

A good work begun and performed (Quality: Average)

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[0 : 00] ...has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Being confident of this very thing, that he which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Not everyone by far is concerned that a good work has been begun in their house.

This strange exercise is the experience and lot, we are fully persuaded of the people in whom the Lord has begun a good work.

To them it is a strange question, often turned over in their minds, often viewed in the negative, sometimes in the positive.

This, the word of God confirms.

[2 : 07] And it is a touchstone. You may measure your religion by this great question, Am I really concerned to whether I am right in the sight of God?

It doesn't matter what words you use, or how your thoughts are disposed, a great underlying question is this.

Am I this? Am I this? Or am I not? There is not some fanciful denominational attitude which men say it is, and strike us down as being peculiar people.

Far from it, it is the mark of the ancients in the gospel. And here we have it in black and white.

We can have it any plainer. Here we have it written to a people, two of whom at least we know for their experience.

[3 : 33] Lydia and the Philippian James. You couldn't have two more opposed characters.

So different. Such a cross-section of the family of God.

So beautiful. But not two identicals. Not twins. A mild Lydia attending the word of God.

The Lord opening her heart, which is another matter on its own. The gainer on the edge of eternity, ready to fall on his sword.

In desperation, suddenly called out of that nature's darkness.

[4 : 44] This is the kind of character he refers to in the fifth verse that he had fellowship with. In the gospel.

Yes, not the stripes and imprisonment and cruelty and apologies and saying, Well, jailer, why did you lash me like that?

Or Lydia, why did you ask me to come to your house and be so kind to me? Why did you constrain me, Lydia? Oh no.

Fellowship in the gospel. The practical side of the gospel, of course.

Although some ten years had elapsed when Paul wrote this from Rome, he never forgot.

- [5 : 49] Of course we don't forget first things, do we? When God blesses them. There are a good many first things we are glad to forget. But not the first things in the gospel.
- And when God does a thing for the first time in grace, you may be sure you will never forget it.
- And it is indelibly written in the apostles' mind. He had hundreds of others that he had met with that being just as precious to him and peculiar in their first meeting with him.
- But he doesn't forget. Grace has got a very long memory.
- And it is intended to have. Thou shalt remember all the way. That starts at the beginning.
- [7 : 00] The I, doesn't it? And so the apostle looks back to that day and remembers the fellowship in the gospel.
- That fellowship is well known to us therefore as we read it in the account in the Acts of the Apostles.
- And a beautiful account it is too. And if we were to dig into it a little further, which we mustn't because of the time, but we see how Paul went there.
- They had cried a man of Macedonia saying, Come over and help us. Help us.
- Now you look at that word help. And how God caused that vision to fall upon the apostle Paul. Come over and help us.
- [8 : 09] And their plans were thwarted and altered. And what they said, yes, we'll go there, never mature. So that if your plans are thwarted and you're turned a different way, don't be surprised.
- You may not know the reason yet, but it will appear later on. Maybe hard, but it came thus.
- There was a man of Macedonia. So Paul goes. Now this is the beginning of the foundation of the church of Philippi.
- And now, of course, Paul is in Rome a prisoner. Another remarkable thing. That he should be a prisoner.
- Now when he was travelling so much as he did, he didn't have time to sit down and write a vision. He preached. When the Lord shut him out of prison, and kindly prisoned at that.
- [9 : 23] Caesar's household, as he talks about in the last chapter. He was still a prisoner, and yet he was a free man doing God's work.
- And he wrote several of these epistles. And had he not been a prisoner, we should have never had an epistle. Now you see, God's servant had to go into imprisonment, which seems most contrary to what you would think, to accomplish the Lord's purpose.
- And this remains with us, therefore, as our comfort and consolation. So going back over the years, he writes to the church established at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.
- It shows that it had been established for some time. Overseers and servers. They were established men.
- So that it was a living church. It was being conducted in an orderly way. It wasn't haphazard.
- [10 : 44] There were overseers. The bearer of this epistle, Epaphroditus, was the, or one of the pastors.
- And the apostle addresses the official to all of them.
- He doesn't say this is just for one of you, or a few of you. This is the beautiful order of the official that it's everybody.
- All are embraced in it. They're all children of God. They're all vessels of divine mercy. But this is the point he is touching upon in this text.

The performing of the work of grace. If you read into that, what is there, you will see the weight and importance there is in the works.

[11 : 55] And how they've been verified, I would hope in your experience. They certainly are in mine now. I'm coming to the end of the journey.

And one or two more of us here too. The order of nature. We're coming to the end of the journey. The finishing has got to be done ere long.

Oh, what an overall view of divine grace you get here. As you read such a word as this, He which hath begun.

You may be exercised about the beginning. Not maybe in the sense that there's a possibility or a probability.

That it may be uppermost in your mind at the moment. Just at the beginning. But the overriding factor of the truth and the doctrine of it is this.

[13 : 09] That only God can begin. That's good work. Only God can begin it.

James, the overseer of the church of Jerusalem. That forthright man.

He says, of his own will, begat he us by the word of truth.

And this is a most God honouring truth of his own will. Now, it's as well that we should be concerned about the beginning.

Because there are so many false beginnings. Luke 6 tells us of the sandy foundation.

[14 : 10] And also of the foundation that was upon the rock. And many other scriptures, of course, refer to the same point.

So that what God begins, he will perform or, as we read, finish.

Now, there must have been then an element of anxiety in the church of Philippi.

As to the continuity of this work, the carrying of it on. And was there any reason that there should be? Well, it looks, uh, uh, ample reason in, uh, chapter 3.

Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. Looks to be ample reason for them saying, well, I wonder where I stand.

[15 : 27] And has not this been so in every generation? We must not, uh, think that these things are some peculiar decay, uh, uh, uh, peculiar to a particular generation.

Like the alms disease in the, uh, alms tree. Something that's new. This has been going on through the ages.

This is many walks. And, uh, word of God, uh, will examine the living. You've got eyes to see it.

Uh, whom I have told you before that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. So that there is reason for the, uh, confirming word.

Being confident for this very thing. Well, you see, this takes it right out of, uh, the hands of bishops and deacons, and overseers.

[16 : 38] Takes it right out of the hands of men. It wouldn't help much if the poor men stood up and said to living souls, well, my dear friends, I feel pretty confident that he that hath begun good work in you will carry it on.

It wouldn't help you much, would it? It doesn't matter what esteem you might hold the speaker. You want it from the word of God.

Faith wants it from the word of God. And nowhere else. And if it isn't there, it's no good.

But it is there. And, uh, by divine inspiration, the apostle Paul affirms that there is there anxiety with regard to whether it will continue.

That is the good work. Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will carry it on.

[17 : 57] Now what is this good work? If we look at the end of verse 7 we shall see it. Where he, uh, speaks of them, uh, in this way.

Uh, ye all are partakers of my grace. Now don't read that as being some kind of grace that he had manufactured or produced.

This is where the marginal rendering is very useful. It says, ye all are partakers with me of grace. You are partakers with me of the same grace.

Now this was the good work. Now who can begin this work?

What does he tell the church? Ephesus, you, as he, what? Quicken. Who were dead in trespasses and sin.

[19 : 11] This beautiful word is so fitting to the beginning that it needs to be given its full weight.

We know what it means in nature. Time of quickening but the, uh, person concerned knows nothing of it.

You may say, yes, but Lydia did, did she? I always regard Lydia's case as being an open question.

As to whether it was at that particular time that the Lord began with Lydia. Not a debatable matter at all.

But the question I would ask is this. Why did she go to the place where prayer was wont to be made if God hadn't begun with her?

[20 : 16] And is it not very consistent with God's gracious dealings? That when, uh, his people are found walking in right ways, he honours them.

And is it not within every reasonable possibility that Lydia's heart had been touched by divine grace before Paul went to Philippi?

And, uh, whether it is or not, uh, whether it is or not is an open question. One does not spread these things, uh, abroad unnecessarily.

But for the admonition and comfort of those who wonder what time, when it was, the Lord began with them.

And cannot mark it. And, uh, get into such tangle in their thoughts, because they can't, and come to the conclusion that it could never have happened.

[21 : 34] You see, the devil's work in this work of grace, he causes more trouble than he does in nature.

You've never, never once wondered whether you were quickened in the womb, have you? Never. You know you were.

What's the word? Why? The evidence is all around, isn't it? Now this is a scriptural world. And this is the word of Jesus also in, uh, teaching Nicodemus, so that as regards a beginning, keep close to the word of God.

keep close to the word of God because it is something that you will be very tried about have many strange thoughts about and often be ready to write yourself off and say well I don't seem to be like other people but if you can mark in the word of God those words comfort and also those things that are not there for example could David or are we told when the Lord began with David what we do know is this that he did begin with him how do we know it why because of the fruits of it in this therefore the beginning of the work must be regarded as the work of God this is the doctrine of the scripture that we love him because he first loved us of his own will he begat us that which is born of the flesh is flesh that which is born these are the operative words of the spirit is spirit just as much as one is so is the other oh that he that hath begun now what a blessing has in this beginning is and it gets more blessed the older you get and it becomes clearer the older you get for this reason that you know where your affections lie and that is the end towards the end the finish it is he that endureth to the end that shall be saved now the beginning therefore is of vital importance and there is perhaps no need for me to say anything more to you concerning this good work now the nature of it is it good ask yourself what esteem you now set upon the work of grace or being right or numbered among God's people or found a sheep or a lamb in his flock do you ever have thoughts about this and you regard it as being of all things the most important as one of our hymn writers says the one thing needful dearest Lord is to be one with it now you know whether you do or don't

I am not putting ideas into your head I am only touching a cord I hope I am but you know whether these thoughts arise in your heart and whether this question of good is something very important to you and your esteem of it this is what we measure things by usually good or bad would you esteem it a good thing to build upon the rock or a good thing to build upon the sand would you esteem it a good thing to be taught to be taught or a good thing to have a notion or religion which of it or the two would us esteem do us esteem and how comes this about therefore that you have some appraisalment of what is really good this word occurs a thousand times in the scripture the most well known is perhaps that in the eighth of Romans we know that all things work together for good for those that love

[27 : 46] God for those who are the called according to his purpose well some of you have lived long enough to test out that word good haven't you and seen like John Kent speaks of the honey in the carcass of the lion you have found good where you least expected to find so it is as we were saying about sabbath that knowledge of your heart's own bitterness a good thing each heart now has its own bitterness you can esteem it to be a good thing to be convicted of your sin and shown your study it is in this therefore that we have to measure understanding of the word good you notice it in the average reading of the word of God you will keep coming across this word good it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace says the thirteenth of

Hebrew would you agree with that and not with meats which have not profited them that have been exercised therein is it a good thing that your heart can be established with grace well you know after all the final court of appeal is in your own breast isn't it you know but this work is something that's got to be continued performed carried on now are you doing it are you going to do it is it now as men say up to you does God begin a work of grace and then leave it for the possessor to carry on as best he can and manage himself well now it's a great question it may not sound an ordinary question but there are so many who believe that it is

God begins and then leaves a sinner to work out his own salvation and that's what we're told in these days when false religion is still rampant work out your own salvation like that fear and tremor and leave it there when it comes to the great final word which is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure then you get the complete picture this work is to be carried on or performed by God now this is what he is doing in thousands of lives and some of our lives here this morning he is performing in what way in what way and you may not be able to say any more than I can he is performing this good work what does

Job say in his 23rd chapter he says he performeth the thing that is appointed for me and many such things are with him so there is no time for rest you know I can remember in the days gone by when that last cross really made me tremble he performeth the thing that is appointed for yes but this is what made me tremble many such things are with him and I now seen perhaps most of those things yes they were with him and mercy I didn't know it wasn't it now today he is performing he is doing it how but you say

I did this did you oh would you feel happy about it think you if like other you put your hand and touch the arc because it looks shaky cut out your own pathway made your own decision do you think you're going to be happy about it ultimately he performed that that was a dark path for Job wasn't it and he speaks about the end of it oh I do feel the beauty of these words throughout the scripture bring the beginning and the end together that's just because I'm getting older he knoweth the way that I take and when he has tried me and only when he has tried me

[34 : 31] I shall come forth as gold grace brings the beginning and the end together in due call don't hurry it don't expect that you're going to view the end as imminent in the days of your youth but the performing hand of God how this subject of course is vast but it's true and this is our comfort look at the seasons look at this beautiful summer's morning well we can see it the very ground speaks to us this morning life come another six months what will it be probably frost dead but are these opposites or are they moulded together that one fit in with the other we read the chapter in

Ecclesiastes didn't we was it last Sunday who can make that straight that God has made crooked consider the work of God he has set the one over against the other this is where God performs he performs it in nature to our comfort and our testing but we know very well that over nature even is that great promise that they shall not fail seed time and harvest summer and winter day and night and yet it is by the complete extreme in one place or another that the Lord performs one is related to the other and this being so in nature we know that it is also in grace but looking at it overall how beautiful it is being confident of this very thing that he who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of

Jesus Christ that's the object in view in the divine light and of course so it is when he shall hand the kingdom over to his father as a redeemed host out of every nation amen the he to him Thank you.