

# I've Started So I'll Finish

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Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[ 0 : 00 ] Once again a very warm welcome to everyone to our evening service and also those of you joining us online. We thank you for your interest and participation in the worship with us this evening. We trust as always that God will bless our gathering, blessing his word to us. One or two things from the bulletin sheet which you have freely available just to remind you of. The monthly prayer meeting on Zoom is tomorrow evening at 7.30 and on Tuesday there's the monthly prayer link with Muriel that's at 11 a.m. and you can find details of that from Marianne or from Lizzie if you can get in touch with them please. There is one intimation that's not on the bulletin that's the youth club are going to meet on Tuesday evening this coming Tuesday evening for a beach bonfire and that's from 7.30 to 9.30 that's for ages S2 upwards. Again if you contact Marianne please she'll give you some details of that. I do also notice the Gaelic prayer meeting is beginning again this week resuming on Thursday at 7.30 that'll be in the seminary and it's not going to be available on Zoom. Again if you wish to contact Lizzie for any further details but those who would normally attend the Gaelic prayer meeting don't need to book. Lizzie will have your names and you can just attend.

I think it'll also be actually on live stream not the actual prayers themselves but the sermon part of it. I understand we can do that through live stream. And there's a special collection next Lord's Day that's in aid of day one ministries. You can find details of that on the second page or third page of the bulletin sheet. So we're going to begin our worship now and we're singing firstly tonight from Psalm 138 Psalm 138 in the Singed Psalms version. Verses 1 to 5 I'll praise you Lord with all my heart before the gods I'll sing your praise. I'll bow towards your holy place and bless your holy name always. I'll praise you for your faithfulness and for your covenant love O Lord for over all things you have raised your holy name and faithful word. Psalm 138 on page 179 if you're using the Psalm 138 on page 179 if you're using the Psalm books. I'll praise you Lord with all my heart.

I'll praise you Lord with all my heart. I'll praise you Lord with all my heart. Before the gods I'll sing your praise. I'll bow towards your holy praise.

and bless your holy name always. I'll praise you Lord with all my heart. I'll praise you Lord with all my heart. For your faithfulness and for your covenant love O Lord. For over all things you have raised your holy name always. I'll praise you Lord with all his holy name always. I'll praise you Lord with all your faithfulness. And for your covenant love O Lord.

For over all things you have raised, your holy name and faithful word.

[ 4 : 09 ] The very day I called to you, you gave an answer to my plea.

You made me bold within myself. With new resolve you strengthen me.

O Lord, let all earth's kings give praise.

When from your mouth they hear your word. Let them extol the ways of God.

For great the glory of the Lord.

[ 5 : 35 ] Let's now join together in prayer. Let's call upon the Lord in prayer. Gracious and eternal God, we are so conscious that you hold forth in your word all that makes you glorious, that you have been pleased to reveal to us, so that we might give you the praise that is becoming.

We bless you, O Lord, tonight that your greatness is once again brought before us, even in these words that we have been singing. When the psalmist himself came to extol your greatness, and when he resolved that this would be the business of his life.

And we thank you tonight, Lord, that in your greatness you have been pleased to reach down toward us. In our own sinfulness, and our unworthiness, and our undeservingness of any mercy from you.

You reached down and you came toward us in the person of your Son, Jesus Christ, O Lord. And in his name and upon his merits, we come to you this evening, O Lord.

We once again approach you as one who is at all times worthy to be praised. And one who is characterized in himself by purity and majesty and holiness and power.

[ 6 : 54 ] Help us to come before you, Lord, in that right spirit. To come before you with reverence, with due acknowledgement of our sinfulness and of your pure holiness.

Help us to come before you with love in our hearts for you. Love for you in your being and all that you have revealed of yourself. Love for you in your ways and your perfect works.

And help us to come before you with due dependence upon you. Knowing that, Lord, in ourselves we don't have the capacity to glorify you unless we have your own spirit within us.

And we thank you for that spirit. That spirit that comes to inhabit your people. And that comes, O Lord, to guide us and to give us further assurance of your love and of your mercy.

And gives us guidance on the way through life. We thank you tonight for all, O Lord, that characterizes your word for us. A word that is certain and sure and bears all the imprint of its divine authorship.

[ 8 : 03 ] And, Lord, we give thanks that we can depend upon your word as truth brought to us in written form. We thank you that your word brings us to Jesus Christ.

The word made flesh. Your great announcement towards lost human beings in the person of your son. An announcement, Lord, that you will have us to come to know you and to be saved.

To look towards you and to place our trust and our dependence upon you. We thank you tonight for all that we experience and all that we enjoy as a congregation together.

We thank you for your goodness to us. Especially over this past year and a half. We give thanks, Lord, for your consistent care of us. For the way in which we continue to be upheld by you.

And for the way that we know that your mercy toward us has been great. And we pray that you would help us tonight to come with thanksgiving. Not only in our singing out of your praises.

[ 9 : 04 ] But also in our hearts and the quietness of our thinking and our hearts and thoughts. Lord, our God, help us to praise you as we hear your word.

As we participate in all aspects of the worship. We thank you for the way that we can come before you with the burden of our hearts. You are a God, as we have been singing, who listens to the cry of his people.

And we give thanks that as we cry unto you. As we call out to you. As we bring all that concerns us and burdens our hearts. Lord, we are assured that your ear is towards all who come trustingly in you.

All who come to set before you things that you know already. And yet things that you would have us to come before you with confession. And please for help.

We thank you for your willingness, O Lord, at all times. To turn your face toward us. We pray that we may be assured day by day. That in the glory of your countenance upon us.

[ 10 : 07 ] We are indeed safe. We have that wonderful life that you describe in your word. A life of fellowship with you. A life of drawing power and love and influence.

By your Holy Spirit. From all that Jesus Christ, our Lord, has done. O Lord, we come before you tonight as those who have many concerns.

Not only for ourselves, but for others. And for the world in which we live. And we pray tonight, O gracious God. That you will hear us as we pray for our world.

This world of humanity. With all its distinctive lostness. With all that your word tells us about it. Through concerning it.

Help us, we pray, to bring before you, O Lord. Our concerns for the people we belong to. For our communities. For our land. For those who rule over us.

[ 11 : 03 ] And for those, O Lord, who have no desire at all toward you. Or towards following you. Or believing in you. Or trusting in you. Lord, we ask that you would, even tonight, be active in turning many hearts to yourself.

Whether they be under the influence of the gospel proclaimed. Or even in their homes. Or even in other activities. You have the whole of the world in your hands.

You have the whole providence that you govern and exercise towards human beings. And you are able to take even the most unlikely things to us.

And move lives accordingly. And bring people to know their need of you. And Lord, this is our prayer for those tonight, especially, who are lost.

Who, like ourselves, were once on the way of wandering away from God and from his truth. We pray for any tonight, Lord, of your own people who have lost their way.

[12:01] Who have departed from the ways of obedience. And who have come, like Peter, long ago to follow from a distance. Who have fallen away from attendance upon gospel services.

Or have come, Lord, to turn their back altogether upon things that they once used to participate in. Remember them, Lord, we pray. And bring them back to yourself.

And grant that you would give us to continue to pray for those who have gone out of the way. We pray that it will be temporary. And we pray that those who have been for a long time, O Lord, out of the way of coming to the gospel.

Coming to worship. Coming to join with your people. Remember them, Lord, we pray, in your pity. Grant us, we pray, continuing steadfast hearts. And graciously bless us tonight under your word. So that our faith may be further confirmed and assured. And that we may be further rooted and grounded in Christ. In our own understanding.

[13:06] In our experience. In our commitment to you. Remember, too, Lord, tonight. Those who have particular troubles and difficulties in life. We pray for those who at this time are laid aside in illness.

In hospital or at home. Or in other places. We ask that you'd bless them. Bless the treatment they receive from nursing staff. From consultants. Grant especially, Lord, tonight.

To remember those that belong to us as families. And as a congregation. We remember those in this recent week. That have been laid aside. We think of Alistair MacDonald.

And ask that you'd bless him. Oh, Lord, at this time. Having been in this car accident. We pray that he may be blessed and upheld by you. Remember, we pray, Maggie Bell and his family.

Graciously continue to uphold them at this time. We pray for little Olivia as well. Asking, Lord, that you would bless her. Again, taken into hospital in recent days.

[14:08] We pray, Lord, that your hand will be upon her. That your blessing will be in her young heart. And, Lord, we give thanks that such lives as she and others like her have come to live in this world.

Though in many ways not able to do the things that others of their age are able to. We thank you for the way in which so much love is shown by them and to them. And we thank you, oh Lord, for their lives.

And pray that you would give us as a society. Instead of looking upon such lives. As lives that are less than others. In value.

Give us, Lord, we pray. The mind that will see all human life. As a life created by you. For your glory. For your praise. I remember John and Dean.

Our parents at this time. Grant them your blessing, we pray. Continue to bless those who mourn. Who mourn in these days or in recent times. Grant your blessing to all of them.

[15:08] And continue, we pray, to uphold them and give them your peace. And so, Lord, guide us now, we pray, into your truth. Continue to bless us throughout the service and on through this week.

We ask all of this. Confessing our sin. And seeking pardon and cleansing. For Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. Okay, just for the children who may be here or some online as well, I'm sure.

The Bible tells us that our human bodies are wonderful. Of course, there's more to us than just a body, the physical side. There is, of course, our soul as well.

Our spiritual side by which we engage in communion with God and come to appreciate things that God has given and provided for us.

Just looking up a few amazing facts about the body. You'll find this readily online if you Google it. For example, more than half of our bones are located in our hands and wrists, in our ankles and feet.

[16:16] And that's maybe a bit surprising. If you would ask, well, where are most of your bones in your body located? You might think that they are located in these other parts of the body where your bigger bones are.

But, of course, they're not. The smaller bones, especially, that make up your hands and your wrists and your ankles and your feet. That's where most of the bones of your body, more than half of them, are actually located.

And we're also told that as far as our blood vessels, our veins and arteries are concerned, if you were to take them all and stretch them out in a long line, there are actually somewhere between

60,000 and 100,000 miles of blood vessels in our bodies.

Some of them tiny, tiny blood vessels. Others bigger, like those that go to and from your heart, for example, to carry blood throughout your body. But we're told that there's anywhere between 60,000 and 100,000 miles of blood vessels in a human body.

And that's long enough to go around the world almost four times. That's an amazing fact, isn't it? Packed into one human body that you have that amount, that distance, that length of blood vessels.

[ 17 : 35 ] And where would you think the fastest muscles in your body are located? Muscles that act quicker than any other muscles in your body.

You'd be tempted to say, well, probably my arms, muscles in my legs, especially if I'm running. The reaction times of those muscles. Maybe you think that's where the fastest operating, the quickest, fastest muscles are located.

But they're not. They're actually in our eyes. Our eyes can flicker in milliseconds, a fraction of a second, from one place to another, from one thing to another, as we flick them even in the same direction.

We're told that the eye can react so quickly, it's about 50 milliseconds of a movement, which is just a tiny fraction of a second.

So that's where the quickest muscles are actually located, in your eyes. Now, the Bible tells us that we were created by God. And Psalm 139, actually, the psalmist there, Psalm 139, talking about the formation of our bodies by God, that we were created by God.

[ 18 : 51 ] But the whole purpose of this verse in Psalm 139 and verse 14 says, I will praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

When we think of what we are as human beings, even our bodies, our immediate reaction should be, I need to praise God for the wonderful creation that I am.

And, you know, that's something that you always have to keep in mind because the world in which we live doesn't necessarily value our human bodies the way it should. But as Christians, as those who believe and respect the Bible's teaching, we should follow the psalmist's conviction, the psalmist's conclusion as he looked at his body, I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

And so I will praise you, O Lord. We praise God when we think about what we are in our body, in our souls, how all of that has been put together.

Now let's say the Lord's prayer together once again. Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

[ 20 : 16 ] Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen. Now, readings from God's Word tonight. We've got two passages.

Firstly, in the Gospel of John, chapter 10, just a few verses. And then we'll turn to Romans, chapter 8, before we proceed then to Philippians, and continue with our study of Philippians.

So first of all, John, chapter 10, and reading from verse 22, down as far as verse 30. At that time, the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem.

It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the colonnade of Solomon. So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, How long will you keep us in suspense?

[ 21 : 23 ] If you are the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give them eternal life, 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.

And if we turn to Romans, in chapter 8, we'll read verses 28 to 39. Romans chapter 8, reading from verse 28.

And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good. For those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

[ 22 : 45 ] And those whom he predestined, he also called. Those whom he called, he also justified. And those whom he justified, he also glorified. What then shall we say to these things?

If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died, more than that who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, for your sake we are being killed all the day long.

We have regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

[ 24 : 09 ] Now let's turn to Philippians chapter 1, and tonight we are looking at verse 6. Philippians chapter 1 and verse 6, And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

This verse especially, having looked at the verses surrounding that last time. It was Magnus Magnusson, I think, who, when he started chairing the program Mastermind, who made the phrase famous, I've started, so I'll finish.

Remember how it's still used in Mastermind when somebody has been asked the question and then the pips go for the end of the time that they have if the question has started.

Magnus Magnusson used to say, I've started, so I'll finish. He finishes that question as the final question for that particular contestant. And you could say that that really is an apt commentary or comment on this verse because if you apply it to this verse and to what it's saying about God, that is precisely what Paul is saying with regard to the work of God as he works in the lives of his redeemed people.

This is what he's saying about the Philippians, as you remember last time we saw the connection between verse 6 and verses 3 and 5 and then verse 6 and 7 as well, where you find the evidence of what kind of people Christians are and Corinth, evidence of the work of God having started in them and what he says there in verse 7 onwards, I feel it's right for me to feel this way about you because you are partakers with me of grace.

[ 26 : 04 ] And the thanksgiving that you find mentioned there in verse 3 as we saw is something that flows from the conviction, the certainty that he has about things as he mentions this in verse 6.

So it's verse 6 really that we're interested in looking at at a time this evening. And Paul's confidence in the Philippians and he did have confidence in the Philippians and what they were about and gratitude for them for their participation and their partnership in the gospel from the first day until the now as he was writing this letter to them.

But his confidence in the Philippians was not based on the Philippians own level of commitment. It wasn't based on the way that he saw the commitment the partaking in the past with him in the work of the gospel or their ongoing prayers or anything else of that nature in itself.

His confidence in them was in what you find in verse 6. It rested on the fact of God's work in them. What God had accomplished and was accomplishing and would bring to its completion in his own work in these Christians in Philippi.

I am sure of this that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. So he mentions there three things in the compass of that verse.

[ 27 : 30 ] He talks first of all about a creation or a work begun. Then he speaks secondly about continuation where the work that has been begun will be carried on by God.

And then he mentions thirdly a completion. I am sure he says that he who began this good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

So within this brief verse you have that wonderful collection really of points beginning with what God started in them then carrying it through to what he is doing in them now and bringing it forward to what he is going to complete when that work is completed.

And that is really something that is applicable to the life of every Christian to the life of every Christian people. Anybody that is in Christ somebody here tonight who is in Christ this is true about you.

God has begun a good work in you and the good work that he has begun in you he is bringing onwards he is continuing that work in you and he will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus

Christ.

[ 28 : 39 ] So that is really what we want to look at these three aspects of God's good work beginning with this beginning this creation the good work has a beginning and the word that he is using here that he who began the good work in you it is used in other contexts for the life for example in the life of the Galatian church that Paul was very critical of for the way they had departed from faithfulness to Christ having he said in verse chapter 3 having begun in the spirit are you now going to be completed by the flesh he was saying to them you began in the spirit this is what you confessed this is what you professed in your profession to having turned to embrace Jesus and the salvation that is in him but you are now working in such a way that you are adding to Christ as the foundation of your justification are you so foolish he is saying to them having begun in the spirit do you think you are going to be completed in the work by the flesh and so that work that beginning as it is here of God actually has a two-fold emphasis in it or meaning in it there is the deliberation in it there is something that is very carefully planned something that is really very deliberate on God's part and so there is both the fact that it is a work that is deliberate on his part and it is also something planned something that a creator in other words or the creator himself brings about and only a creator is able to bring about in terms of this work in other words it has a connection with creating on the part of God you remember in Ephesians how you have chapter 2 and verse 10 another very precious verse where Paul again is demonstrating that by grace they were saved not by their own works or their own efforts because he says we are his workmanship created in Christ

Jesus for good works it is not your good works he says that saved you the good works are actually the product of your salvation or an aspect of the fact that God by his grace has saved you we are his workmanship we are the we are those those lives that have come under his craftsmanship under his skills that's really what a Christian life is about it originates with the craftsman who is God and as the divine craftsman begins that work this is what he's saying to the Philippians he who has begun that good work in you he will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ and he calls it a good work and again that word good is also important because it's good in the sense of the meaning of the word carries in its character in itself it's a good work it's distinguished from every other sort of work by its intrinsic goodness but it's also got the other side to it in its meaning that it is beneficial not every work that is good that you would admire is necessarily beneficial you can admire a work of art you can admire many things that are done by craftsmen but it doesn't necessarily mean it's going to bring much benefit into your life but what Paul is saying is this work that God has begun this good work is not just good in itself you can admire it in its beauty in its intrinsic quality but it's brought you immense benefits it's a work that carries the benefits of salvation to you he has begun that good work and doesn't that remind you of how it was at the beginning with God when he created the heavens and the earth and then looked out over it as it were as you find in Genesis the early chapters there behold it was very good you see when God creates something whether it's the physical universe we're thinking of or even ourselves and the way he created us in the beginning as human beings and perfection whether you think of that or this work of redemption this work of salvation this work that he has brought into the lives and the hearts and performed in the experience of these

Christians in Philippi this good work is a work in which God takes satisfaction what an immense thought that is that in your case as a Christian in your case as someone that God has redeemed in your case where a good work has begun God is deriving satisfaction from that amongst all the things that you and I have to say about our lives in our sins in our lapses in our unfaithfulness in everything that you know is from time to time from day to day wrong about our lives yet still you bring assurance to your heart by considering that where that good work has begun God is taking satisfaction from that God is saying about that work that he begins in every heart that saving work it is very good it brings me pleasure what an amazing God we have friends and in such miserable fallen lives as we are in our natural sinfulness

God should actually derive great pleasure from rescuing us from that God should take delight in beginning a good work in us a work of redeeming grace a work of salvation doesn't that bring joy to your own heart tonight to realize that God rejoices over his saving work in his people that there is a celebration in heaven itself if you like over sinners repenting through the work of grace bringing them to Christ and you can see that really in the way that a congregation began in Philippi in chapter 16 of the book of Acts Acts and you can see in that that when God begins a good work he

doesn't follow the same pattern if you like in the case of every individual because you'll find they are very different individuals and a very different way of bringing them to salvation the good work is the good work it's the work that goes on in their heart that begins in their hearts but look at the ways in which he brings that about there is

Lydia and there she is at that meeting by the riverside listening to the words that Paul is preaching and unnoticed to anyone quietly without disturbance the Lord opened her heart and then go on in the chapter there's Paul and Silas in the prison they're singing praises to God at midnight and being overheard by those in the prison and all of a sudden there's a great earthquake the foundations of the prison are rocked the chains are held the prisoners are broken they're free from them and the jailer comes in a panic thinking that the prisoners have escaped until Paul pacifies and says to him no we're all still here and he springs then into this inner part of the jail where he has tied Paul and Silas hours before that and says sirs what must I do to be saved here's a man who has come to have a good work beginning in him through the convulsions of an earthquake what a contrast to the quiet change in the heart of

[ 36 : 51 ] Lydia same work same good work different means of bringing it about bringing it into a reality everyone in here who has come to know the Lord and this good work in them will have a different account of the circumstances of the means that God used of the influences in his providence that he used but this is God and the sheer variety of everything that's open to him in his use is actually seen and demonstrated in the different testimony that his people bear to how they came to know him but in each and every one of them this is essentially what has happened God has begun a good work in them that's the root of our saving experience he has begun that good work there's a creation of life in our human beings secondly there is a continuation

I am sure he said that he who has who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ now there's a certainty in the mind of the apostle there's a conviction in the mind of the apostle here he's not saying the one who began the good work in you I think he will actually bring it to completion at the day of Christ it's not a maybe it's not probably it's not in all likelihood it's not 99% sure he's saying I am sure he's sure not because of what he is himself in his own understanding nor even of what he knows of the Philippians he is sure because he knows God and he knows God's work is a permanent work a work that will be brought to its completion where it has begun I've told you a number of times I think about the spring of fresh water and the sand down at Airtung some of the family were down there recently since they came on holiday and once again the spring is there it comes up through the sand and when the sea comes in it's completely covered and yet it doesn't become salty in itself that clear water still begins still goes on flowing up from deep below the sand and you can see it rising even to the surface of the sea it's a different color to the salty water you might say for all the efforts of that great sea or that great ocean which vastly outweighs the little stream that's coming up from the sand it still not only survives but keeps on pumping out its clear water and it's a really good illustration I think of what this is saying about God and about the beginning of life in our souls and how that is brought onwards by him for all the attempts that Satan for all the attempts that other forces will actually use to try and extinguish this to try and knock it back to try and undo it it cannot be done it is God's work he has begun this good work in you and I am sure he will bring it to completion there's a certainty about remember what we read back in in John's gospel where Jesus said my sheep hear my voice and they follow me and I know them and I give to them eternal life and they shall never perish and he went on to speak about the father the father who gave them to me is greater than all and none is able to pluck them out of my father's hand

I and the father are one and you know there's a lot of theological comment or speculation even at times over how we interpret that verse the father and I and the father are one but in the specific context whatever other theological connotations it has in the specific context context what Jesus is actually saying is I and the father absolutely together in this in the security of my sheep none shall pluck them out of my hand or the father's hand we are absolutely at one in this they shall never perish there's no danger of it from the father's side or from the son's side where he has begun a good work he will bring it on to completion it will never come to be destroyed even though we at times have so many lapses and of course the same in Romans chapter 8 where we read all these wonderful questions that the apostle was asking what shall we say to these things and so on if God is for us who can be against us who shall bring any charge against God's elect who who's going to find them guilty or no one because

God has justified who's going to condemn them well no one because Christ Jesus is the one who died who is raised again who is at the right hand of God who is interceding for us who shall separate us and so on from the love of Christ you see this is the ground of our Christian assurance and we all need that assurance and perhaps without our own island or highland tradition most of us we tend to associate lack of assurance with that particular tradition over the generations it's just a feature of what is really pretty evident that that's something that's always been there for at least for many generations and we need that God will grant us further assurance and further assurance comes from his own work not from our efforts not from anything that we are actually doing in itself but from God's work I am sure of this that he who began the good work in you will bring it to completion and when you think of Romans 8 there and the verses that

Paul provides of course an answer for the death of Jesus the resurrection of Jesus the ongoing intercession of Jesus cannot fail of their objectives they cannot fail of their objectives all of these are realities his death his resurrection his ongoing intercession towards the continuation of his people and onwards into glory the only way that the Lord's people for whom he died could fail to reach that glory is if there's some failure some crack or other opens up in the foundation that's in Christ no that's never going to happen that's the ground of your assurance however poor a Christian you may see yourself tonight to be however much you might lament your lack of obedience your proneness to just not being what you should be following the

[ 44 : 02 ] Lord as fully as you would like you can be absolutely sure of this as Paul is that he who began that good work in you will bring it to completion will carry it through all elements of opposition that you face until the day of Jesus Christ and you know there are many ways in which you could answer the question where does the desire in our heart to please God come from well one of the ways you can answer it is it comes from knowing this about God knowing the certainty and security of his good work knowing that he is not going to be deflected from that that is never going to fail it is out of knowing that that you and I come to actually seek to please him with our lives and to go on dedicating our lives to him day by day and that is really the perseverance of the saints as the theologians put it is one of the great doctrines of the faith the perseverance of the saints of God's people and we could say that it is really God's work in his people that undergirds that perseverance you might say

God's preservation of them in order for their perseverance as 1 Peter puts it this inheritance is reserved is kept for you who are being kept by the power of God through faith and to salvation ready to be revealed in the last time and that is where your assurance is actually rooted but that does not mean our inactivity or our passiveness or our lack of application to follow the Lord if you go forward to chapter 2 and you will find there in verses 12 to 13 especially the other side of this therefore beloved as you have always obeyed so now not only in my presence but also much more in my absence work out your own salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure he's not asking them there to work out their own salvation in the sense of earning it in the sense of laying themselves a ground work for God's acceptance they're already accepted and it's the fact that they're already accepted that leads to them working out their salvation they're the ones who believe they're the ones who pray they're the ones who read the scriptures they're the ones who enjoy fellowship with each other they're the ones who engage in all of these activities as we do as believers but what is the root of it it's God working in you of his good pleasure that's the ground of our assurance tonight we work out from God's working in one of the commentators Robert Rainey on Philippians it's an old work but I thought his summary here was really excellent where he said as follows the ultimate salvation of those in whom a good work is begun is connected with and he mentions a number of things it's connected with the stability of God's purposes the efficacy of the son's mediation the power of the Holy Spirit's influence and the nature of the covenant under which believers are placed but then he goes on to say this and the perseverance thus provided for see these four things he's mentioned that's what provides for the perseverance and that is made good he said through the faith patience fear and diligence of those who persevere and by no means without these so you don't just persevere because God is working in you and will bring that work to completion you have to include that you persevere through faith through patience through prayer through your Bible through the word of God through worship they're all aspects of your perseverance but they're not the ground of it that's the work of God that's the good work that he's begun and it's essential for us to know these great elements in our believing experience in our redemption and thirdly he speaks here about

completion he will bring it to completion at the day of

Jesus Christ see God is as it were working to a certain schedule it's his schedule he's not going to be rushed he's not going to be delayed there's no problem in this kind of building work or this kind of work there's problems at the moment I understand with lack of material for building projects whatever the reason for that is may be complicated but God is working to a schedule and there's no shortage of material and there's no shortage of ability on his part to secure that work and his completion and it's at the day of Jesus Christ that it will be brought to completion that's the day of Christ's return that great day when Jesus will appear and when all of his people will be brought to be with him forever when the resurrection will take place and you know Paul's burden in speaking of the resurrection in all his epistles is not the resurrection of the unjust it's not the resurrection of the unsaved although these are mentioned the burden of Paul is to really focus on the resurrection of the saved and all that that means for

[ 49 : 56 ] God's people because that's the day of completion of the work that God has begun and you know it's like you could say it's illustrated by when you find a formal building opened usually you find a certain dignitary or other brought along to formally open the building usually you'll have the architect or others who are prominent in the building of it present as well or think even of a statue to someone famous that's being unveiled it's been in the workshop of the sculptor up to that moment it's then taken out and placed where it's going to stand but you can't see it it's usually draped with some covering or other until the time comes for it to be unveiled and at the unveiling then you see what was in the sculptor's mind because you're seeing the finished work and you can say well wherever that work began whatever it was to begin with whatever materials he was using whether it was stone or wood or whatever it was this was what was in the sculptor's mind this was what was in this was his objective to create this and now

I'm seeing it and I can admire it and I can see the skill in it and I can even see the likeness of the sculptor in the work of his hands or our hands and that's what Paul is actually saying of the day of Christ as far as the work of salvation is concerned because the architect and the builder are the same person it's God and Jesus the Jesus who is in glory having returned and come on the day of his glory will be standing there at the unveiling of this magnificent edifice of salvation in every single person and as they are together as they are unveiled in his likeness and in his glory to be admired for all eternity by themselves and by God and you can say as you look at yourself on that day well this is what God always had in mind as Paul is putting it here he's giving thanks for the partnership of these

Christians in the gospel from the first day and you can say here he is looking at the last day the day the work began and the day the work is going to be completed this good work of God the first day of their following as God enabled them was always with a view to this last day the day of Christ friends what a day that's going to be we just can't take it in what an immense day that is going to be when the Lord is revealed in his pristine glory when the resurrection will take place and all his people will be raised in his likeness when the judgment takes place and all who ever lived will be judged some with a judgment of salvation others as John puts it a judgment of damnation how precious is Jesus to yourself what is your life built upon what are your hopes for your own person what are your hopes for your future what are your hopes for eternity where are they based and are they based anywhere else than on the good work that God begins in his people and will bring it to completion at the day of Christ and if you're here and lacking assurance and wanting further evidence that you are his that his work has started in you well you're in a good place because as you're seeking that you can come with a conviction of the apostle and say if I find the least evidence in my life that he has become that good work in me I am sure of this that he will bring it to completion whatever I face whatever may be against me he is committed to that and that's where I rest that's where I find my comfort where I find my assurance he's never going to give up and he's never going to stop until the work is done I've started God is saying and I'll finish it let's pray Lord our God we give thanks for that good work we pray that that good work will be in each one of us here this evening and all of us oh

Lord who are participating in this time of worship give us that concern that we ourselves will know ourselves to be among those in whom you have begun that good work those who are being brought on to completion toward the day of Christ oh Lord make Jesus increasingly precious to us help us to see that all that we have by way of assurance of salvation and salvation itself is on the ground of what he is and what he has done and what he continues to do and what he will always be

throughout eternity as the foundation of our redemption oh Lord our God bring us we pray day by day to know of your own fatherly care and keeping grant to us that we may recognize with confidence the work of your hand and your keeping power and your guidance of us and your commitment to finish the work graciously hear us Lord as we pray and as we commit ourselves once again to you as a people go before us and accept our worship again at this time for Jesus sake amen we're singing now in conclusion in the same psalm psalm 138 this time singing verses 6 to 8 the final three stanzas that's on page 180 although the

[ 56 : 31 ] Lord God dwells on high the lowly person he protects whereas the proud and haughty one he knows afar off and rejects although I walk a troubled path your tender care preserves my life you raise your hand against my foes your right hand saves me from their strife the Lord will certainly fulfill for me the purpose he commands your love endures forever Lord preserve the works of your own hands these three stanzas though God although the Lord God dwells on high although the Lord God dwells on high the lowly person he protect whereas the proud and haughty one he knows afar of and rejects the my foes, your right and save me from their stride.

The Lord will certainly fulfill for me the purpose he commands.

Your love endures forever, Lord.

Preserve the world of your own hands.

Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore. Amen.