

GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

2 = Who is Working?

Announcements:
7/14 @After Service -
Special
Congregational
Meeting
7/21 @8:30 -
Sunday School
7/21 -
Registration
Closes for
CLARUS
MID AUGUST -
Grace Groups
Relaunched!

REVIEW: Was there anything covered or said on Sunday that you had any questions or comments about?

ICE BREAKER: Who was your best friend when you were growing up? Are you still in contact with them today?

READ: Philippians 1:3-6

Verse six of what we just read is one of the most incredible and beautiful passages in all of Scripture. Paul Begins by telling us that he is *sure*. He has a deep seated and powerful confidence. In what, that God who works will continue to work and will finish that work. In other words, Paul is saying that salvation, and sanctification, and really all of Christian life is work done by God himself. In one short verse Paul has said the same thing that he will say at length in the letter to the Ephesian church summarized when he said "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God. " (Eph 2:8.) It is this working of God that I would like to look at today, with a hope that, like Paul, we can find confidence and assurance!

Really there are two times that Paul mentions God working that are worthy of our time and attention. We start with the beginning. It is pretty clear here, God began the work. What work? The good work! In particular the good work of salvation. A lot could be said here, but again, our particular goal is to see the confidence that Paul has in our own lives. To help us get there, let's just ask the direct question: how does knowing that God began the work of salvation bring confidence? Again it might be helpful to think about Ephesians (You could read the whole passage, Ephesians 2:4-10). There Paul is trying to *exclude* something, namely any boasting in our own goodness. Here in Philippians, I think the other side of that coin is applicable: I can't boast, but I also don't need to fear that I am not strong (or good, or holy, or...) enough. In other words, the first and biggest reason that I can have confidence in knowing God started the work is that I know that he is much better at starting things than I am! I have confidence then not in my ability to save myself, but in God's ability to save me!

DISCUSS: Why is it so important to see that God (rather than us) starts the work of salvation? What other ways does knowing he began the work give us confidence?

But then there is a second time we need to note. We move here from the beginning to the end. As Alec Motyer says: "No other agent is at work but [God] alone, and what he does covers the beginning, the continuation, *and the completion* of the Christian existence." God began it, and God himself will bring it to completion. It is helpful here to think in some (technical) theological terms. The beginning is what we often call "justification". What is justification, it is our being made right before God. In Sunday school I remember being told it was being made "Just-as-if-I" never sinned, and that's pretty close. The end here is talking about what we would call "sanctification". Sanctification is the ongoing process of being made more (and more) holy. For many Christians we are able to see God in the work of justification, but think then that we have to try harder and be better and do more when it comes to our sanctification. But Paul is pretty clear here (and honestly all of Scripture is clear too!): even our sanctification is a work of God. So now my confidence is not just that he will save me, but that he will grow me, and change me and shape me and make me more and more like my savior. What a blessed promise that is!

DISCUSS: Why do we often struggle in seeing sanctification as a work of God? How does knowing that God is doing that too bring us more confidence?

Finally I would like to ask a simple question: "well then what do we do"? The short answer is "nothing" but the longer answer is a bit more beautiful. To take a word out of our text and use it a bit out of context: just like the Philippians "partnered" with Paul, we "partner" with God in what he is doing in us. Just because it is God's work does not mean that we are totally off the hook. How we live matters, what we do matters, how we try matters, but again, we have confidence knowing we are partnering with the God of the universe, and he will surely do it!

DISCUSS: In what ways do we partner with God in what he's doing in us? How does *that* thought lead to more confidence?