

The letter to the Philippians, which begins with grace (**1:2**) and ends with grace (**4:23**), has been called "The Shepherd Psalm of the New Testament", and it is one of the most beautiful of Paul's letters.

**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."**

- Grammatical Usage: "**confident**" or in the Greek, "epiteleo" meaning, "certain completion"; "**work**" or "ergon" meaning, "task" in the sense employment.
- Literal Interpretation: Because I have been convinced (and therefore I am now certain) of this very fact – that the One Who commissioned in you a good, life-fulling task will go on pushing it to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.
- Contextual/Comparison: We shall consider this statement in relation: (1) to the Church at Philippi; (2) to the Church today; and (3) to the individual Christian.

#### 1. GOD'S WORK IN THE CHURCH AT PHILIPPI

Who began the Church at Philippi - and how? It is perfectly clear that God commenced, was continuing and would complete His Church. In **Acts 16:6-34** the story is told for us. How did He "begin" His "good work"?

- By burdening the hearts of some praying women (**Acts 16:13**). Whenever the Lord is about to begin any work, He first sets one or some of His people praying. All true prayer begins, not with the pray-er, but with God (**Romans 8:26-27**).
- By guiding the footsteps of His servants. God's servants had intended preaching in Asia, but the Holy Spirit changed their plans and directed them to Philippi (**Acts 16:6-7**). In answer to prayer, God was sending His servants to plant the first Church in Europe.
- By giving His servants a vision (**Acts 16:8-9**). All because a few women prayed! How often has this very thing been repeated? As prayer has been offered, and sometimes (as perhaps in this case) before it has been offered (**Isaiah 65:24**), God has worked, miraculously, mightily. He is just the same today!
- By making His servants obedient. The important words in **Acts 16:10** are "**at once**." This indicates instant, unquestioning and complete obedience. God can do great things with His servants when they are ready to obey Him in this way.

Seven Marks of a Godly Servant:

- A Servant Is Humble (**Philippians 2:3-8**). Just before his death, Jesus decided to give his followers a clear picture of the attitude they should have. He took off his outer garments, got a basin, and washed their feet. If Jesus humbled himself in this way—and even further in his death—then we also should be humble in all we do for him and others.
- A Servant Prepares (**1 Timothy 4:7b-8; 15**). Provisionally, through Scripture, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the ministry of the Church, God offers on-the-job training.
- A Servant Perseveres (**Luke 12:35-37a; 38**). The work we've been given is long and tiring, receives little thanks or recognition, and may seem to count for little while it's being done. The Master gives us others to work beside, a glorious future to work toward, and a promise that our work is not in vain.

- A Servant Serves Where Needed (**1 Corinthians 9:19; 22b-23**). Jesus walked hundreds of miles, slept on the ground, was pawed at by people, got dirty. Dealt with the bickering of his coworkers, washed their feet. He did what was needed to advance the gospel.
- A Servant Serves (or Not) As God Directs (“**1 Chronicles 28**”). David wanted to serve and honor God by building God a wonderful and permanent house; **1 Ch. 28** shows that the Lord did not allow David to build the temple. Sometimes the Lord says no to our plans to serve. Maybe there’s someone more qualified, or we are already serving in other places. Maybe we don’t know why. But we trust and obey God (**Rom. 8:28**).
- A Servant Expects to Suffer (**Matthew 10:24-25**). As Jesus’s light shines through us, people who love darkness (**John 3:19**) will become convicted and uncomfortable in the light of his glory, and will hate and ridicule us.
- A Servant Is Not Ashamed (**2 Timothy 2:15**). The work we do we do is for Jesus, by the Father’s command, through the power of his Holy Spirit. It is a joyous work we’ve been given, and we look to the day when our Master returns and commends us (**Matthew 25:23**).
- By the preaching of the Gospel. Their object in going to Philippi was “**to preach the gospel**” (v. 10); to make known “**the way to be saved**” (v. 17).
- By performing miracles of conversion. Three special cases are mentioned: (1) Lydia and her household (**vv. 14-15**); (2) the demon-possessed girl (**vv. 16-18**); and (3) the Jailer and his household (**vv. 25-34**). In each case it was God who did it.
- By faithfulness in persecution. Who can doubt that God permitted and used the sufferings of His servants as an instrument for the building of the Church in Philippi? (Read **Acts 16:22-24** and compare **Philippians 1:12**).

## 2. GOD’S WORK IN THE CHURCH TODAY

God is still the author and upholder of His Church, and He will surely complete it (**Matthew 16:13-18**). In **Acts 16** we see the “**gates of Hell**” opposing the progress of the gospel, but the powers of darkness were overcome and the Lord built His Church in Philippi. Although today many alien forces are arrayed against the Church, yet **Philippians 1:6** is true, and so is **Ephesians 5:25-27**!

## 3. GOD’S WORK IN THE INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIAN

Just as He began and continued the work at Philippi, and just as He is the author and perfecter of His Church today, so is He the author and finisher of His work in the life of every individual Christian. Only God can make a Christian.

A Christian is one who is convicted (**John 16:8**); born again (**John 3:3**); redeemed (**Ephesians 1:7**); justified (**Romans 5:1**); translated (**Colossians 1:13**); sealed (**Ephesians 4:30**); and made a partaker of the divine nature (**2 Peter 1:4**). Only God can do these things! Therefore:

- Has God COMMENCED His work in you? Has He saved you (**Romans 10:9-10**)?
- If He has, He will CONTINUE His work in you. **John 6:37; 10:27-29; 17:12; 2 Timothy 1:12**, and **Jude 24** assure us of this.
- He will COMPLETE His work in you. He “**will carry it on to completion until the day of Jesus Christ**”, and then, when the Lord comes – **1 John 3:2**!

➤ Conclusion: God has called each of us to His work. Have you answered?