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The Christian's confidence

"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," Philippians 1:6.

From this verse I would like to set before you some considerations suggested by what it is Paul wrote.

The word 'confident' used by Paul is a very strong word. It speaks of a very strong and firm persuasion. It was an unshakeable assurance. Thus Paul speaks of the Christian grace evident in the lives of the Philippians. What he remembers of them utterly convinces him of their conversion to Christ through faith in the gospel message.

I. SALVATION IS PRIMARILY AN INWARD WORK.

Yes, of course there are outward manifestations of God's grace, but the work is first and foremost an inward work. "He which hath begun a good work in you . . ."

1. There was nothing spiritually good in us before this working by God.

This word 'begun' brings home to us that before the moving of God within our souls there was nothing. Events recorded in Genesis 1:1 picture this for us. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

As the Shorter Catechism teaches:

Q 9 What is the work of creation?

A The work of creation is, God's making all things of nothing, by the word of his power, in the space of six days, and all very good.

The first proof text given states: "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear," Hebrews 11:3.

Likewise, there was 'no good thing' in us when we were unconverted. It was not a matter of God 'renovating' some ruins of righteousness that remained within us but rather of God 'regenerating' a holy and new creation within us.

2. It is essential that we carefully note that salvation is of the Lord.

Paul states this very clearly for us. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast," Ephesians 2:8-9.

How erroneous is the notion, common in all false religions and in the pulpits of churches which once preached the gospel, that salvation springs from man's own efforts and labours! A sinner is saved "by grace . . . through faith; and that not of yourselves . . . not of works"!

The preachers of this falsehood, be they Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, Roman Catholics or apostate Protestants, are directing men and woman and children down a road that will lead ONLY to hell!

How sad to see so many deceived in this manner!

3. Please note that this work God is doing is a 'good' work.

We find the same Greek word 'good' in Matthew 19:17. "And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."

Here, the Saviour says that God is 'good'. Not surprisingly therefore, whatever work God performs is 'good'!



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The fruit of salvation is good in the life of the person converted. He becomes a 'good' person. In days gone by it was common for the worldly to describe the Christian as a 'good living' person!

Furthermore, who can measure the good that comes to the person converted by God's mercy!

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose," Romans 8:28.

The merciful hand of God works ONLY that which is for our good. Thus Joseph was able to say to his brethren of all his experiences at their hands and of the hands of the Egyptians he had encountered: "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive," Genesis 50:20.

Also, we must state plainly that the source of good in this world springs from the workings of God in the hearts of His people. "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith," Galatians 6:9-10.

It was for this purpose sinners are saved. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them," Ephesians 2:10.

History bears out this claim. Christians by direct action or by their influences, have authored all that has been beneficial to mankind. Chiefly, we may observe that the preaching of the gospel has been the fountainhead of good amongst men. Though the message of the gospel and those who testify of it have been universally and continually vilified, nevertheless the gospel and its dissemination has been the ONLY source of good amongst men. The good fruit of the gospel is evident though men seek to deny it. "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers," Ephesians 4:28-29.

II. IT IS A WORK WHICH WILL BE COMPLETED

"He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it."

1. The word 'perform' means 'to perfect, accomplish, finish.'

What a comfort and joy this is for the child of God!

Have no fear, dear Christian. "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it." You are in good hands. You are in God's hands. As it was with the lost sheep, so it will be with us all. "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost," Luke 15:4-6.

2. It must be noted that the work of God's grace is progressive.

We are not yet what we will be, though we are eternally thankful that we are not what we once were. We must note that some things have been 'completed' regarding our salvation. Our sins are forgiven and that forever. "Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back," Isaiah 38:17. "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD," Psalm 40:2-3. Our eternal destiny has been 'established' or 'fixed and confirmed'. How blessed is this truth!

We will not 'fall away and be lost'! "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I



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give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand," Luke 10:27-28. "Any man" includes you Christian! By God's grace it is impossible for us to destroy ourselves by our folly though we appear to come near it at times! The 'lost sheep' in its blindness and madness, would have destroyed itself but the 'Good Shepherd' intervened. So it is continually for us. "But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they (their enemies) could not cause them to cease, till the matter came to Darius: and then they returned answer by letter concerning this matter;" Ezra 5:5.

3. One day this work that God is carrying on will be 'performed' or completed.

"Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring 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," Isaiah 46:9-10.

God has an eternal purpose and He will accomplish what it is He has set out to do! "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being pre-destinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ," Ephesians 1:9-12.

Does that not say it all and that better than any preacher could state it?

III. THE DAY OF COMPLETION IS THE DAY THE LORD JESUS RETURNS

". . . until the day of Jesus Christ." The work that God is presently carrying on amongst His saints will be completed on that day when He returns. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is," 1 John 3:2.

Please note that 'now' we are the sons of God. We are His children. However, the full purpose of God in us has not yet appeared! The word 'appear' means 'to make manifest'. This is the same word as is used later in the verse referring to the coming of Christ. One day He will be 'manifested' in all His glory and majesty to the exceeding wonder of His saints and the bitter anguish of those who despised and loathed Him, His gospel and His people!

1. God's work in us is not yet completed. The foundation has been successfully laid and the walls are going up but the last ridge tile has not yet been put in place! Naturally, as it is with every house building site, the construction of some houses is further advanced than others. So amongst God's people it is evident that some have advanced in grace more than others. But all will be complete one day.

2. For those who died in Christ, this is true also. "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness," Psalm 17:15. Grace has not yet finished its work in David! It is true he is with Christ in heaven at this moment. "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better," Philippians 1:23. "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord," 2 Corinthians 5:6-8.

Yes, when the Christian dies he goes immediately into the presence of God BUT he does not enter upon the glory that will be his when his body is resurrected from the grave! It is then that GLORIFIED he takes on the likeness of the Lord Jesus.

"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.



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So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Corinthians 15:51-57.

3. With what joy we should continually look for the return of Christ. Such was the spirit and the attitude of the apostolic church! "Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," Titus 2:12-14.

Sadly, that most certainly is not the state of the church today. The coming of Christ is a 'forgotten' truth. At best, God's people have confused and unscriptural views of that spoken of by all the prophets. "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into. Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ," 1 Peter 1:10-13.

The church today is like the slumbering virgins as set forth by the Saviour in one of the last of His parables, Matthew 25:1-13. To 'watch' demands information and instruction on what it is we must look for. Oh how solemn is the duty of God's servants in this matter and yet how many fall far short of faithfully carrying out this duty. It should be noted by all that at the end of each chapter of Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians, he makes a reference to the return of Christ.

So much for those who would tell us that you can make too much of this glorious doctrine.

I prefer to follow Paul's example and thus fulfil the command of the Saviour!

It is a doctrine which especially is needed in these days of confusion and defiance of God and His Word. The psalmist was thrown into a state of despair and misery at what he saw before his eyes. That changed when he saw what God had to say on the matter. "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image," Psalm 73:16-20.

Even one acquainted with God and His power needs to be reminded of how it will end for those opposing and rebelling against God.

The Scriptures that teach us about the last days are especially written for our comfort. "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words," 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

What a tragedy when so many ministers do not apply this wonderful ointment to the hearts of God's people when they so much need it today!



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Christ spoke often of His return and the state the earth will be in when He does return. This He did in order to prepare His people for those trying and testing circumstances. "And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not," Luke 12:39-40.

We will be ready, 'prepared', when we study God's Word and learn that God is ready for that day of rebellion and will utterly defeat the rebellion. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion," Psalm 2:1-6.

Christ SHALL reign on earth, irrespective of all man's attempts to hinder Him. Man's efforts to stop that happening are laughable! We can reverently say that God is 'amused' by such feeble efforts! "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh." The word 'laugh' means to 'mockingly rejoice'! As Elijah mocked the prophets of Baal, 1 Kings 18:7, so God laughs and mocks the follies of today's deniers and blasphemers.

How differently we would see and contemplate the wickedness of today's apostasy if we only could see it through God's eyes!

We can if we would only study the prophetic Scriptures and BELIEVE them!

May the Church of Christ today, rejoice in what the Lord has done for us at Calvary when He purchased our redemption and also rejoice in the final outworking of that great work in the day when He returns again.

The Lord bless you all.

Ivan Foster.

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