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“God Will Finish What He Starts”

Philippians 1:6

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When we come to faith in Jesus Christ, God does not abandon us. On the contrary, He sends His Spirit to dwell in us and abide with us to help us run the race with perseverance. God is as much at work in bringing us to salvation as He is at work in keeping us saved! But it's not all on Him. We have a responsibility to “work out our salvation” too. We will study this encouraging promise as we read through Philippians 1:6.

1. Introduction to Philippians

a. Philippi, the city

- i. Philippi was a city in an ancient Macedonia, which is in modern Greece.
- ii. Philip II of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great, conquered the city and renamed it after himself in 356 B.C.
- iii. In the first century, Philippi was an almost exclusively gentile city with a population of about 10,000–15,000 people.

b. Philippians, the letter to the church

- i. Philippians is a letter written to the church at Philippi.

1. Around 50–53 A.D., Paul visited Philippi and established a church during his missionary journey.
2. 10 years later, Paul wrote to the church at Philippi from a prison in Rome in 62 A.D. (**Philippians 1:7**).

- ii. The main theme of Philippians is joy.

1. Joy is mentioned 14 times in the 4 chapters of Philippians.
2. Despite Paul writing from prison, he made joy the theme of his letter to the Christians at Philippi.

2. **Philippians 1:1-11** – “[1] Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: [2] Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. [3] I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, [4] always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, [5] for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, [6] being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; [7] just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace. [8] For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ. [9] And this I pray, that your love may abound

*still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, [10] that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, [11] being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God."*

- a. Timothy was Paul's young protégé and traveling companion.

3. Paul's purpose for writing

- a. Paul felt great affection for the church at Philippi.
  - i. **Philippians 1:8** – *"For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ."*
- b. Paul's letter to the Philippians is different from his other letters.
  - i. What Paul's letter was:
    - 1. Paul was not writing a corrective letter, like Corinthians.
    - 2. Paul was not writing a theological letter, like Romans.
    - 3. Paul was writing a letter of love and appreciation to the church at Philippi.
  - ii. Paul wrote to:
    - 1. Thank the Believers at Philippi for their financial support.
    - 2. Caution them about the potential of false teachers coming in to ruin the church.
    - 3. Encourage them in the unity of the Spirit.

4. Biblical joy

- a. Philippians is sometimes referred to as "the epistle of joy."
  - i. Paul wrote while in prison awaiting trial, just before Nero officially outlawed Christianity in the Roman Empire.
  - ii. Despite his chains, Paul made "joy" the operational word of Philippians.
    - 1. Joy is central to the Christmas story and part of the angelic announcement made at Jesus' birth.
    - 2. The Gospel is the "good news of great joy that will be for all the people" (**Luke 2:10b**, ESV).
    - 3. The word "joy" appears 123 times in the Bible, not including the other forms of joy like "rejoice."
- b. Usually, people of the world speak about happiness instead of joy.
  - i. Happiness is based on happenstance.
    - 1. Happiness is temporary, fluctuating, and fleeting.
    - 2. Happiness is based on external factors outside our control.
  - ii. Joy is based on a relationship with Jesus Christ.
    - 1. Joy is relational, steady, and eternal.

2. Joy is based on the underlying realization that the unchanging God loves me and is in control regardless of whatever happens.
3. Our worst day with Jesus Christ is better than our best day without Him.
4. **DISCUSS:** When did you experience the difference between the happiness of the world and the joy of the Lord? How has God brought joy to your heart despite the circumstances?

c. The Greek word for “joy” is **chara**, meaning “calm delight.”

- i. Joy is not about plastering a fake smile but about delighting in the Lord.
- ii. **Philippians 1:3–6** – “[3] I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, [4] always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, [5] for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, [6] being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.”
- iii. Paul gave two reasons for his joy.
  1. In verse 5, Paul rejoiced that the Philippians had a heart to financially support his ministry.
  2. In verse 6, Paul shared that Christ was his reason to rejoice.
  3. **DISCUSS:** What causes you to rejoice? What Scripture do you keep close to your heart to remind you of the joy available to you in Christ?

5. Reasons to rejoice

- a. We can be “confident” that God will finish what He started concerning us (**Philippians 1:6**).
  - i. The Greek word translated “confident” in verse 6 is **peithō**.
  - ii. **Peithō** means “to be completely convinced.”
- b. God does not abandon us.
  - i. After salvation, God imparts the Holy Spirit to indwell us.
    1. **1 John 4:13** – “By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.”
    2. **John 14:16–18** – “[16] I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— [17] the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. [18] I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.”
    3. **DISCUSS:** In what ways has the Holy Spirit been active in your life?
  - ii. The Holy Spirit empowers us.

1. **Philippians 2:13** – “It is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”
2. God empowers us with the desire to do His will.
3. God empowers us with the ability to live out His good purposes.
4. **DISCUSS:** How have your desires changed over the years as you’ve grown to know and love Christ?

- iii. The Holy Spirit counsels, comforts, convicts, challenges, and guides Believers.

- c. If God is for us (**Romans 8:31**), we can run with perseverance and not grow weary.

6. Responding to God’s Pursuit
  - a. **Philippians 2:12-13** – “[12] Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; [13] for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”
    - i. We are responsible for working in concert with the Spirit of God.
      1. God initiates and pursues; we respond.
        - a. God is “not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (**2 Peter 3:9**).
        - b. God’s kindness leads us to repentance (**Romans 2:4**).
      2. **DISCUSS:** What does it mean for you to work in concert with God? Is there something in your life that you have been struggling to submit to Him?
    - ii. There are two extremes that people can fall into regarding how we run the Christian race.
      1. Some think that the Christian race is all on God.
        - a. This view suggests that God chooses us and keeps us.
        - b. **DISCUSS:** What subsequent behavior can we fall into when we abdicate our duty to choose to do good and not sin?
      2. Others think that the Christian race is all on us.
        - a. This view suggests that we choose God and we keep ourselves saved.
        - b. **DISCUSS:** What subsequent behavior can we fall into when we think our Christian race is all up to us?
  - b. **Philippians 1:6b** – God will work to complete His work in us “until the day of Jesus Christ.”
    - i. The “day of Jesus Christ” can have different meanings in the Bible.
      1. Sometimes, “the Day” refers to the second coming of Jesus Christ.

- a. **Hebrews 10:25** – Paul urges us to good works, “*not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*”
2. The “*day of Jesus Christ*” could also refer to the day you stand before the Lord when you die.

ii. Either way, God will continue to work in us and guard us till the day we step into His glorious presence.

1. **Psalm 138:8a** – “*The Lord will perfect that which concerns me.*”
2. **DISCUSS:** How does God’s promise that He will perfect His people comfort you today?

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James (NKJV)