

THREE REASONS FOR CONFIDENCE

1 ³I thank my God whenever I remember you.⁴In all my prayers for all of you I always pray with joy, ⁵because of your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶Of this I am sure, [namely,] that he who began a good work in you will carry it out to completion until the day of Jesus Christ. ⁷It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because I have you in my heart; for both in my chains and in the defense of the gospel all of you share with me in [God's] grace. ⁸God is my witness that I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. (Phil. 1:3-8)

Introduction

One day the famous hymn writer, Fanny Crosby, was visiting her dear friend, Mrs. Phoebe Knapp. Mrs. Knapp was something of an amateur musician who enjoyed composing melodies on the piano.

On this particular afternoon Mrs. Knapp had a new tune she had recently composed that she wanted to share with her friend. She sat down at the piano and began to play. After she had played the tune through once, she turned to Fanny and asked, "What does the tune say to you?"

Fanny knelt down beside Mrs. Knapp's piano as her friend played the tune once again. A smile beamed across Fanny's face, she rose to her feet, and announced, "It says, 'Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine; Oh what a foretaste of glory divine!'"

Fanny continued to dictate the verses and Mrs. Knapp wrote them down, joining the words with her melody to form the hymn that has become one of the most beloved hymns of the Christian church. (*Hymns of Faith and Inspiration*, Ideal)

In addressing the Christians at Philippi, the Apostle Paul begins by conveying to them his assurance and confidence that God is working in their lives: "*I thank my God whenever I remember you ...* ⁶*Of this I am sure, [namely,] that he who began a good work in you will carry it out to completion until the day of Jesus Christ.*" The Apostle Paul also conveys his reasons for having such confidence, so that these Christian people might enjoy the assurance of their salvation.

In order that we may gain a genuine assurance with regard to our salvation, an assurance based upon the Word of God, let us consider this passage and the three reasons for confidence that are presented here.

I. You May Be Confident that God Is Working in You, ...If You Have Received Christ as Your Savior

One of the Philippian Christians to whom Paul is writing was a woman name Lydia, the account of her conversion is described in Acts 16:13-15,

On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. ¹⁴One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. ¹⁵When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. If you consider me a believer in the Lord, she said, come and stay at my house. And she persuaded us.
(Acts 16:13-15)

Among the small group of women who have gathered by the riverside for prayer was one who is defined as *"a worshiper of God."* That is to say, she was a Gentile who had come to believe in the God of Israel. Her name was Lydia. As Lydia listened to the preaching of the gospel, *"the Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message."* Consequently, she believed in Jesus the Savior and presented herself for baptism.

Another one of these Philippian Christians is a man we do not know by name, but only by profession. He was the Philippian jailer. The account of his conversion is given in Acts 16:23-34. While in Philippi, Paul and Silas delivered a soothsaying girl from demon possession, as a result, the civil authorities had them beaten and cast into prison,

... the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. ²⁴Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. ²⁵About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose. ²⁷The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸But Paul shouted, Do not harm yourself! We are all here! ²⁹The jailer called for lights, rushed in, and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰He then brought them out and asked, Gentlemen, what must I do to be saved? ³¹They replied, Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household. ³²Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. ³³At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. ³⁴The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them, and the whole family was filled with joy, because they had come to believe in God. (Acts 16:23-34)

The jailer, no doubt a rough and hardened man, showed no interest in the gospel until he was roused out of his sleep in the middle of the night by an earthquake, and to his amazement discovered that none of the prisoners had escaped. When he witnessed this sight for himself, he trembled with fear and earnestly asked Paul and Silas to explain to him the way of salvation.

Consider the contrast between these two Philippian Christians: Lydia came to Christ through a slow, gradual process. There appears to have been dissatisfaction with the idolatry and debauchery of her Greek pagan upbringing. There was an attraction to the Jews and their knowledge of the true and living God. All this culminated with an introduction to Christ and her response of personal faith in Him. The jailer came to Christ as the result of a sudden, literally earthshaking experience. This man who constantly worked with the criminal element of society was in all likelihood a very hardened, irreligious, perhaps even cynical, man. When the crisis at the prison occurs he is about to resort to suicide. This reveals both his sense of desperation as well as his pride: to be responsible for a prisoner's escape would have been both disgraceful and a chargeable offense against him. But through this crisis he is so shaken and so impressed by the lives of Paul and Silas, (they both remained in their cell and convinced the other prisoners to do the same,) that he seeks Christ and receives Him as his Savior.

Despite the striking difference in the background of these two individuals, the apostle addresses them together, as well as the rest of the Philippian Christians, and says: **God** has begun a work in you and **He** will perfect it.

You may be confident that God is working in you, if you have received Christ as your Savior. The very fact that you have recognized Christ for who He really is (the Son of God, the Savior sent by God) and have received Him as your Savior and Lord is supernatural; it is an act of God, just as surely as was the case with Peter:

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, Who do people say that the Son of Man is? ¹⁴They replied, Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. ¹⁵But what about you? he asked. Who do you say I am? ¹⁶Simon Peter answered, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. ¹⁷Jesus replied, Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. (Matt. 16:13-17)

According to John 1:10-13, receiving Christ and abiding in Him is attributed to God as His saving work in a man's heart and life: *"He [Jesus, the Incarnate Son of God] was in the world, and the world was made through him, but the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to his own [people], yet those who were his own did not receive him. ¹²But to all who did receive him, to those who believe on his name, to them he gave the right to become children of God—¹³[they] were born, not by natural descent, nor by human will, nor by a husband's desire, but by God."*

The Apostle Paul informs us in his first epistle to the Corinthians, *"It is because of him [i.e., as a result of the work of God] that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—righteousness and sanctification and redemption"* (1 Cor. 1:30.)

II. You May Be Confident that God is Working in You, ...If You Promote the Cause of Christ

The Apostle Paul testifies to the Philippians that he offers up his prayers with joy, *"because of your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now."*

Lydia insisted that the missionaries be her guests while they carried out their gospel ministry in the city of Philippi: *"When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. If you consider me a believer in the Lord, she said, come and stay at my house. And she persuaded us"* (Acts 16:15.) The jailer tended to the missionaries' wounds and brought them into his home and fed them: *"At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. ³⁴The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them, and the whole family was filled with joy, because they had come to believe in God"* (Acts 16:33-34.)

The Philippian Christians were deeply interested in the progress of the gospel. They were aware of the apostle's journey from Jerusalem to Rome; they were aware of his recent imprisonment; they were aware of his pending trial. They were concerned for him and for the gospel: Is the gospel gaining a hearing in Rome, or is it being silenced? Are there conversions to Christ? How is the church at Rome? It is because of their interest in the cause of Christ that the Apostle Paul writes as he does in Philippians 1:12-14,

Now I want you to know, brothers, that the things that have happened to me have actually resulted in the advancement of the gospel. ¹³It has become evident to the whole Praetorian guard and to everyone else that I am a prisoner for Christ. ¹⁴Furthermore, due to my imprisonment many of the brothers have become much more confident in the Lord, taking it upon themselves to speak the word without fear. (Phil. 1:12-14)

These Philippian Christians were actively involved in the spread of the gospel. We have already noted the hospitality extended to Paul and Silas by Lydia and the jailer during their ministry in Philippi. In His third epistle, the Apostle John commends those Christians who have shown hospitality to the itinerant evangelists who have come to bring the gospel to their community. The ministry of hospitality to those who have gone out to bring the gospel to the world is seen as a means of sharing in the work of the gospel:

Beloved, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers, even though they are strangers to you. ⁶They have told the church about your love. You do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. ⁷It was for the sake of the Name that they went out, receiving no help from the pagans. ⁸We ought therefore to show hospitality to such men so that we may be fellow-workers for the truth. (3 Jn. 5-8)

The Philippian Christians faithfully prayed for the apostle and his ministry, as he gratefully acknowledges: *“I know that, through your prayers and the help provided by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the result of all this [i.e.; the outcome of Paul’s present trial] will be my deliverance”* (Phil. 1:19.) In his epistles, the Apostle Paul urges fellow Christians to carry on a ministry of prayer for those who are preaching the gospel:

He requests prayer *“that words may be given to me, [together] with boldness, whenever I open my mouth to make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰(on behalf of which I am an ambassador in chains), so that I may speak boldly for it as I ought to speak.”* (Eph. 6:19-20)

He further requests prayer that *“God may open a door for our message [i.e., that God would open up opportunities for the preaching of the gospel], so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. ⁴Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, [i.e., that the preacher may make the message of the gospel clear and impress upon his hearers the urgency of responding to Christ], as I should.”* (Col. 4:3-4)

The Philippian church sent out one of their own members to minister to Paul in his need, and that Philippian Christian whom the church sent gave himself whole-heartedly:

But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow-worker and fellow-soldier, who is also your messenger and the one whom you sent to minister to my needs. ²⁶[I am sending him back] since he yearned for all of you and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick ... ³⁰because for the sake of the work of Christ he came near to death, risking his life in order to supply what was lacking in your ministry to me. (Phil. 2:25-26,30)

The Philippian Christians committed themselves to the financial support of the Apostle Paul and his ministry:

You certainly know, Philippians, that at the outset of [my] gospel [ministry], when I departed from Macedonia, none of the churches had fellowship with me in the matter of giving and receiving except you alone; ¹⁶for even [when I was] in Thessalonica on more than one occasion you sent [aid when] I was in need ... ¹⁸I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphraditus the things you sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. (Phil. 4:15-16,18)

You may be confident that God is working in you, if you promote the cause of Christ. Do you find in your heart an interest in the cause of Christ and a willingness to participate in some aspect of the ministry of His gospel: prayer, hospitality to those who are actively ministering, financial support, offering yourself for gospel service? Such is an indication and evidence that you have a

living connection with Christ. Contrast the vital Christianity of these Philippian Christians—and the assurance the apostle ministers to them—to the lifeless, stillborn “Christianity” over which the apostle laments: *“All the others seek their own interests, not the interests of Jesus Christ”* (Phil. 2:21.) Again, in Philippians 3:18-19 he writes: *“As I have often told you, and even now tell you with tears, many walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹Their destiny is perdition, their god is their own appetite, and they glory in their shameful conduct. They set their minds on earthly things.”*

III. You May Be Confident that God is Working in You, ...As You Persevere in Christ

The Apostle Paul reminds the Thessalonian Christians that it was common knowledge how much he and Silas had suffered and how they had been shamefully treated in the city of Philippi: *“We had previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi, as you know”* (1 Thess. 2:2.)

Paul is especially referring to the incident recorded in Acts 16:16-24,

Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we met a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune telling. ¹⁷This girl followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved. ¹⁸She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so troubled that he turned around and said to the spirit, In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her! At that very moment the spirit left her. ¹⁹When the owners of the slave girl realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. ²⁰They brought them before the magistrates and said, These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar ²¹by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice. ²²The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten. ²³After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. ²⁴Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. (Acts 16:16-24)

The missionaries suffered persecution at the hands of the cruel and pagan citizens of Philippi, and the church encountered the same treatment: *“it has been graciously granted to you, for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him. ³⁰You are experiencing the same opposition that you saw happening to me and now hear is happening to me”* (Phil. 1:29-30.)

In the face of such hostility and opposition these Philippian Christians did not forsake Christ. Paul rejoices *“because of your fellowship in the gospel **from the***

first day until now” (Phil. 1:5.) He urges them to continue to maintain their faithful Christian witness:

Live your life only in a way that is worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that if I come and see you—or if I remain absent what I will hear about you is that you are standing firm in one spirit, and with one soul are contending for the faith of the gospel; ²⁸and that you are in no way being intimidated by those who oppose you. (Phil. 1:27-28a)

You may be confident that God is working in you, as you persevere in Christ.

Our Lord informs us that we may expect opposition and persecution:

If you belonged to the world, the world would love its own; but because you do not belong to the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. ²⁰Remember what I told you, A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. (Jn. 15:19-20)

Our Lord requires us to endure for His sake and not forsake Him:

All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved ... ³²Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. ³³But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven. (Matt. 10:22, 32-33)

Perseverance in the faith—continued trust and love and allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ—is a sure indication of God’s work in you. As the Apostle John indicates, the initial reception of Christ as your Savior and the continued perseverance in His fellowship is the evidence of a genuine work of God’s Holy Spirit: *“to all who did receive him, to those who believe on his name, to them he gave the right to become children of God—¹³they were born, not by natural descent, nor by human will, nor by a husband’s desire, but by God”* (Jn. 1:12-13.) The phrase, *“all who **did receive him**”* (or, *“as many as **received him**,”*) occurs in the aorist form of the Greek verb λαμβάνω, indicating an initial act of faith. The next phrase, *“to those who **believe on his name**,”* occurs as a present participle of the Greek verb πιστεύω, indicating a continuing faith and commitment to Christ the Savior, it may more accurately be rendered, *“to those who are continuing to believe on his name.”*

Contrast this evidence of true saving faith with the temporary, “fair weather faith,” counterfeit described in Mark 4:16-17,

Others are like seed sown on rocky ground: when they have heard the word, they immediately receive it with joy; ¹⁷but they have no root in themselves. They

endure for a while; but then, when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, they immediately fall away. (Mk. 4:16-17)

Conclusion

The Apostle Paul wrote these opening verses of this epistle (verses 3-8) to the Philippian church because he wanted these Christian people to have confidence and assurance of their interest in Christ and their participation in His salvation. In effect, he wanted them to be able to sing, "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine; Oh what a foretaste of glory divine!"

So that there might be genuine assurance based upon the objective, divine criteria of God's own Word, the Apostle Paul has supplied the grounds or reasons for confidence: Your personal faith in Christ alone for your salvation; Your interest in and involvement in promoting the cause of Christ and His gospel; and Your continued commitment to Christ, even when you encounter hardship, disappointment or persecution for His sake.

May we examine our lives in the light of these three divine criteria for assurance; and in so doing, may we be able to honestly sing from our hearts: "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!"