

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE (04).

July 08, 2007.

Review.

I want to begin this morning by summarizing what we have covered thus far. The primary point I have been making is that when God saves you He changes you. The change is radical. The change is revolutionary. The change is permanent. The spiritual change God works is of such a nature, the Bible says you are literally a new creation in Christ. *2Cor.5:17* says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." "Behold, new things have come", is like a billboard calling your attention to what has happened to you. It is not a billboard you can hide. Very soon, the world will begin to discover this billboard in your life. Peter said the world will begin to express surprise that you are no longer living the quality of life you used to live with them. (*1Pet.4:4*).

We looked at the major changes the Lord worked in you when He saved you. You were spiritually dead. The Lord brought you to life. You were spiritually blind. The Lord gave you spiritual sight. You were spiritually deaf. The Lord gave you spiritual hearing. You were not able to understand the things of God because they were spiritually appraised. The Lord gave you spiritual understanding. You saw the things of God as foolishness. Now you see the things of God as true wisdom. You did not have the ability to go to Christ for salvation. Now you have the ability to go to Christ. God gave you the gifts of repentance and faith so you can truly repent of your sins and believe in Christ for salvation.

You were lost but Christ found you and saved you. You were changed from being an idolater to being a worshipper of the true and living God. You were a child of the devil, a child of disobedience and a child of hell. God saved and changed you and you became a child of God, a child of obedience and a child of heaven. You were darkness but now

you are light in the Lord. You were a friend of the world and an enemy of God. Now you are Jesus' friend and an enemy of the world. Now you are God's people, God's own possession, God's beloved who lives enfolded in the sphere of God's love.

Side by side we looked at the eternal permanence of the salvation God has given to you in Christ. The salvation you received is called eternal life. The Lord Jesus said, "I give eternal life to them, and they will not not perish into the ages", that is, "they will never perish for all eternity." (*Jn.10:28*). In *Jn.3:16* Jesus said that those who believe in Him will receive eternal life and will not perish. Now, Brethren, if this was all the assurance you had in God's word regarding the eternal permanence of your salvation, it would have been more than enough. But God has given to you far more than this.

We saw that those who are a new creation in Christ cannot revert to being old creation. Those who have passed out of death into life cannot return to the state of death. Those who are in Christ cannot be out of Christ. Those who have been transferred out of Satan's kingdom into Christ's kingdom cannot return to Satan's kingdom. Those who are Christ's sheep cannot revert to being the devil's goats. Those who are God's beloved cannot become the devil's beloved. The river of God's love is overflowing its banks and flooding your heart. That river of God's love will never stop flooding your heart and will never run dry. Finally, we saw that there is nothing in heaven and earth that can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. All these truths were clearly demonstrated to you in God's word.

In *ISam.12* Samuel recounted for Israel all that the Lord did for them in delivering them from slavery in Egypt to settling them in the land of Canaan and delivering them from their enemies in Canaan. And he ended with these words, "consider what great things [the Lord] has done for you." (*vs.24*). The verb "**consider**" calls upon them to see, learn and reflect upon. Israel failed to consider what great things the Lord did for them and so, very quickly, they forgot His works. In *Psa.106* the psalmist recounts Israel's history. And the psalmist said three times in the psalm, "They did not remember Your abundant kindnesses" (*vs.7*). "They quickly forgot His works." (*vs.13*). "They

forgot God their Savior.” (*vs.21*). They forgot God’s works. They forgot God. Then they forsook God. Finally they rebelled against God and turned to a life of disobedience and idolatry. And then judgment fell upon them.

I say the same to you this morning : consider what great things the Lord has done for you in saving you. See, learn and reflect upon the many miraculous and radical changes the Lord worked in you in order to save you. *Psa.105:5* says, “Remember His wonderful acts which He has done.” Every morning, in your devotional time, you should set aside time, however brief, to remember, to consider, to give thanks and to bless God as Paul did in *Eph.1:3*. Paul wrote, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.” If you fail to daily remember and consider, you will quickly forget. In forgetting you will also follow Israel’s path of forsaking and rebelling. You will turn to disobedience and idolatry. I close this review with the question found in *Heb.2:3*, “how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” Learn this one fact very well : there is no escape.

He Who Began.

Please turn now to *Phil.1:1-6* (**read**). The focus of our study will be *vs.6*. **Alec Motyer** entitled his exposition of this verse as “**The divine basis of assurance.**” We shall begin our study with an exposition of the key words. **Firstly**, the verb “confident”. This verb means “**to be persuaded**” or “**to be convinced**” in such a manner that one becomes confident, certain or sure. The verb is perfect tense and speaks with emphasis of a confidence begun some time in the past and still actively continuing. But the confidence is not only actively present it is also permanent. It is the kind of confidence that will not be disappointed. In other words, it is a certain confidence.

Paul used this same verb with the same tense, emphasis and meaning in two other places. **Firstly**, in *Rom.8:38-39*, Paul wrote, “I am **convinced** that neither death, nor life,

nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” *Secondly*, in *2Tim.1:12* Paul wrote, “I know whom I have believed and I am **convinced** that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.”

Secondly, the verb “began”. The subject of “**began**” is “He”, that is, God. When used with reference to God, this verb speaks of a decisive and deliberate act. Both the impulsive and the imperfect are ruled out. Here is something deliberately planned by God and being decisively executed to perfection. Note also that the action of the verb is directly concentrated on the object. In other words, the emphasis is that whatever God has begun is directly and peculiarly focused or concentrated upon the object.

Within the context, the object is the Philippian believers. More broadly applied, the object is God’s elect people. More specifically applied, the object of God’s work is you. God’s actions are seen as directly concentrated upon those who are His elect people, that is, upon you as one whom He has chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. (*Eph.1:4*). God’s mind and energies are peculiarly concentrated and focused upon saving you. You are like that one lost sheep Jesus described in *Lk.15:3-7*. God promised to give you to His Son. (*Jn.6:37*). God will keep His promise that He made to His Son. And so God’s mind and energies are deliberately and peculiarly concentrated and focused upon saving you and bringing you to glory.

Thirdly, the verb “perfect”. This verb means “**to complete; to bring to the goal**”. As used by the Paul, the emphasis is threefold : **(1)** to be perfecting; **(2)** to carry this perfecting towards completion; **(3)** to finally complete the perfecting. The subject is still God. And the picture is : God will perfect His work. God will ever more be putting His perfecting touches to His work. And God will most certainly and finally complete that perfecting work. In other words, God will not stop short on this work He has begun and abandon it in a state of incompleteness. He will see it right through to the

end. God will not fail in completing this work He has begun in you. God does not and cannot fail. God's promises do not and cannot fail.

In *Deut.31:8* Moses said to Joshua, "The Lord ... will not fail you or forsake you." In *Josh.1:5* the Lord said to Joshua, "I will not fail you or forsake you." In *Josh.21:45* Joshua said to Israel, "Not one of the good promises which the Lord had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass." In *Josh.23:14* Joshua repeated to Israel, "not one word of all the good words which the Lord your God spoke concerning you has failed; all have been fulfilled for you, not one of them has failed." In *Rom.9:6* Paul assures us that the word of God does not fail. In *Matt.5:18* Jesus said, "truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished."

Fourthly, when used of God, the word "work" brought to a Jewish mind God's work in creation, a work that God began and completed. In *Gen.2:2* we read, "By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done." As we know, God's creation work was described as "good". (cf. *Gen.1:4, 10, 12*). At the end of the sixth day of creation we are told, "God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good." (*Gen.1:31*). We have seen that God's gracious work of salvation in us is described as a "new creation". (*2Cor.5:17*). This new creation work is God's "good work" in us. It is a good work that God began in eternity, that He continues in time, and that He will perfectly complete in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lastly, "the day of Christ Jesus" is the day of Christ's return. This is the day when a lot of terrible things will happen. But this is the day when a lot of glorious things will also happen. What we are being told in *Phil.1:6* is that on this day an exceedingly glorious thing will happen. God's good work of salvation will be completed in every believer, from Abel, the very first believer to die, to the very last one who will be saved. According to *Heb.11:40*, we will all be made perfect together. In *Rom.8:29-30* we are told that those whom God foreknew or fore-loved, predestined, called and justified, He

will also glorify. He will glorify us by completing the work of conforming us to the image of His Son. *1Jn.3:2* says, “we will be like Him.”

Now, there are several points to be noted from *Phil.1:6*.

Firstly, Paul’s confidence was not rooted in himself. Paul’s confidence was not rooted in the Philippians and their faithfulness to God. The Philippians brought great joy to Paul’s heart. (*vs.4*). They were faithful, evangelistic, and missions-minded. (*vs.5*). Even though they were living in rock-bottom, below the starvation line poverty they were sacrificially generous in their support of the ministry in general and of Paul in particular. (*Phil.4:10-19; 2Cor.8:1-5*). In addition to all these things, they were undergoing severe persecution for their faith. (*Phil.1:27-30*). Yet Paul’s confidence was not in the Philippians. Paul’s confidence was rooted in God, the God who is faithful. I want you to turn now to two passages that teach the same basic truth about God that Paul is asserting in *Phil.1:6*. The goal is also the same – completion at the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Turn to *1Thess.5:23-24*. Paul wrote, “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Now note why Paul is confident that his prayer will be answered. *Vs.24* says, “Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.” Paul is confident because God is faithful. Turn now to *1Cor.1:7b-9*. Paul wrote, “awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Now note the basis of Paul’s confidence. *Vs.9* says, “God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” Paul is confident because God is faithful. God is trustworthy. God can be depended upon to do exactly what He has promised to do and all that He has promised to do.

Secondly, Paul's confidence is rooted in the God who is able to do what He has promised to do. *Eph.3:20* says God "is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think." "**God is able**" describes an ever-present attribute in God. God is able. God has the power. God has more than the power. God has the omni-power. There is never a moment in time or eternity that God is not omnipotent. God has the power "**to do**", to take action, to accomplish. The psalmist declared, "The Lord will accomplish what concerns me." (*Psa.138:8*).

"Far more abundantly" is the translation of one Greek word. It is described as the highest form of comparison imaginable. In other words, it is not merely a superlative. It is a super superlative. It can be translated, "**super-abundantly; beyond all measure; greatly exceeding all boundaries.**" Think of the size of our universe. Its size in terms of light years is beyond our comprehension. As a matter of fact, scientists do not even know the real size of our universe because they are continuing to discover more and more galaxies. God did this. God created this mind-boggling universe with a size and complexity that even the most brilliant scientific minds cannot fathom. And yet, this still does not exhaust what it means that God "is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think."

Thirdly, Paul's confidence is rooted in the God who cannot be thwarted in what He does. In *Isa.46:10* God said, "My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure." In *vs.11* God added, "Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it." In *Isa.14:27* God said, "the Lord of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it?" In *Isa.43:13* the Lord said, "I act and who can reverse it?"

In *Job.42:2* Job confessed to the Lord, "I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted." The greatest Gentile king who ever lived was King Nebuchadnezzar. And in *Dan.4:35* Nebuchadnezzar confessed concerning the Lord, "He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the

inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, 'What have You done?'"

There are many professed Christians who do not have Paul's confidence in this God who is faithful. They do not have Paul's confidence in this God "who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think." They do not have Paul's confidence in this God who cannot be thwarted in what He sets out to do. They say they believe there is no healing miracle too great for God to work. And so, they invite you to come and be healed. They say they believe that God wants you to be prosperous. So they invite you to play in God's heavenly lotto. But they do not believe that God is able to save a soul, preserve that soul throughout its life on earth and then take that soul to heaven.

I hope you are seeing the contradiction. There is no promise in the Bible that says God will heal you if you are sick. But without such a promise from God they still believe that if you exercise faith, you will be healed. They say God has the power and we must not limit God's power. There is no promise in the Bible that God will make you rich. There is no heavenly lotto. But without such a promise from God they are selling you their own concocted heavenly lotto tickets, just like the pope sold indulgences, and they are giving you the guarantee that every ticket will win. Like the pope, they are getting rich with your money while you are sitting and waiting to hit a heavenly jackpot that does not exist.

On the other hand, God has given to you in His word many wonderful promises and declarations that say He saves you, He keeps you, and He will deliver you safely to glory. We have seen these many wonderful promises and declarations in the last three studies. Here is one from ***Jude 1:24***. Jude says God "is able to keep you from stumbling and make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy." But in the face of all these wonderful promises they are saying you can still lose your salvation. They are saying, yes, God is faithful, but your unfaithfulness can cancel out or overthrow God's faithfulness. They are saying, yes, God can do anything He sets out to do, but you

can thwart God. You can stop God dead in His tracks. You can push aside God's hand. God may be holding you, but you can pull away and let go of God.

In other words, God may be omnipotent, but you are stronger. God may be sovereign, but you are more sovereign. Now here is the problem : if you are stronger than your god; if you are more sovereign than your god; if you can put limitations on your god; then you are god and the god you claim to worship is an idol. Isn't it amazing how we cannot escape *Gen.3* and Satan's promise that you will be like God. You may be holding a Bible in your hand, but that does not change the fact that the god you are serving is an idol and not the God who revealed Himself to us in the Bible.

Facing a serious dilemma now, they retreat to their next line of argument : they say God cannot violate your will and force you to do what you do not want to do. I have two questions. *Firstly*, where does it say in the Bible that spiritual depraved and dead sinners can choose God in the free exercise of their will? Sinners do not have free wills or the privilege of the free exercise of their wills. The sinner's will is Satan's slave and it faithfully carries out Satan's bidding. (*2Tim.2:24-26*). Jesus said to the Jews who were boasting about their freedom, "everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin." (*Jn.8:34*).

Secondly, where does it say in the Bible that when God saves you He violates your will? God does not violate your will. God changes you. *Psa.110:3* says, "Your people will volunteer freely in the day of Your power." The first change is regeneration or the new birth. When God regenerates you, you will begin to volunteer freely with God and resist the devil. The proof of regeneration is that you begin to volunteer freely with God. You begin to agree with God. You cease resisting God. You stop running away from God. And you start running towards God. You do not pull away from God. You are happy that He is holding you.

If, in the matter of your soul's salvation and the eternal preservation of your soul, you begin to complain and gripe about the freedom of your will, about God violating the

freedom of your will, about God forcing you to do this or that and not giving you the freedom of choice, I would begin to become concerned about whether you are truly saved.

Instead of complaining and griping about God's great and wonderful redemptive works in my life, I am continually rejoicing and praying, *"Lord, do some more great and wonderful works in my life."* And if you see that as God violating your will and taking away your freedom of choice, my prayer is, *"Lord, violate my will some more with more of those great and wonderful works. Lord, take away all my freedom of choice if You want. Just give me more of those great and wonderful works."*

Fourthly, the work of salvation God did in the Philippians, God began that work. Please turn to *Acts 16*. In *Acts 16* we are told that Paul had plans to preach the gospel in the Phrygian and Galatian regions. But the Holy Spirit intervened and stopped those plans. (*vss.6-7*). *Prov.16:9* says, "The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps." Paul had a good plan. He was doing the Lord's work. He was preaching the gospel and planting evangelistic mission-minded churches. And he was working according to a plan. His prayer was that his plans would be God's plans. For the most part, Paul's plans were the Lord's plans and the Lord's plans were Paul's plans. But this time Paul's plans were not the Lord's plans. So the Lord intervened and told Paul he must not preach in the Phrygian and Galatian regions. But the Lord did not reveal what Paul's next step would be.

So Paul made another plan. He decided He would go to Bithynia to preach. Once again the Lord said "No" to Paul's plan. So Paul traveled to Troas. And in Troas the Lord gave to Paul a vision which directed Paul to Macedonia. (*vs.9*). Philippi is the leading city in the Macedonian region. Paul went there and began to preach. From there Paul would travel to and preach in the other Macedonian regions of Thessalonica and Berea.

The first convert to Christianity in Philippi was a lady named Lydia. But I want you to note what the word of God says concerning Lydia's conversion. We are told that as she

was listening to Paul preach that “the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.” (*Acts 16:14*). Note that. The Lord didn’t violate her will. The Lord didn’t take away her freedom of choice. All the Lord did was open her heart. Prior to that her heart was closed to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. She could not respond to the gospel. Even as she began listening to Paul her heart was closed to the gospel. But, then, as she was listening to Paul, the Lord intervened and opened her heart and she began to respond to the gospel Paul was preaching.

I want you to note very carefully that Lydia was a Gentile who was a convert to Judaism. *Acts 16:14* describes her as “a worshiper of God.” Like Cornelius, she forsook her idolatrous Gentile religions and embraced the religion of the Jews. She was serious about the Jewish religion and like Cornelius, she could be described as a devout woman who feared God. (cf. *Acts 10:2*). Despite all this, she was spiritually dead like every unsaved Jew and her heart was closed to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ that Paul was preaching. Being spiritually dead, she didn’t have the ability to open her own heart. But she was one of God’s chosen, chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. (*Eph.1:4*). She was one of those who were ordained to eternal life. (cf. *Acts 13:48*). And so, as she listened to Paul preach, the Lord opened her heart and she responded and was saved. The Lord saved Lydia and her household and then they were baptized.

The conversion of Lydia is no incidental detail. The Lord began His gospel work in Philippi with the conversion of Lydia. To remind you, the verb “**began**” tells us that what the Lord did was deliberate and decisive. This was His plan to focus on Lydia firstly. The Lord loved Lydia in Christ from eternity and prepared her for this moment. Lydia was originally from Thyatira. The Lord made her into a shrewd businesswoman and strategically moved her to Philippi. Philippi was little Rome and its citizens were, for the most part, retired wealthy Roman soldiers.

Here in Philippi, her business made her wealthy and she built a large house. But she also had a large and generous heart which the Lord would use for His glory in the spread of the gospel. Her first act was to insist that Paul and his missionary team move into her

house so that she could care for them. Secondly, she opened her home to become the new house church the Lord would establish in Philippi. And as mentioned earlier, the Philippian church became one of the most faithful and generous supporters of Paul. It is clear that Lydia's example set the pace here.

But what is important to note here is that as the Philippian believers were reduced to rock-bottom abject poverty because of persecution, they did not stop their support of Paul and the gospel ministry. They continued, with great sacrifice, to generously support Paul and the gospel ministry. Generosity does not have to do with wealth. Generosity is a quality that resides in and characterizes the heart. Generosity will manifest itself in wealth and in poverty. And generosity will continue to manifest itself even when wealth is reduced to poverty.

Like Lydia, your conversion to Christ is no incidental detail. You are not an incidental detail in God's plan or in this church. I repeat, you are not an incidental detail in God's plan or in this church. Your conversion to Christ is an unheralded act in this world. It is an act not worthy of the world's notice. As a matter of fact the world will view your conversion to Christ with contempt. But from God's perspective your conversion to Christ was a deliberate and decisive divine act. Your conversion to Christ was a deliberate, purposeful and strategic move made by God for the cause of the gospel and the spread of God's glory in this earth. The fact that you were placed in this church and not in some other church is no accident either. This is God's plan for you.

When my grandfather left India just over a hundred years ago and came to Trinidad with his wife that was no accident. That was God's plan. When the Lord saved my father in **1958**, that was no accident. That was God's plan. Two unheralded acts by God have resulted in the preaching of the gospel around this world and in the support of the preaching of the gospel around this world. I believe that God, in His gracious planning and purposes, has made us into a kind of strategic Philippian church. I want to solemnly warn in the same breath that there is no room for pride or boasting here. Apart from the

Lord we are not only weak, we are nothing. We are what we are only by the sheer grace of God.

I want to say to you again : your conversion to Christ is no incidental detail. God placing you in this church is no incidental detail. You have been strategically placed by God here for His purposes and glory. Whatever country or island your forefathers or you came from, you are not in this country and in this church by accident. You are here because God has begun a good work in you. And it is here that God is perfecting that good work of saving grace in you.

Furthermore, it is in this church that God has involved you in gospel work in this nation and around the world. You are involved by your prayers. You are involved by your worship. You are involved by your evangelism. You are involved through missions. You are involved through theological training. You are involved through the equipping of men in the ministry. You are involved wherever I go and teach and preach. You are involved by your faithful and sacrificial giving. Wherever in this world that the gospel ministry of this church has touched lives, you are involved.

What God is doing in your life, that is God's work. You have the holy privilege of co-operating with God and being a fellow-worker with God in your own life. What God is doing in this church, that is God's work. It is not my work. It is not your work. We simply have the holy privilege of being fellow-workers with God. From beginning to end the work is God's work, started by God, carried on by God and it will be finished by God. And all the glory must go to Him.

Be thankful, rejoice, weep, laugh, celebrate that God has chosen you to do His great and wonderful works in you. Be thankful, rejoice, weep, laugh, celebrate that God has given to you the holy privilege to work along with Him as He does His great and wonderful works in this church and in other gospel labors around this world. God does not need you or anything you have. He could do whatever He wants, whenever He wants and however he wants. Be thankful, be humbled, but also rejoice that God has condescended to come

to you and say to you, *“Come, be my child and work along with Me. Sow these seeds with Me. Water these seeds with Me. Build this life with Me. Encourage this one with Me. Comfort that one with Me. Teach this one with Me. Counsel that one with Me.”*

Your conversion to Christ is no incidental detail. Why has the Lord saved you? Have you come to understand the specific purpose God has for your life in saving you? Have you come to understand what it means that God will glorify Himself through you? Have you found out by what means God will glorify Himself through you? Have you found your place in God’s scheme of all that He is doing in this world to glorify His name and bring His elect people to glory? What is the strategic role God has given to you to accomplish the spread of His glory in the earth?

By life or death, by submission or resistance, by obedience or disobedience, by honor or dishonor, by health or sickness, by wealth or poverty, God will glorify Himself through you. Here is your chance now for freedom of choice. You can choose to glorify God by life, submission, obedience, honor, health and the means God gives to you. Or you can choose to glorify God by resistance, disobedience, dishonor, and death. If you are a child of God, one of God’s elect, God will glorify Himself through you. God will bring you to glory. God will not allow you to apostatize and lose your salvation. If He has to put you on a bed of sickness for the rest of your life to do so, or if He has to kill you to do so, God will bring you safely to glory. You must choose the road to glory that you want to travel on.