

The Perseverance of the Saints

By Don Green

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Bible Verse: Philippians 1:6
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Truth Community Church
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

We could not possibly have ended on a better verse to lead into our text this morning than, "That soul though all hell should endeavor to shake, I will never, no never, no never forsake," quoting from Hebrews 13 and the triple negative that is found there, the strongest possible emphatic statement that God will not abandon his people to Satan, to their own sin, he will not abandon them to hell. Once you are saved, you are saved forever and that brings us to our text this morning as we continue in the book of Philippians 1. Let me invite you to turn to Philippians 1:6 for one of the signally great texts in all of the Bible. The Apostle Paul says,

6 For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

Paul here in this verse has expressed the biblical doctrine known as the perseverance of the saints and just to set a little bit of the literary context before we go into this verse in particular, you'll recall that Paul had opened and was expressing to the Philippians his gratitude to God for them. He was thankful to God as he prayed for them on a consistent basis throughout the course of his life and ministry.

Look at verse 3 with me. He says in verse 3, "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now." Their long history of faithfulness to the Gospel, their long history of support of Paul in his ministry was an external evidence of an internal reality; that they had genuinely been converted to Christ; that God had saved them and that God was at work in them. First of all, Paul gives thanks to God rather than to them. He's thanking God because he sees a vertical work of God in them being expressed in horizontal ways. That's why he's thanking God even as he prays for them. He says, "Father, I see Your work in them and that makes me glad and I give You thanks for what You are doing." And why can he be so grateful as he thinks about these friends? He goes on and he says in verse 6, "I am confident. I thank my God because I'm confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." Beloved, what I want you to see here is some very basic grammar in terms of what's going on here. His prayer here, while he is grateful for what the Philippians have done, his writing and his prayer is vertical, it is God-centered. "I thank my God because I'm confident in Him, that He who began a good work in you will

perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. I pray for you with gratitude because God has started a work and I'm so grateful to God because I know that the work that He started, He will take and finish."

So as he's writing to them, he is writing from a position of confidence and strength, and as I say in this verse, he expresses the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, one of the great Reformed doctrines that we could ever study. And what does that mean, what does that phrase mean, the perseverance of the saints? One writer defined it this way and I quote, "All those," you should write this down because this is good for your soul, "All those who are truly born of the Spirit and united to Christ by faith are kept secure in Him by God's power and thus will persevere in faith until they go to be with Christ in death." Let me read it again, "All those who are truly born of the Spirit and united to Christ by faith are kept secure in Him by God's power and thus will persevere in faith until they go to be with Christ in death." Beloved, if you are a true Christian, you need never fear of losing your salvation. That's not because you will perform so admirably throughout the course of your Christian life, rather it's because Christ himself will perform so admirably to finish the work that he began in you. You were saved not by your own power, not by your own wisdom, not by your own choice, you were saved by the power of God in which the Holy Spirit applied the redemptive work of Christ to your soul in effectuating the choice of God that he made before eternity began. Salvation is a work of God, you must understand that, and because it is a work of God, it is not subject to reversal, it is not subject to being canceled. Once God starts a work, he finishes it, and if you are here today in Christ, that means that you will most certainly come to the end of your life in Christ and find yourself safe in heaven in the end. There could be no other possible outcome. God starts a work according to his eternal plan, he carries it out by the power of the Holy Spirit, it effectuates what Christ accomplished on the cross, and God has intentions on your soul that are not subject to reversal by men and that means that we are secure, it means that we will persevere, it means that that soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake, Christ will never never ever forsake. He didn't lay his life down on the cross for you only to allow that to be reversed in the end. He didn't triumph over demonic hosts only to let them triumph over any of his beloved in the end. Christ in the greatness of his power and in the greatness of his love has purchased us with the greatness of his life and the greatness of his shed blood for a great salvation that he intends to carry out all to the end. And beloved, he does not have his arms crossed waiting to see if you're going to cross the finish line on your own, he is at work in you and God is at work in you to make sure that you cross the finish line no matter how you may stumble along the route along the way.

So this is why, these great biblical themes are why we sing with joy. They are why we rejoice. They are why we worship. We understand that we are not worthy of such love, we're not worthy of such a great salvation, and yet this is what our Christ has done for us and, therefore, we rejoice that one has delivered us and saved us, we rejoice that one has been so good to us and he didn't just start good and then back off at the end like we so often do with some of our projects that get half finished but never quite done, God begins a work in you and he finishes it by his power without fail and that's what we want to consider from God's word here this morning as we look at Philippians 1:6.

Let's look at the author of the work, first of all. If you're taking notes, that's your first point. Let's look at the author of the work. Paul is expressing his assurance, the inner confidence that he has about what his view of them is. He says in verse 6, "I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." This Greek verb that is translated being confident, it means to bring about a convinced state. Paul is convinced in his mind of what he is speaking. It is a settled reality to him. He's not tossing back and forth about what the outcome will be, he is convinced in a settled state of mind that the outcome for the Philippian church will be good. He is convinced in his mind that they are sharers in grace with him, that they are true partners in the Gospel, that they share in the same salvation that he does. He is convinced of that by all of the things that he has stated about them and about God and the question is what is it that he's convinced of? Who began this work?

Well, let me remind you without turning back to the book of Acts, a little bit of the history that we looked at a few weeks ago. At every point of the development of the Philippian church, God had done and had initiated the work. Everything that led to the existence of this church at Philippi was a start, was started by the work of God. Think about it with me as we just kind of review this in our minds just a little bit. Who stopped Paul on the road to Damascus? Christ did. Christ stopped him on the road to Damascus when Paul, the thorough intention of Paul's heart was to go and to persecute Christians. Christ stopped him on the road to Damascus and said, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And in that moment, Paul himself was converted to Christ, not because Paul was looking for it, quite to the contrary, Christ was looking for him, stopped him and saved him, stopped him in his tracks, literally speaking. This was a work of God in the life of the Apostle Paul.

How was it that Paul ever got to the city of Philippi? God gave a vision and directed Paul to go to Macedonia. What happened when he got to Macedonia in Acts 16 and started preaching the Gospel to those women gathered by the riverside? The Bible says that God opened Lydia's heart in order that she might believe. Later on in Acts 16, God sent an earthquake to save the jailer, to awaken the jailer to his need for Christ, and God sends an earthquake and Paul tells him, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved," and the jailer and all of his household believed.

Here's what you need to see, beloved, just historically speaking as you read through Scripture about the church at Philippi, you see the work of God going on at every point. The man who brought the Gospel to them, the Apostle Paul, Christ did a work in him. How did he get to Macedonia? God gave a vision that directed him there. What was the work that was going on when he was preaching the Gospel? God is opening hearts to believe that which was being spoken to them, the jailer and on and on it goes, and now as he writes this letter some 10 years or more later, the Philippians are still supporting the work of the Gospel, still faithful to Paul, still encouraging him and partnering in the Gospel work with him. Now, you step back from that and you look at the totality of what is being expressed here and you say go back and look at the root of this. The root of this was in Christ himself. The root of this was God working in human hearts and now 10

years later there is a proven track record that the expressions of faith that they made in their early days were real as shown by their tangible continuance in the faith to this day. Paul as he writes this letter now is looking and reflecting on all of this and says, "I'm utterly convinced that what God has started, He will continue in you." That kind of rhymes, doesn't it? He will continue in you. I need to write that down and use that at some point again in the future. You see, the Philippians' love for Paul, the Philippians' contributions multiplied over time to the support of his ministry was saying this, their gifts were an indication that an unseen work of God was going on in their hearts and Paul knew that the evidence showed an unseen work that was going to continue in them until they were safely delivered home.

Let's approach this from another way, just to think about it theologically and from other passages of Scripture. Ephesians 1 tells us that God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. God has chosen in eternity past to save a people for himself. Beloved, that can only mean one thing, it can only mean one thing, it means that God's choice will stand. It will be carried out. It will be completed. And everything that he chose and determined to do in eternity past will come to fruition and it will be found that nothing was lost in between. How could it, beloved, how could it? Could Satan rise up and hinder the work of God? That possibility was extinguished when God kicked him out of heaven when Satan rebelled. Satan has no power to thwart the work of God in keeping his people. Would it be from us, would it be because of our sin? Well, well, the very point of the choice was that he would save us from sin. He knew that in advance. He knew your sin even as a Christian in advance and saved you anyway.

Think about it from another perspective. Let's step out of eternity past and go back 2,000 years to the cross of Christ where Jesus Christ died to save that chosen people for himself. We'll look at some other passages in a few moments but just to give the overview sense of it, Christ, the eternal Son of God, went to the cross in order to save and to redeem this people for himself. That was what he voluntarily did. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. This means, then, that Christ who died on the cross in order to achieve the work of redemption on behalf of his people, that work will stand. The work of Christ will stand in every sense the same way that the choice of God in eternity past will stand.

Think about it further. The Holy Spirit came and applied that work to your heart in redemption. The Spirit did a work to open your eyes. The Spirit caused you to be born again. You didn't cause yourself to be born spiritually, the Spirit did that work in you, and the work of the Spirit is going to stand.

Now think about what we just reviewed here. The Father in eternity past, the Son at the cross, the Spirit in your life applying redemption to your soul. Beloved, do you realize that there is a Triune work of God at work in you if you're a true believer, that every member of the Trinity has played a part in a unified plan of redemption to save a people and God included you in that? Beloved, there is no Scripture talking about God the Father reversing his choice. There is no Scripture about Christ abandoning his people. There is no Scripture about the Spirit withdrawing from those that he has indwelt. And the reason

that there is no Scripture like that is because the saints persevere because God keeps his people, Father, Son and Holy Spirit all working together in a divinely powerful act of salvation to make sure that you are safely delivered from sin, Satan and wrath, and delivered to heaven in the end, and no one is lost in the process who truly comes to Christ. Yes, yes, you fall into sin and to temptation. We get that. Yes, we understand that you struggle along the way. But the teaching of Scripture is that God keeps those who he saves in faith in Christ until the end, and the fact that you struggle and you are weak along the way ultimately only redounds to the power and the glory of God, that he saved you despite and in your weakness. He kept you through it all in order to deliver you safe in the end.

Look at verse 6 with me again in light of these things, in light of the history of Philippi, in light of the work of the Triune God in salvation. All of this undergirds what Paul is saying here in verse 6, "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work and you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." And beloved, the wonder of this, the beauty of this for your discouraged soul is this, is that the power of your salvation rests on the God who saved you, not on yourself.

Now, what we're saying here is true. We're going to look at passages now. This is true of individuals and it is true of the church corporately. Look at John 6, the Gospel of John 6 with me. The Gospel of John 6. And again, we come back to what I may have said on Tuesday or Sunday, things kind of all mesh together in my mind, we're back to a point where once again what Scripture is persuading us of is the love of God for his own; is the fact that God genuinely loves his own with an eternal love that he will not withdraw, and that therefore God keeps us and we doubt this doctrine of perseverance in part through an unfamiliarity with Scripture and also because of the suspicion that we have in our carnal hearts against the ultimate goodness and love of God. We're back here once again, beloved, where I am trying to bring to you Scripture that tells you that this God who saved you is a God of eternal love and his love is never withdrawn from those that he sets it upon.

Look at what Christ himself said in John 6:37. He says, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me." The Father chose them in eternity past, what Christ is saying is that all that the Father chose are going to come to me, there will be none lost in the middle, there will be none lost along the way. Verse 37, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out." That is a statement of love. It is a promise of certainty that the one who comes to Christ will not be cast away by him at any point. He won't be refused when he comes in faith, after he's in Christ, he won't be cast away. This is the word of Christ speaking here and he says in verse 38, "I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." What is that will, Jesus? Verse 39, "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day." Verse 40, "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day." Christ guarantees by his own personal promise that the one who comes to him in faith he will raise up on the last day. He will be in the resurrection. He will be in glory with him at the end. He will tolerate none being

lost. He will have nothing of his Father's will to save them being frustrated. He says, "I will do it. I will keep him. This is a certainty." You can trust the word of Christ.

Now, just to back up for a second in light of words like that, beloved, this is why we worship the Lord. This is at the core of why we worship the Lord, that we, though unworthy, we sinful, we deserving judgment, have been on the receiving end of love and a gift like that, and we return thanks, we return worship, we give homage to the one who created us and the one who redeemed us not in a sense of craven fear that he might smack us if we don't, this is the worship of a reverent fear and a reverent love that says, "God, I am so grateful to You, all my heart can do is sing in response."

In fact, let's go back to Psalm 95 for just a moment. We'll get to Psalm 95 in a few weeks on Tuesday. I encourage you to come to our Tuesday studies where all these themes are reinforced as we go through the Psalms. But beloved, the one who understands the work of the Triune God in salvation and has put his faith in Christ worships with gratitude, with joy and with thanksgiving.

Look at Psalm 95:1 and 2. It says, "O come, let us sing for joy to the LORD, Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms." Why? "For the LORD is a great God And a great King above all gods." Skip down to verse 6, "Come, let us worship and bow down, Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. For He is our God, And we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand." God has saved us like a shepherd and brought us into his flock. God the Father has saved us and adopted us into his family where he intends to keep us forever and ever, amen. That in the redeemed, when the redeemed recognize what their God has done for them, they sing, they shout, they're grateful, and it shows forth in worship and gratitude toward him in response. That's why we worship. That's why we come together and have a worship service. We serve God with our worship and praise in response to what he has done and the fact that it will never be taken away from us. We are overwhelmed by such magnificent grace and love and patience and mercy that has been shown on sinful souls like our own. Now see, you can't walk away from Scripture seeing these things with an indifferent attitude if you're in Christ. These are not matters of take it or leave it for true Christians. These so inform and dominate and control our affections that our life is given to Christ gladly, that all that we consider important, all that we identify ourselves in, is in this Christ who loved us and gave himself up for us. And it's not I who live, it's not we who live, but Christ lives through us. That's the way the proper response goes and this is not with reluctance, this is with full-throated, full-hearted gladness and worship.

Look over at John 10. John 10:27, Jesus says, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one." Once you are in the hand of Christ, no one can snatch you out of there. You can't jump out of his grip on your own, Satan can't come and take you away because it was the determination of God to save you and to deliver you safe into heaven, and that

choice of God is what determines the outcome and therefore we are safe and we are secure in him. That's true of individuals as you read Scripture, you see it's true of the church corporately as well. Jesus said, "I will build My church," Matthew 16:18. "I will build it and nothing will hinder Me," Christ says. He will build up his church, he will gather people from every tribe and tongue and nation, he will gather them together so that there will be a worldwide fulfillment of the Psalms that calls all the nations to worship him. You see, what Scripture shows us and the reason that Scripture is given to us is not to give you a roadmap so that you can figure out how to be saved and to work it out by yourself on your own, what Scripture reveals is this great redemptive plan of God that is eternal in its nature and eternal in its scope, and that Christ carries it out and Christ does this work in his people in the furtherance of that plan to save them, to keep them so that they would never be lost.

Look over at Ephesians 5 in a passage that we normally think about in connection with marriage, and rightly so, but the whole premise of the teaching on marriage is based on the work of Christ for his bride, the church. Ephesians 5, beginning in verse 25, "Husbands, love your wives, just as," now he's going to, now he's switching to talk about Christ so that husbands would understand their role, yes, but he's pivoting to talk about what Christ did for his people as a picture of what husbands should do for their wives. Verse 25, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless." Christ gave himself for the church. Why did he do that? Because he loved the church. When did he do that? Was it after his people had cleaned up their lives? No, he loved us when we were still sinners. He gave himself while we were still in sin. The Gospel came to you not in response to your self-improvement but in grace God worked in your life to bring the Gospel to you either through a human voice or through the written page of Scripture or some other resource. God initiated and brought the Gospel to you and the Holy Spirit opened your eyes to see the glory of Christ that you might be saved.

Now look, look, God did not go to all of those great eternal lengths simply to walk away from it, simply to shrug his shoulders and say, "I can't do any more with them. I'm out of here. They're on their own. Spirit, out-dwell them. Come out of them." There's nothing like that in Scripture. Quite to the contrary, Scripture says that you were sealed in the Holy Spirit. You were indwelt by him as a down payment for what God has started in you he will most certainly finish and so what we see here is the author of the work guarantees the outcome. It's not that we started to save ourselves and now we get some credit or that it depends on us in order to make sure that our sins really remain forgiven. No, Jesus paid it all. James Montgomery Boice said this, "No one whom God has brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ will ever be lost." So based on Scripture I can tell you today if you're in Christ, you'll always be in Christ. Not only is there no going back, but Christ won't go back on you. He will keep you safe until the end.

Let's go back to Philippians. Now that you're in Ephesians, it's just a page or two over. In light of all of these things, once again you can see what Paul is saying. "I am confident of

this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." Paul's thanks to God was grounded in his confidence in God. Nothing hinders Christ from completely saving his people.

Now, we've dealt with this next question often in the past, we'll just deal with it briefly here. What about, but what about all of those people who claim to be Christians but now want nothing to do with Christ? What about those that have walked away? What are we to think about them, and they have a settled hostility toward Christ when outwardly they appear to be true Christians in the past?

Look at 1 John 2:19. Scripture anticipates that very issue, that very problem. 1 John, after 1 & 2 Peter, 1 John 2:19 says, "They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us." It is possible to appear to be a Christian, it is possible to claim to be a Christian without the inward reality of regeneration being true in your heart. It is possible to name the name of Christ and it is possible in his name to appear to do great works and wonders by his name and his power. This is all possible but Scripture says that those things are not a guarantee that a man is truly in Christ.

Look over, these are the words of Jesus himself, look over at Matthew 7. Matthew 7:21, it says, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'" How is it, then, that they are being sent away? Was it that they lost their salvation? No, that was not the case and that's not the case. Jesus says to them, "I never knew you. There was never a time where I knew you. There was never a time where you had truly repented and come to Me in faith, therefore, depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness." The answer to this appearance of Christians who seem to fall away is that they were never saved to begin with because those who are truly saved are born again, they are a new creation in Christ, the old things have passed away, behold new things have come and those new things stay. So when a man ups and walks away from Christ, you say, "Wow, he was really convincing but he was never really in Christ to begin with," and Scripture shows this repeatedly.

Now that has pastoral implications here that I should probably park on for just a moment or two. Those of you that know you're living the life of the hypocrite, you outwardly come and identify with God's people, you outwardly say the things of Christ and yet you're living a double life, you're hiding a sinful part of your life, you need not be comforted by this doctrine of the perseverance of faith, you need to repent and show that you're really in Christ because the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints offers no comfort or assurance to hypocrites, it offers comfort and assurance to those whose faith in Christ is genuine and sincere even though they stumble along the way. So no hypocrite in the room should take heart in the doctrine of the perseverance of saints, rather they should be warned by Christ and flee to him with an unreserved devotion that says, "Lord, I forsake it all. I come and save me and have mercy on me."

But for the true Christian, the one who does believe in Christ, the one whose heart is full of affection toward him, the one whose life bears the fruit of the Spirit even if it's imperfect fruit at times, for you Scripture comes to you and promises you the one who began a good work in you will perfect it until the end. He will never withdraw his grace. He will never forsake you or leave you. Whether you're a brand-new Christian six months old, or whether you're 60 years into your walk with Christ, it's all the same. The Christian who is six months old in Christ is as equally secure as the one who is 60 years old in Christ, talking about length of conversion, not infants here just to be clear. Because everything that is necessary for the redemption of the baby Christian has been accomplished as fully in them as it was in the 60-year-old Christian because the full righteousness of Christ, the full merit of his shed blood is applied to the account of the one that is saved and there is no building on the perfection of Christ, and we rest in his righteousness and his righteousness alone.

Well, let's go back to Philippians 1:6 and consider point 2 here just briefly: the nature of the work. The nature of the work. We saw the author of the work was God who had begun a good work, now let's look at the nature of the work, point 2, and just looking at this briefly, this was a work that God had done inside them in their heart, in their inner man. Look at verse 6 with me, "I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you," in you, "will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." And here, beloved, we simply see, I just kind of note this in passing I guess, that Paul is referring not to a work of outward morality, he's not referring to behavioral change on the outside of them, he is talking about a work that God did in them. In Acts 16:14, I alluded to it earlier, God opened Lydia's heart in order to believe. He did a work inside in her mind, in the affections that opened up, in the fullness of their inner man opened them up to Christ. In their heart, in the heart of every true believer, God gave life where death had prevailed. He gave understanding where darkness and ignorance had prevailed. You know, and you know people like this, maybe some of you were like this yourself. You know, I went through life thinking I was a Christian and then all of a sudden it was like the lights went on, all of a sudden I had understanding that I didn't have before. There was a clarity and a certainty to these things that was new to me and foreign to my prior experience. God did a work in order to open their hearts to believe and to impart spiritual power and spiritual life to them. God did a work in them and the outward change was simply a product of that, it was a fruit of that. It wasn't that outer change produced the inner work, God did an inner work and then that showed in the outer man, and for the Philippians, their gift to Paul was an outward token of a greater inner work of God.

Look at Philippians 2 with me here, Philippians 2:12. Paul has just glorified Christ talking about his obedience to the point of death, even death on a cross, verse 8. God has highly exalted him, verse 9. Every tongue will confess that Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father. The fullness of redemption has been accomplished in Christ at the cross and now he applies this. What does this mean for my life as a Christian going forward? Verse 12, "So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling," not to keep your salvation lest you lose the forgiveness of your sins, rather work out the implications of what it means to be in Christ. Christ has loved you and given himself for

you in an act of humility, Paul is saying in this context, you work out a like humility in your relationships within the church and show forth the pre-existing work of God in your heart. Work it out in that way. Apply it.

And he says in verse 13, why should you do this? Yeah, we have responsibility to pursue our own sanctification, yes. Why do we have that responsibility? Verse 13, "for it is God who is at work in you," there it is again, he is at work in you "both to will and to work for His good pleasure." It's an inner work that God does. We proclaim not humanistic outward moral change as the core of our message, the core of our message is that Jesus Christ came to earth, gave his life on a cross to save sinners just like you, that he died, he was buried and he was raised again on the third day so that whoever believes in him for salvation from sin can find eternal life that will not be taken away. These are things that are addressed to the mind, that work in the heart, and then show themselves out in obedience.

The author of the work, God, the author of the work, the nature of the work, he did a work inside you, and what was the point of this? Point 3: what's the purpose of this work? What's the purpose of this work, and in some ways as great as all of this has already been as we have contemplated the eternal plan of redemption, the Triune work of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each playing a part in the fulfillment of the one great plan of redemption, we realize that Christ has loved us and given himself up for us and that that work is therefore secure and that we will never be lost. That alone would be enough to cause our worship and praise to rise endlessly from grateful hearts, but what's the point? What's the point of all of that? What's the point of the Triune God executing a plan of salvation like that and what's the point of it in our own lives?

Well, look back at Philippians 1:6. Paul is grateful as he prays for the Philippians because he knows the outcome of the work. He knows what the finish line looks like. Verse 6, look at it with me, "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you," salvation is a very good work, he "will perfect it," he will bring it to maturity, he will complete it, "until the day of Christ Jesus." Ah, there we go. It's the day of Christ Jesus that this is all pointing to. Paul is looking ahead here to the reward of believers. He's looking ahead to the time when we stand face-to-face with Christ and find the outcome of our salvation. Beloved, let me remind you that Christ will return for his church to reward his disciples. Salvation is not only or solely about this life. There is a future purpose at stake. There is a future purpose that is coming to fruition and everything is moving toward this great day when you as a Christian stand before Christ and you stand before him and he rewards you for your Christian life and your faithfulness to him.

Paul alludes to this just a few verses later, look at verse 10, in his prayer for them he says in verse 9, "I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to," here's the purpose, here's the endgame, "to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ." Until the day of Christ. What's he talking about? There's a future coming great day and that great day, beloved, of the ultimate purpose of Christ and you standing before him, that's the point of it all. For you as a Christian, that great coming day before Christ is the

purpose for which you are being fashioned by the work of the Holy Spirit in your life. All of the work of God has in mind this day when you come before Christ and stand before him and are finally welcomed into his physical presence as his own. Martyn Lloyd-Jones stated it this way, "When Christ returns, you will stand before Him and receive your reward. You will enter into your inheritance, into that magnificent and amazing consummation, the day of Jesus Christ."

So beloved, all of this has very practical ramifications in this life as well. In the midst of the temptations, your stumbles into sin, in the midst of the adversity and in the midst of the sorrows that seem to overwhelm you like a tsunami flood, in the midst of life change that the outcome of which is uncertain, and all of the frustrations and all of that stuff, beloved, you must always have in mind as a Christian, you must always have in mind what the real context of it all is. God has begun a work in you and he is working that work to completion and there is an ultimate goal that transcends whatever the earthly outcomes are of your present problems or difficulties or opportunities. It far transcends all of that. The coming outcome of this is the day of Christ Jesus when you stand before him and God is at work in you, often through adversity, often through discouragement, often even on the brink and the pit of despair, often in the midst of all of that doing a work to conform you to the image of Christ; to teach you to wean your affections from this world to look to Christ for your fullness of satisfaction and everything that you love; to learn not to love this world or the things of this world or the lust of the eyes or the boastful pride of life, to put those things aside and to see the transcendent glory of Christ as the one worthy consuming object of your heart's affection forever, and you are to be conformed in heart to that and one day you will be conformed to the very image of Christ and be like him, Scripture says, and that's the point of it all.

The sanctifying process here on earth is sometimes difficult and discouraging but, beloved, the promise of Scripture for you is that in the midst of all of that there is the unseen hand of the Potter working and shaping and folding and molding that clay into what he wants it to be, and you are on the receiving end of a work of God like that and what Scripture says is the Potter intends to make the vessel exactly what he wants it to be, to be a perfect reflection of what he planned in eternity past before time began. That's why we're here. That's why we're in Christ. It's all pointing to something that far transcends this life and it's because we understand that – oh, beloved, this, this, this shapes the way that you think about life, this shapes everything about the way that you process everything that comes to you – it's because we understand the love of Christ who loved us and gave himself up for us, it's because we understand that there is an ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in us even if sometimes it seems weak and distant from our perspective, we realize that there is a work of God that is going on that is shaping us for a day where we will meet Christ in glory and the fullness of our salvation will be revealed, and the triumph at the end, beloved, will be even greater, the majesty and the glory of that day will be even greater because God brought you through such weakness and failure to get to it, and the ultimate triumph will be seen to belong to Christ and to him alone. He's at work in you to perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. So we endure, we are encouraged, we ourselves persevere because God has promised to do this persevering work in us and through us. "No one will be able to pluck them out of My hand."

Look at Philippians 3:20, more evidence that this is exactly what Paul was talking about when he spoke about the day of Christ Jesus. In fact, let's go back to verse 17 and just see that even in the context of Philippians Paul was contemplating those who started out in Christ but did not finish, and proved themselves never to have been saved in the first place. Philippians 3:17, "Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us." He says, "For many walk," just like Christ said, many will say to me on that day, "many walk," many start out appearing to be Christians, "of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ." Oh, we thought it looked like they were with us for a time but now they are enemies of the cross of Christ. What happens to them? Their "end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things." But what about the true Christian, Paul? What about those of us that truly belong to Christ? Oh, he pivots and it's so much different. Look at verse 20 with me, he says, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." What's he going to do? Oh, I can't wait. Why not do it right now, Lord? Let's just skip it and get right to the good stuff. Verse 21, he "will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself."

Christian, what is the outcome of your salvation? Look at there, Christ is going to transform the body of your humble state and somehow conform you so that you are a reflection of his glory. You will not become God, you will not become the essence of God in Christ, but somehow you are going to be conformed so that you are a perfect reflection as much as a created being can be of the glory of Christ. That is the outcome for us and when you are conformed to the image of Christ, when you are conformed to the nature of his glory by his powerful act, beloved, I promise you that all of these things that occupy our time and attention right now are going to be forgotten. The sorrows and the disappointments and the frustrations are not even going to come to mind because they will be swallowed up in this great purpose of glory that will be achieved for us by our Christ when he acts upon us to conform us to make us like himself. Everything between now and then is details. The ultimate purpose is the day of Christ and being perfected at that great time.

The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints means that no true Christian gets lost along the way. Our confidence gives us strength to go through adversity because, Christian brother, Christian sister, I tell you on the authority of God's word, on the authority of the word of Christ himself, Christian brother, Christian sister, it comes out gloriously for you in the end and that's what this doctrine means to our hope. So the vital question is whether God has started this work in you, and how do you measure that? How do you know that? What do you look for? Well, let's start here: do you believe in Christ? Do you believe in what Scripture says about the purpose of his work on the cross, that he died for sinners like you? Do you believe that? That's the starting point. You say, "Well, yeah, I believe that. I do believe that. You know, my life is a mess but I believe that. I know that to be true." Do you trust Christ and not yourself? Do you have an interest in the things of Christ? Are you alive to his word or is it just something external to you that you can take

or leave? Or is his word alive, is it your bread, is it your drink, is it that which you cherish above all else on earth? Are you thankful? Are you grateful to God for grace and blessings? If those things have a place in your heart then, beloved, your belief in Christ is real. It's shown by the work of God in you and those are very good signs because Scripture says the natural man does not accept the things of God. They are foolishness to him, actually, but if the things of which we've been seeing in Scripture here today are precious to you, you love Christ and your heart rises with joy at the thought of future glory, then whatever else may be diminishing the joy of your salvation, you should come back and realize there is a work of God in me, it is alive and it is active, and if God is at work now, he will finish it in the end, and there could be no greater place for you to be than secure in Christ like that.

If these things are foreign to what you love, you have great cause for concern but all is not lost. You could take this day, you could take this moment in time, this hour in time and say, "God, You've awakened me to the fact that I don't think these things are truly mine," and the promise of Christ to you is you can call on him and he will receive you even as a former hypocrite, even as one who has claimed to be a Christian when you knew you weren't. You can call on him sincerely and find that he is the friend of sinners even like you and he will receive you and save you and begin this work in you as well. Just call on Christ and don't stop calling on him until you're confident that that work is active in your heart.

Let's pray together.

Father, we thank You for the glory of the work of salvation. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we worship and praise You and we ask that in fulfillment of Your word, You would perfect the work that You've begun in us. And Father, for those whose consciences have been pricked by a recognition of the deadness of their own heart, Father, would You start the work in them and bring them to Christ that they too might share in the wonders of these great glories. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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