

Preaching Christ (Quality: Average)

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[0 : 00] We will speak again from verse 6 in the first of Philippians. Olds official to the Philippians chapter 1 and verse 6.

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

He spoke this morning of the good work. And the clear view we have in this verse, as in other verses, that that work is of God.

There is no other hand in it that it is the work of divine grace, that he that hath begun will finish or perform it, which is the greater and God's given view, purpose of Jehovah, that his people shall understand his sovereign mercy to each one of them.

We did not mention his gracious sovereignty, his electing love and mercy this morning. Here it is in the text.

[1 : 30] This is how God begins. There are untold numbers in heaven who can set their seal to this.

And there are those upon earth who can set their seal to it as well. And will take it with them to everlasting glory when the work is finished.

That is, was God who began. And this mysterious beginning, therefore, is his responsibility.

We need our hearts and minds lifted above the fallacy that salvation is a work of human agency and creature power.

And although this is a delicate as well as a difficult subject, it is so clearly outlined in the word of God that we know full well how this is done.

[2 : 39] That it is not of him that willeth or of him that runneth but of God that showeth mercy. So that to prove this and to find confirmation of the word of God is the happiness of the believer.

This is his doctrine. All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable among other things for doctrine.

Foundation, that is. Sound truth. And this is, indeed, sound truth. It is, therefore, a matter which we can rejoice.

The apostle says with such confidence himself that he is confident of this very thing that he that hath begun a good work in you will carry it on.

So I say we need our minds lifted up above the thought which is so prevalent with us that we are the arbiters of our own future and that salvation is in our hands.

[4 : 05] No greater error ever was spread and it is the greatest error that the great enemy of the church can ever spread and has ever spread.

And it has caused the greatest unhappiness and havoc. But the beauty of it is that the Holy Spirit has enlightened men's minds.

See the fallacy of it. And in seeing the fallacy of it they have rejoiced at the stupidity of the truth. And from this once settled upon it they will never be removed.

In this, therefore, God has the glory he that hath begun. Rather than go over what I said this morning about your exercises as to whether it has begun or not let us look at the way it's carried on the way it's performed.

You will remember that the few verses we read in the first chapter this morning spoke of Christ being preached.

[5 : 23] In his prison the apostle met with some success. In his preaching there were those of Caesar's household who were called by grace.

On the other hand he met with great enemies who preached Christ merely to tease him. And the Christ he said of strife and envy some of goodwill.

Imagine for yourself Christ being preached of envy and strife and what grief it would cause the apostle. Blasphemy blasphemy.

The name of Christ used in an artificial way of preaching copying the apostle that he had to endure all this and yet of it he takes this very remarkable view so that he is able to rejoice that in both ways whether in sincerity or in ill will Christ was preached so that he set great store upon the preaching of Christ and it is this way first of all that we must look to see how God carries on according to this text or performed the good work it is through the preaching of Christ.

Now look at the variety of ways in which Christ is preached. The amazing ways. The devil with his designs he makes Christ a subject of endless fables and all evil matters that are an abomination really.

[7 : 35] Only this week I had a letter from a Baptist church in Southampton asking me to let my people know of a coming concert and a banquet a beauty for the furtherance of the gospel and I wrote and told them I had to set before my people to come out from the world and be separate not to go to banquets and concerts to see this is the current evangelism of the day Christ is free they wouldn't dare leave Christ out of it there he is supposed to be but it's the devil's work and yet in that very preaching the Lord is well able to use his truth so that whilst we can have nothing to do with these things and they are anathema to us we say that

Paul rejoiced that Christ was preached but when we come to the other side of it when he is preached in truth and sincerity what a different atmosphere we come into it isn't a crowded hall it isn't a masked band it isn't all the orchestral ability of professional singers or professional players as much as it would attract some of our natural minds is it a different atmosphere altogether this holy reverential atmosphere that has got vitally essential to the reception of the word of

God in truth and with reverence and godly fear and is not this how God conducts this work of performing his role where would you rather go I don't mean optionally but where would you go in preference to hear profitably you want the ableist organist we can get you want the best figures we can provide let me say again nothing against but in its proper place where is God worshipped if it is not in the heart making melody in the heart there's the apostle and

Paul must have had a vast experience of the attractions of his day we don't look upon these ancient stew as poor half savages for any meat we have enough knowledge to know that Ephesus and Philippi and Colossae were places of feeding great bitterness but in that day as now the gospel is to be preached Christ is to be preached there's to be a hallowed reverence a prayerful attention to and what begets this why hunger it is one of the outcomes of

God's gracious beginning this is why his people hunger because he's begun with them it's why they want to gather up for themselves like the ancient Israelite did when he gathered the manna it is true he gathered it for his household but when these spoken of here heard the truth they wanted it for themselves do you come to the house of God today wanting something just for yourself not selfishly but absolutely driven to it by sheer need sheer hunger were you on wrong lines were you looking for something that wasn't promised or were you within the comfort of the promise of God you were certainly within the promise ask and it shall be given you and if he being evil know by your own natural judgment how to give good gifts to your children how much more shall your heavenly father give the holy spirit and that ask so that the preaching of

[13 : 32] Christ is first and foremost the means which God uses to carry on the world so it doesn't matter whether there's just two of you you see or whether it's in a cox or a woods matter bit it makes no difference to that and this is the beauty of it it is well to have a sanctuary and well and a great mercy that the Lord provides one but it isn't essential so that where two or three are gathered together in my name there are neither though Paul's great overriding thought was this Christ is this the name is this the person and this is how

God is still carrying on his work and although every sermon and every preaching may not by any means be holy of Christ and much of it may be of experience yet the main subject as with these epistles is Christ and then walking out Christ an experience of Christ what is incumbent upon to leave us in Christ you have it here in this second chapter if there be there for any consolation in Christ if any comfort of love if any fellowship of the spirit if any bowels and mercies fulfilled in my journey that you be like minded well what blessed ground this is isn't it and how real and vital it is as regards the preaching of Christ and the receiving of Christ and the believing of Christ there must be corresponding agreement this lowly walk and humble me and which the Lord gives let nothing be done through strife or vain glory see what havoc this makes this is where we go drift this is where

Christ isn't practiced though he may be preached this is where we lose it all when we get outside or come Monday morning this is where it's all gone when we get back to business tomorrow yeah let nothing be done through strife or vain glory this is how the Lord carries on his work by working as we have in a lower verse which I quoted this morning work out your own salvation with fear and trembling gorgeous God that worketh in you to will and do of his good things this is where the practical part comes in all bound up in this being confident of this very thing that he that has begun a good work in you will carry it on himself and finish it and perform it now look at the ways we were speaking of the seasons this morning and how

God controls the seasons wonderful works of nature what command he has over how he can cause the seasons to differ look at the difference between this summer and last summer and so with the Lord's working graves one is taught in one way one is taught in another diversities of operation his gifts differ the pathways differ and how true this is they do but nonetheless there is a performing of his work lessons to be learned and this is why we are bidden to exercise bowels of mercy why we are bidden to esteem others better than ourselves let not every man look on his own but every man also on the things of others then comes a grand underlying foundation preaching

Christ yes but digging so wonderfully deep and the verses that follow from verse six in the second chapter set this out that this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus now this is preaching Christ this is where the vine glory is going to be dispersed this is where the strife is going any strife here that the mind of Christ is in it we shan't then take the sword or the tongue we do alas this is the standard of the gospel this is where

[20 : 10] Christ is preached practically and this is the object lesson set out before the church of God let this mind be in you but also in Christ and then comes deeper doctrine than ever and that is that who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God eternal nature country for the Lord Jesus Christ with his father in glory before the foundation of the world and quite voluntarily and willingly took to himself the great work of salvation in all its parts now those that can follow this in love hunger and desire and want a Christ like mind and a

Christ like spirit these are the ones who say who give evidence of having this work carried on because it's God like it has been done and will be done God but here is the fruit of it God's work is manifest the apostle preaches Christ in a very practical way he says what Christ did let this mind be in you he further goes on he made himself no reputation a very tender spot isn't it reputation we're all pretty careful about our reputation aren't we and should be too but on the other hand you can be too careful about your reputation oh this reputation of sinful man is but a facade in many cases it's what we are in reality not what we appear to be man looking at the outward appearance it is true the dreadful nature of deceiving other people of being a hypocrite or a dissenter this is not spirit of Christ but he made himself of no reputation well look at the beauty in the sermons that speak of the

Lord Jesus being made of no reputation we have him here before us in the gospel haven't we we hear the voice of his enemy his own creature saying to him how can this man forgive sin to see him in his lowest estate he laid aside his heavenly glory and made himself of no reputation faith now this is a carrying on of the world let us be quite sure about this this is the pathway of Christlike humility not seeking a great name among men not popularity oh no not unfaithfulness for the sake of popularity oh no no

Christ was faithful in all his house what will popularity do when it comes to the end prove but a vain bubble won't it it certainly won't be God finishing the work in this Christ made himself no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant oh it digs deep doesn't it it rings with heavenly truth a servant yes a servant behold my servant says God of him what a name to assume isn't it a servant it needs no explanation as regards what a servant is that

Christ was a servant of his father he was a servant to not of and there is a difference to his church that he took upon himself the form of a servant and made in the likeness of men preaching Christ I wonder I wonder I wonder if those who preach Christ of envy and contention and strife preached like this think who they did or knew anything about it did they not merely take the name of Christ not knowing what they said but where it was preached in sincerity and truth there where these truths are set forth and this is how

[27 : 12] God is ever pleased to set forth this gracious work of his dear son for the benefit of his people so that they shall receive the word as James says with meekness and understanding with tenderness love warmth and this requires at their hand something which they haven't got of themselves why now this brings about and brings us to a very important point when you hear the gospel preach and you fall so far short of it you're in danger of trying to gather up these things for yourself you may cast yourself aside and say well I fall so far short of the heavenly standard that there can be no hope for me suffer the word of exhortation says Paul in his closing remarks to the

Hebrews bear with it and these words of exhortation need to be born with he that hath begun who will carry it on for perfect finish and this is one of the great things that he is doing showing up your need and your deficiencies and setting you such a high standard that you will feel you must go to him for the grace to do it which is just the very thing that God determined so that there will be a continual emptying as well as a continual filling what wondrous things the word of

God performed in the hearts of believers doesn't it so that the Lord Jesus he was found in fashion as a man and humbled himself the Lord Jesus himself no other person he did not change his character he was the Lord Jesus upon earth every bit as much as he was the Lord Jesus in heaven he did not order one which he took upon himself human nature and we know how that remarkable sinful account that he does not alter in any way in his holy heart purpose and nature he took into union with his divine nature a nature like sin accepted you can't do that you can't take another nature into union with your own your nature is your nature but

Christ did there is a new nature given to the believer but he doesn't take it into union with his old now it's entirely separate it is nothing to do with the old nature in any way whatever but with Christ the nature that he took into union with his divine nature was human sinless and holy and his divine nature was vile within it now this glorious gospel is to be preached Paul preached it and he had not the first of Luke or the first of

Matthew to look to like we've got what did he have in the ninth of Isaiah those well-known words for unto us a child is born unto us a son is given the government shall be upon his shoulder and his name shall be called wonderful counselor the mighty God the everlasting father prince of peace this is the prophecy of the increase of his government and peace there should be no end upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever that's the prophecy and it is sealed with this seal the zeal of the

[33 : 06] Lord of hosts will perform this same word perform this the zeal of the Lord of hosts perform this the glory of it is to the father he has now performed to his kingdom there is no end it is here that Christ is free though Paul had no as I've said account of the angel's visit to Mary the anxiety of Joseph he had no account or written account of that holy beginning at the same time the truth taught him out of the Old Testament and by whatsoever means God chose brings forth this great and glorious truth which is to be preached and this nature was one he became obedient well if we had nothing further we should have a lot but we shouldn't have everything he became obedient unto death the death that we have here before us to commemorate the ordinance of his table in such simple expressive ways by the breaking of bread the pouring out of wine and his shed blood that he became obedient to death the garden of gethsemane witnessed that scene where he took the last step that I spoke of last

Sunday father if it be possible let this cup pass from me nevertheless not as I will but as thou wilt this this was the last and as you know the last is the crisis but the Lord Jesus speaks thus that his people might see him in his obedience obedience this is preaching Christ I say again I wonder whether those who preach Christ of envy strife and contention preach thus that the gospel certainly does he that hath begun a good work what a good work this is to see

Christ in this solemn place and who for and what for why did he become obedient unto death how could he even the death of the cross why crucifixion why should he there hang a malefactor between heaven and earth well preaching Christ tell to tell us to preach to the eunuch didn't he Jesus the eunuch was reading 53rd of Isaiah and he said well who does the prophet refer to then he speaks of this strange character who's led as a lamb to the slaughter who is it Philip preached unto him

Jesus it's just a preaching which carries on the work it did in the eunuch didn't he so it isn't merely the name my dear friends wow it's believing in this blessed man and walking in his footsteps and seeking grace to be of the same spirit as he was it isn't having a name or a profession merely it's being numbered among those who counted in honor to follow the despised Jesus he became obedient unto death even the death of the cross oh do not think then that although we confidently affirm that

God begins and God carries on and performs his own work that it's a pathway of ease and comfort be not led away by such a thought as that fatal antinomianism which brings people to live as they like and say well if we're saved we're saved all the activity of grace burns up all such vile and evil things shall we sin that grace may abound God forbid he became obedient unto death wherefore God also hath highly exalted him given him a name which is above every name here's the other side of the carrying on of this work highly exalted and we know in what capacity

[39 : 39] Christ Jesus was not highly exalted again as in the eighth of proverbs to be with his father in creation he was not highly exalted to add to creation it was perfect God saw that it was good he was highly exalted to deal with sin sinners and the vilest of sinners too those that hated him he had to deal with what men would call an insurmountable task in dealing with vile unbelief in the hearts of man born in sin haters of God carnal mind enmity with God and knowing this what a refuge is this truth that he that hath begun will perform it what a refuge is this and does this mean to go home and lay down at rest do nothing well you know this is the beauty of preaching the gospel you see it is reciprocated in the hearts of the believer it isn't arguable it isn't something that comes back to the pulpit having hit the wall at the back and reached no response it goes home it is something of a gracious nature and it is this that God has determined he will do when his son is highly exhorted that at the name of

Jesus every knee should bow well is not this a matter for our poor knees to bow before the sovereign gracious God who has brought us thus far opened our blind eyes made us to see these things though perhaps through a glass dark nevertheless to see them in their reality and beauty and what a depth it is as I have said the apostle was digging deep but he was preaching Christ and this is the way that the father has determined that his people shall learn of him the beautiful text though much malign of the

Lord Jesus and I close with this where he says take my yoke upon you and learn of me with my yoke on you prime meek and lowly in heart and you shall find rest unto your souls and be sure you will the true rest that remain here in this time state quite apart from the heavenly rest that the latter part of the text speaks of he will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ we must leave it here it's a subject of great depth isn't it and beauty the Lord make it so Amen and and