real accurate knowledge of this truth of Philippians 1:6 produces an additional reason for daily humility, for godliness, for patience, and remember, patience is enduring, enduring. This assurance and confidence is an incentive unto the serious and constant practice of gratitude and good works and it makes us careful to continue in the ways of God so that we experience his gracious countenance, his face shining. The Canons put it this way: to have God's face of pleasure shine on me is dearer than life, and if it's withdrawn, my experience is more bitter than death.

Know, beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, know his work in you. He began it. May the knowledge of what he's begun and the promise that he's never going to stop make you fervent in your desire to honor him and thank him. No better way to say it again: render grateful returns of ardent love, ardent love to him who first manifested so great a love to us. Amen.

*Gracious Father, take this thy word, apply it, apply it more precisely, more deeply than what any man's words could ever do. By thy Spirit, give us to know the wonder of such amazing grace that began it and is going to complete it. For Jesus' sake. Amen.*



## Philippians 1:6

### WHAT GOD BEGINS SHALL BE FULLY DONE

- I. The beginning.
  - A. What “good work” has God begun in us? It is the work of saving us from the greatest evil and giving us the greatest good.
    - 1. There is a work FOR us, which God has already accomplished.
    - 2. Our text speaks of the work of salvation IN us, i.e., inside His people by His Spirit.
  - B. This work is “good,” because it accomplishes what it is designed to do; it accomplishes God’s purpose.
- II. God “will perform,” i.e., bring to an end, accomplish, perfect, execute, complete.
  - A. The clear implication is that this good work of salvation in us is all God’s work.
  - B. This is the truth of the preservation of the saints.
    - 1. Not one of those in whom a work of grace has begun will ever perish or fall away.
    - 2. Every one of them will persevere through every uncertainty, difficulty, and opposition till the day of Jesus Christ.
  - C. This comforting truth is taught elsewhere in Scripture.
- III. Thus we may be “confident,” be persuaded and trust.
  - A. Sadly there are some who take away a believer’s comfort by teaching that the work of salvation begins with man’s choice.
  - B. Our text puts our confidence in God and in Jesus (not in man)!
  - C. God performs His work in us “until the day of Jesus Christ.”
  - D. Thus every believer, who yet lives in this world with a sinful nature, may be confident of his salvation and place in glory.
  - E. This truth produces, not presumptiveness, nor remissness, but humility, godliness, and patience (Canons V-12,13).