

# How God Prepares You For Himself

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 15 September 2024

Preacher: J.D. Edwards

[ 0 : 00 ] All right, well, thank you for your patience. Philippians chapter 1. Our sermon text today is Philippians 1-6, but I'd like to read the whole prayer, so we're going to read verses 1 through 11.

Philippians 1, verses 1 through 11. And I read this trusting that it is God's inspired, inerrant, infallible, clear, and sufficient word.

It's God's very own word for you, His people. Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine, making requests for you all with joy for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.

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. 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.

[ 1 : 27 ] For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.

Verse 9, And this I pray that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Let's pray.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for how your Holy Spirit illumines to us a glimpse of the eternal reality that Jesus Christ, God the Son, He took on flesh.

He accomplished the mission the Father gave Him to do. That He is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. And one day He will come. And He will judge the living and the dead according to your standard.

We praise you, Lord, that though you owe man nothing, you could have left us in our fallen sinful state, you have come through Jesus Christ to bring a people to yourself.

[ 3 : 13 ] We thank you that you are still at work completing in your people that which Jesus Christ finished in His life, death, and resurrection. We pray, Lord, that through the ministry of your word, you will accomplish that in whoever you give eyes to see and ears to hear.

And we pray that more will come, Lord. More will come to know how good and how gracious you are. For your glory we ask. Amen. Amen. When you get to watch a master craftsman at his work, it holds you for a while, doesn't it?

I can just be amazed watching so many people that are good at their craft do their work. I had a very simple repair that needed to be done. It was a rock that hit my windshield.

And I just had to stand there and observe and watch him come and put the machine on and scrape out the bits of glass. And just to watch someone really good at what they do fix a piece of glass was fascinating to me.

I was gripped. I remember a sign at a mechanic shop growing up and it was something like \$50 to fix your car, \$75 if you watch, and then \$100 if you ask questions, \$150 if you try to help.

[ 4 : 34 ] So, to watch is one thing. The beautiful thing, though, is that in Jesus Christ, as he pulls us into his church, we get to watch the master work.

I'd like to draw your attention one more time to verse 6 in our text. Philippians 1.6 Paul has his eyes open to the work that God is doing.

And it fills him with joy and thanksgiving and confidence. And he writes, I am confident of this very thing that he who began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Well, I encourage you to memorize this verse. And I challenge you to do it in the next 30 minutes. And to help you, I'm going to read it for you about six times as we go. And all I want to do this morning is apply this beautiful truth to five categories of people focused on one word or phrase in Philippians 1.6 each time.

The first phrase I want to focus on is that God begins this work. He who has begun this good work in you. So I want to talk first of all to you in whom God has not yet begun a good work.

[6:01] And my encouragement to you is very simple. I believe there's some in our congregation for whom this is still true. And maybe there's others within earshot. If God has not yet begun his good work in you, ask him to.

See, you and I, we need God to work on our hearts. Amen? Amen? We need this. Here's the difference. We go to a doctor, a heart doctor even, and he'll say, you got a heart problem. Do I have your attention now? Will you listen? Will you do what I've said? And we want to take on for ourselves all the things we need to do to fix the heart problem the doctor told us about. Try to get your heart rate up for 20 minutes a day.

Watch your diet. Get some omega-3 into your system. And then we go and do those things because the doctor said, you got a heart problem. But that's not what Paul is preaching to the church, is it?

He says, he who has begun a good work in you. In other words, it's God who is doing this work in your heart. The reason for this is because we can't work on our own hearts this way.

[7:10] We are born without the Holy Spirit. We are born under the curse of Adam. Every single person. Fallen. Condemned. Twisted. Distorted. Bent toward evil.

That's how we're born and brought into this world. The image of God still remains, but it's defaced. Like you take a penny and scrape the face.

God must begin His good work in you. Listen to this verse. Isaiah 64-7. It was one that we came across in our study with the men on Wednesday mornings.

It shakes me in my boots still today. Isaiah 64-7. There is no one who calls on your name, he's telling God. There is no one who stirs himself up to take hold of you.

You, God, have hidden your face from us. You have consumed us because of our iniquities.

Iniquities. Listen to how the ESV puts that last statement. God, you have made us melt in the hand of our iniquities.

[8:21] Well, we know what sin is. Sin is when we fall short of the glory of God. Iniquity is when we sin with a heavy hand lifted up against God. It's the most serious type of sin.

And God has made us melt in the hand of our own iniquities. And that's why there's no one who calls on the name of God if we're left to ourselves.

Amen? God's work begins only after your self-righteous work ends. God begins a good work in each one of His people, but He begins that only after your and my self-righteous work has come to its end.

We've run out. We're exhausted. We're done trying on our own. And this is good news. This is really the beginning of the Gospel. Listen to how Paul put this in Colossians 2.12.

You must first get buried with Jesus Christ in baptism. You must die to self-righteous efforts and works. Die to yourself in trying to save yourself.

[9:30] And when you receive Him by faith alone in Jesus Christ alone by His grace alone then you are also raised with Jesus Christ through faith in the powerful working of God.

It's the powerful work of God that begins this good work of regeneration. How powerful is the work of God to begin in your heart and in mine? It's the same power with which God raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

In the Gospels of Mark and Matthew we read about a real estate mogul. A man who owned a lot of property. And this man came up to Jesus and asked this question in Mark 10.17.

What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus exposes him.

You think you need to do more and you can do more? Jesus says you've kept all the moral law.

How about your heart? Have you kept the moral law of God in a loving way in your heart as well?

[10:41] See some have said the point of this is to make that man go back and try even harder. And it's just the opposite. The point is that you can't try hard enough on your own.

The point of the law in its first use is to crush you. You can never make yourself right with God by your own efforts by your own works. This ruler was unwilling to give up trying to save himself.

He wanted to do more and he wanted to inherit eternal life by his own standing. And the Lord Jesus laid him flat. God's work begins in your heart and in mine only after your self-righteous work ends. So, for you in whom God has not yet begun his good work, ask him to do that. Ask him to bring you to the end of yourself and work powerfully in you in the way that only he can.

God's work will be good. The second word I want to share with you and encourage you with from our verse is the word good. Notice in verse 6, Paul says, I am confident of this very thing that he who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

[12:03] Christ. Maybe there are some today who don't know or who have forgotten even in a subtle way that God's work in his people in your heart is a good work.

It's painful, it's devastating at times, right? But it is good. So you who do not trust that God's work is good, my prayer for you today is that you will ask him to prove that this is so in your own life, that you can add your own testimony.

My life has also proven that God's work is always good. You know what was the sin of the prodigal son? He did a lot of sins with his flesh, but his sin started in his heart before that, didn't it?

The prodigal son, he thought that taking all of his inheritance up front, leaving his father's household, using all that money to throw parties, to have fake friends, share fake laughs, and give himself to prostitutes, he thought all of that was more good than being right with his dad and dwelling secure in his father's household.

In this parable, do you see how this is exactly what Christ came to reveal to people who are fallen in our sin and whose minds are still twisted, chasing after the lust of the flesh?

[13:32] He revealed the most good is being right with the father. It doesn't get any better than that. And that's how Jesus Christ reveals the father to you and me.

It's the father who runs to greet you with open arms, unashamed. He doesn't care how bad you smell. You're covered in the slop of pigsties and your own vomit.

And he brings you into his loving arms. That's how good the father is. 1 Peter 2.3 encourages the church to taste and see that the Lord is good.

It's not enough for me to tell you this or maybe kids for your parents to tell you the Lord is good. I've tasted and I've seen. You need to taste and see for yourself the Lord is good.

How good is the Lord? He's as much good as light is compared to darkness. He's so much more good like life is over death.

[14:35] He's so good. He's a God of blessings when you deserve wrath. The word good in Philippians 1.6 it carries with it the meaning of that which is honorable, excellent, pleasant, agreeable, joyful, happy.

And maybe the word that summarizes all of that representing God himself is good means gracious. God's work in you, inside of you, in your inner being, in your soul, it is a good, gracious work.

I love how our confession of faith summarizes this on regeneration. This is the teaching of scripture summarized, boiled down. You and I were dead, but God enlightened your mind savingly to understand the things of God.

He took away your heart of stone and he gave you a heart of flesh. He renewed your will. He makes you love what he says is good by his power. And he effectually draws you to Jesus Christ.

Yet, so as you come freely, like the prodigal son sprinting, hoping he'll be accepting me and welcoming me home. And Jesus came to say, of course, he will.

[15:55] And this is all because he has made you willing by his grace. You see how good and gracious is in working inside of you from start to finish. That's why we sing with the hymn, Oh, how great thy loving kindness, vaster, broader than the sea.

Oh, how marvelous thy goodness lavished on me. So you who do not yet trust that God's work is good, I pray that you will ask him to prove so in your own life.

The third phrase I want to focus on is not only on how he began this, but how he completes this. Because I don't think I've said anything now that's too new to you all, but I do think that I and all of us have a tendency in our flesh and maybe we've sat under teaching to the contrary about how it is that God completes this work.

Let me read verse 6 one more time. I am confident of this, this very thing, that he who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

[17:12] So I want to encourage you who want to complete this work in yourself, for yourself, to ask God to reform your thinking.

Don't reform your thinking to what you hear me say or what you read somewhere else. Let the Spirit through the Word of God reform our thinking on this. So you who want to complete the work that God started in you for yourself, you need to ask God to reform your thinking.

I've thought a lot this week, why is it that we want to add something to God's salvation? I think it's because we really want to respond in gratitude, that's probably where it starts, but then it's also that we fear that maybe I'm not truly saved.

Maybe there's something more I can do to help secure myself. And it's so subtle, but then our flesh wants to teach ourselves that we can do this, we can secure ourselves by completing what God started.

or at least helping God complete what He started. But verse 6 could not be any more clear. He who began a good work in you, He and no one else is the one who will complete it in you.

[18:34] You're probably already ahead of me on why this is so significant. It's because whoever began the work gets the glory for beginning the work. And whoever completes the work or has a share in completing the work, gets the glory or at least a share of the glory in completing it.

So God's glory is what's at stake with this doctrine. We can put this question this way. How are you and I finally saved if you want to even put that qualifier in front of it?

There's a very well-known, well-respected pastor who on many other doctrines is wonderful, but I just want to be cautious for myself and for your ears. This is how subtle it can be.

Listen to what this pastor has written and see if you agree with it. Quote, no holiness, no heaven. Works of faith, obedience of faith, fruits of the spirit that come by faith are necessary for our final salvation.

So, we should not speak of getting to heaven by faith alone in the same way we are justified by faith alone. Do you see how subtle this is?

[19:49] A crack in the door and enough of a distortion comes in that it can have a wrong effect on true believers. That's my caution. It can feed that part of our flesh that wants to secure ourselves and inevitably is siphoning away some glory from God.

Here's how we can twist that in our mind. We can take that to mean that I must now muster up enough faith, enough faith, so that I can then do enough works, enough works.

How much is enough? That I can obey enough, that I can show enough to finally be saved. That doesn't sound right, does it? What I want to persuade you with today is reading about four or five Bible verses so you can hear the word of Scripture which I believe is very clear on this point.

Notice how that is not at all the tone of Paul. By the mercy of God, by the strength and the energy of God, Paul outworked any believer, I think, any saved sinner, he outworked.

Listen to how Paul puts it. In the same way that God began a good work in you, God completes his work. Colossians 1.29, Paul wrote, I struggle, I toil with all his energy that he powerfully works in me.

[21:18] That's a very different tone. Galatians 3.2, Paul writes, let me ask you this, did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?

Are you so foolish having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Philippians 2.13, it is God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

You hear Paul's tone. I don't think it could be any more clear. God completes his work in his people by his power alone. 2.

Peter 1.3, his divine power has granted to us all that we need for life and godliness. You see, it's God's divine power that has granted our final salvation through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence.

So for you who want to complete this work that God began in you for yourself, ask God to reform your thinking and he graciously will.

[22:37] The fourth word in our verse today that I want to encourage you with is the word confident. Confident. I am confident of this, that he who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Most likely some of you if you're like me, today you need to be strengthened with confidence. You need to be strengthened with confidence and my prayer is that you will ask God to help you trust him, the source of your confidence.

Paul says I am confident of this very thing. He's confident, he's certain, sure, fully persuaded of this very thing. God will finish what God started.

That word confident was used mockingly of Jesus Christ as he hung on the cross to pay for our sin. In Matthew 27 verse 43 they mocked and they said let God deliver him.

He trusted, that's the same word, he had confidence in God. Do you need to be strengthened with such confidence? One of my favorite Puritans John Flavel he he fell so passionately about this he ministered to the church.

[ 24 : 04 ] Church did Christ finish his work for us? Then there can be no doubt he will also finish his work in us.

Amen? That's the source of our confidence. And it's good that we desire that confidence that blessed assurance that's a gift from the Holy Spirit.

We need that confidence in our own lives for ourselves for our soul. We also are burdened and we should pray that God will help our loved ones to trust God and gain such confidence.

And I pray that you will also at least allow God to stir up a portion of your heart to care that he will complete the work for this congregation. Paul, by the way, is writing to a church, isn't he?

For the church at Philippi, all the saints, with the elders and deacons. I'm confident for the church, for all of you, and under Christ's name, as a gathered congregation, Christ will finish what he started for you.

[ 25 : 08 ] John Gill had written this, and to me this was such a powerful encouragement for my confidence in this truth, that I can trust God to finish what he started.

Quote, where there is grace, there will be glory. Grace is what we need now, the moment we first believed, when he first began this good work in us, and glory is what he holds up to us for eternity, to come with Jesus Christ.

Where there is grace, there will be glory. Is there grace in your life from God? God, there will be glory. Here's John Gill's argument for proving this.

God carries out his good work in your life according to who he is. He is unchangeable in his nature, in his purposes, in his promises, and in his calling.

God is a rock, and his work will be perfected by his power sooner or later in his people. Because God is faithful. He will never forsake the work of his hands.

[ 26 : 14 ] He alone has the power to accomplish what he intends in you. Listen to what John Gill said. It's even better because it's not attached to you at all.

It happens in you, but it's for God himself. God has too much of himself pledged to leave his works in your hands. Did you catch that?

Let me run that one by you one more time. God has too much of himself pledged to leave his work in your hands. He is committed to completing what he started in you.

If this work is not finished, then the glory of God the Father in your election, in the covenant of grace, in your salvation, in the mission of his son, the glory of Christ and redemption and of the spirit and sanctification would be entirely lost.

God has way too much of himself pledged to leave this good work and the finishing of the work he started in your hands or mine. Praise God and all glory be to God.

[ 27 : 28 ] So he's confident of this very thing. And the last phrase I want to encourage you with is the end that this is all for.

I am confident of this that he who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

This is what it is all for. It's the chief end of man to glorify and enjoy God forever. The day of Jesus Christ is coming.

church the Lord who began his good work in you he will complete it in his own timeline for each soul and for the church global invisible under the one true God on his timeline.

He will finish what he started. Someone made a joke that there are two seasons in Colorado. there's winter and then there's construction.

[ 28 : 32 ] Those are the two seasons. When it's not snowing there's construction being done. I'm familiar with one job site here in Parker at which 140 workers show up every day.

They are doing dry wall, windows, putting the sprinkler system in, laying down the turf, painting all the walls. All those crews are going to keep working until the project is complete.

How will we know that the project is complete? It's when they're done working on it. What is it for? What's the end of the project? In this case, it's a school. When you see the children running on the playground, sitting in the classrooms, learning, you see the parents relieved, smiling, enjoying a

school in our town, you know that the project is complete.

The project has a worthy end. There will never be a shortage of funding or labor or anything that's needed until those kids are in the building learning, because that's why that project was begun.

The church is the glorious project of God to unite the church to himself, Jesus Christ. And how will we know that the work of God is done in his church?

[ 29 : 53 ] It's when you, church, are enjoying Jesus Christ and glorifying him. Individually, this will happen on a different timeline for each soul. But as a church, collectively, we can trust one pastor will die, the next pastor will die, the next pastor will die, deacons and elders will be raised up and they'll be buried.

The Lord will carry on his church. It's the work of God. He alone can build it, and he will build his church. church. I'm so encouraged by the short life of a Scottish Presbyterian pastor named Robert Murray McShane.

One of the things he wrote is this, only an inch of time remains, and then eternal ages roll on forever.

Only an inch of time remains. When he wrote that, he didn't know that he would get typhus fever, something you get from lice, bugs like that.

He preached a sermon on a Sunday within 48 hours. He was dead, and they buried him at the age of 29. The Lord's work in preparing his soul for eternity was complete.

[ 31 : 13 ] It doesn't mean he attained the same level of maturity as Paul, and we all fall short of the glory of Jesus Christ, but for that soul, 29 years, that was his timeline. I feel like on this doctrine, Robert Murray Machine in the 1800s put so clearly and simply what all the other reformers and the further reformation, the Puritans, had been working out from Scripture and synthesizing up to this point.

So I've written about four questions and answers as if I got to just interview Robert Murray Machine at age 28 or so you can hear what God had been doing in his life before the Lord took him to glory. One question I wanted to ask him is this, what has God shown you about yourself in God's work of completing you and preparing you for the day of the Lord Jesus Christ?

McShane wrote, the seed of every sin known to man is in my heart. Next question, what is your source of confidence?

Paul had a confidence that God would complete this work, what's your source of confidence?

McShane wrote, what a man is on his knees before God, that he is and nothing more.

[ 32 : 40 ] You see what he's saying? Every sin known to man, that seed is in my heart. What I am on my knees before God, that I am and nothing more, nothing in my hands I bring.

Pastor Robert, how do you pray? And he wrote, Lord, make me as holy as a pardoned sinner can be. Amen.

Well, I only got four questions, so I squeezed three in together on this last one. Pastor Robert, what have you learned in these 28 years, a handful of years in the ministry?

What do you know for certain? And what's your advice for Christians like us here today? He wrote, unfathomable, unfathomable oceans of grace are in Christ for you.

For every look at self, take ten looks to Christ. Dive and dive again. You will never come to the bottom of these gracious depths.

[ 33 : 53 ] the Lord who began his good work in you, he will complete it on his own timeline until the day of Jesus Christ.

Church, beloved congregation of the Lord Jesus, God is preparing you and he's preparing us together for himself.

one way or the other, you and I will be with the Lord very soon if he's begun a work of grace in your life. He will make sure that you're ready.

Your part is to simply ask him to watch him prove so in your life. Thank him for being so patient and reforming your thinking. Keep trusting him and rest knowing that you are his.

He is preparing you for himself on his timetable for his glory because he alone is God and he will be glorified in the life of his church.

[ 35 : 01 ] Isn't it humbling and a source of confidence and strength that we get to see God working in his people within the church? Just as we can watch a master lay down tile or build something out of wood, that's what we get to do in the church with one another.

We get to watch our master do his work in his people and just glory in what he's doing. I am confident of this, that he who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Amen? Let's pray. Father, thank you for your promise. Thank you for your good work that you do in your people for your glory.

We pray that we can rest knowing that you are the one who saves from the beginning to the end. Amen.