

## Under Construction — Philippians 1:3–6 Greenwood Christian Church • Bill Peroni

Our text is from Philippians 1, beginning at verse 3, where the Apostle Paul writes these familiar words:

“I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this: that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

If you look in your notes at that passage, in both verses 3 and 6 there appears the main character in this story. Do you see where Paul says, “I thank my God...” He says, “being confident of this, that...” — that He — and who is He? At the end of verse 6: Christ Jesus.

I’m going to call Him the Protagonist, our main character. It’s a story about Christ—what He’s done and what He will do.

I was once part of a local church ministry that built a new building—turned out to be a \$20M relocation project, in a couple of phases. But without a doubt, the coolest thing about the experience was the “BOGO” mentality with this relocation project. You know what “BOGO” means, right? “Buy One, Get One.” But our take on it was “Build One, Give One!” We raised the money to build what we needed, and gave 10% to a partner church in the city of Kharkov, Ukraine, to build what they needed.

This is one of my most prized possessions. It’s an actual brick from the construction of that building in Kharkov, Ukraine, signed by some of the leaders in that fledgling congregation.

When we first arrived in Kiev and took a 12-hour train ride over the countryside all the way to Kharkov, one thing stuck out right away. Across the skyline—in city after city—everywhere you looked, you’d see construction cranes everywhere. They weren’t moving. They were just sitting there, all day, every day. Idle. Frozen mid-swing over buildings that would never be finished. We watched over the course of years—projects that were never finished. Just standing there, left in the wake of financial collapse, the result of the fall of the Soviet Union, and Ukraine being left to fend for themselves economically.

When hyperinflation peaked at over 10,000% year-over-year—in a very short amount of time—the amount of money friends had saved to buy a car

devalued into just enough money to buy a bus ticket to ride the bus across town. The value of their money just evaporated. Unfinished houses and apartment buildings, hotels, and office towers—like so many empty promises of what might have been. And the thing is—that was 30 years ago—and some of those same construction cranes still stand idle over those same unfinished projects, in some of those same places across Ukraine.

I remember, with feet on the ground for the first time in this place I'd never been before, thinking: isn't this how many of us feel sometimes about our own selves? We started with all this excitement! But somewhere along the way, something happened—disappointment, sin, heartache, failure. Something happened—and suddenly you were the unfinished project. Anybody ever been there?

Well, if you have, I've got good news today. And I bring a message of hope. The God who started whatever He's doing isn't done yet. The cranes may appear to be frozen in time—the jobsite may look to be abandoned—but God is still building. And He always finishes what He starts. That's right out of His Word.

That's the promise of the Protagonist. Let's read this all together, out loud, in full voice: Philippians 1:6, from the NIV: "Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

Do you remember the story of how the Philippian church first got started? In Acts 16, Paul meets a businesswoman by the name of Lydia. She opens her home, and the first known European church plant is started. A few verses later, a Philippian jailer and his whole family come on board. Fast-forward about 10 years, and a tiny little house church has helped bankroll Paul's missionary journeys, all the while facing persecution and extreme poverty themselves. No wonder Paul says, "I thank my God every time I remember you."

And do you remember where Paul was when he wrote those words? He wasn't sitting in Starbucks with a cotton candy frappuccino. Paul wrote these words while he was in prison—while he was in chains. And yet, what did Paul say? Verse 6: "Being confident of this..." He was confident. Paul was confident God finishes what He starts. And don't miss this—he wasn't just writing to an individual. He was writing to an entire church family. This promise wasn't just for one person having a bad day—it was for a whole group of

believers in Philippi. Which means it's also for you. And it's also for me. It's for us.

That's the promise: He, the Protagonist, is not done. Not done with your life. Not done with your faith. Not with me or mine, either.

I want you to listen carefully, because somebody needs to hear this. If not you, it's somebody you know. Truth is, we all need to hear this, each in our own ways. No matter what you've done, you're not done. And more importantly, God's not done with you. I don't know—or even care—how low you've sunk, or how fast you're sliding to the bottom of the barrel. You may think you've sunk too low, fallen too far, strayed too much, broken too many promises to others, to yourself, or to God.

If you believe that, look at me, listen to me. If Jesus was standing in front of you right now—in flesh and blood—He'd take you gently by the shoulders, look you in the eye, and say in no uncertain terms: "That is a lie!" How do I know it's a lie? Because of what God has said—through the words of Paul: "He," meaning God, began a good work, and "He," meaning God, will carry it on to completion. That's a promise.

But there is a process. And let's be honest: the process doesn't always look like progress. Ever felt like you were taking three steps forward but two steps back? Like you were waiting on God for something—but all you hear is crickets? Am I the only one? Waiting on God can sometimes feel like nothing is happening at all.

Who here has an Instant Pot in your kitchen? When the Instant Pot came out, I bought one—and like any self-respecting guy, I wasn't about to read that 72-page manual that comes with it. I figured, "How hard could it be?" Tossed in the ingredients, sealed the lid, pushed the button—and... nothing! No lights. No sound. No steam. Nothing. But the woman at the store had warned me with the voice of someone who clearly had blown up dinner before—at least once: "Whatever you do—trust the pot. It will look like nothing is happening, but something is."

So, I waited. And waited. And waited. And just when I was ready to give up on it and pop the lid—lights started flashing, steam started hissing, beepers started beeping—and inside was the best beef stew I had ever had in my life! And she was right—all that good stuff was happening unseen, unheard, unnoticed. The Instant Pot delivered for me that day—but it had to build up pressure first.

And maybe—just maybe—God’s doing the same thing in you. You don’t hear it. You don’t see it. You don’t even feel it (at least not in a good way). But something’s happening. Unseen. Unheard. Unnoticed. In secret. There’s a process in the progress—and it’s time now to trust that He who began a good work will carry it on to completion.

There’s an old saying that’s carried me through some dark days and nights. It simply says: “If it’s not good yet, God’s not done yet.” And I believe that—not just because it sounds poetic and nice, but because I’ve lived it. I’ve seen the ashes. I’ve sat in the silence. I have those moments when all I want to do is quit. But God rebuilds what seems to be beyond repair. Unseen. Unheard. Unnoticed. In secret. And here’s why: because the work belongs to Him. He started it. He sustains it. And He will complete it.

“If it’s not good yet, God’s not done yet.” Do you believe that? Let’s say it together. I’ll say the first part, you say the second: “If it’s not good yet...” You might not see it—but He said it—and you can trust what He says.

Hebrews 10:23 says, “He who promised is faithful.” Ecclesiastes 3:11 says, “He makes all things beautiful in His time.” His time isn’t always our time—in fact, most of the time it’s not—but that’s His promise.

The Protagonist. The Promise. The Process. Let me say something personal—and you will maybe see why this resonates with me so deeply. Because I’ve lived this. There was a season in my life when I had to walk through a fire I never saw coming. I’d been in local church ministry for years. I loved the church. I loved working in the church. I was doing my best to lead people well. It seemed like good things were happening. But then everything fell apart. Life, as I knew it, completely unraveled. I truly felt like my life was over. I thought, “Well, that’s it. There is no coming back from this.”

But here’s the thing about God—He doesn’t toss us aside when we’re broken. He specializes in redemption. And my message for you today is this: if you’re still breathing, friend, God’s still working. I’m living proof of that.

In the original language—when Paul talks about “carrying” this work “on to completion,” it’s a colorful use of language we sometimes miss in English. The future tense of the verb he uses, *epiteléō*, pictures a master builder laying the capstone, walking the punch list to make sure every socket cover is on, every piece of trim perfectly fitted into place. It’s a construction metaphor.

Jennifer and I recently moved to Grain Valley—into a place newly built. No one had lived in it before. And I’m just saying—the builder might have had something to learn about “epiteléō”! It was 93° the day we moved in (and felt like a hundred), and the A/C didn’t blow cold air. The “hot water” was not really hot water. There was a hole in the main bathroom tub, and I’m not talking about the drain. Some punch-list things “epiteléō” might have addressed before we moved in—I’m just saying.

But the word Paul uses here is not for a quick cosmetic makeover, but for a master builder—God—who oversees every minor detail, carrying it through, stage by stage, until the Day of Christ, when He signs off as totally and finally complete. Paul often pairs the word for “begin” with this word for “complete”—here in Philippians 1; again in Galatians 3:3; and again in 2 Corinthians 8:6. So the master builder picture is right on beam: the One who broke ground on the project is the same Master Builder who brings it through every stage in between, all the way up to the final punch-list sign-off—being perfectly complete.

God has His way of doing His best work through the most unlikely of things—which has been His strategy from the very beginning. I’m going to call it God’s program. God has always used the small, the forgotten, the overlooked. That’s how Gideon’s 300 could take down a massive army. That’s how a young shepherd boy could bring down a giant. That’s how a mustard seed could picture what the Kingdom of God looks like. That’s how one little kid’s lunch could feed thousands of people. That’s how twelve ordinary men could change the world. So don’t ever doubt who He can use—and how. He can use you.

After the Babylonian exile, the Jewish temple had been destroyed, and the rebuilding was slow to progress. The people were losing heart. But God said through the prophet Zechariah (4:6), “It’s not by might; not by power (not by human hustle), but by my Spirit,” and in 4:10, “Do not despise these small beginnings—for the Lord rejoices to see the work begin.” It says, “the Lord rejoices.”

Did you ever stop to think about how to make God happy?

Let’s never underestimate what God can do when the little we have is placed into His big hands. Don’t ever assume your prayers don’t matter. Or ever assume your presence doesn’t count. The world may not see it or ever celebrate it—but heaven does.

When I spent time with the church in Kharkov, it was great for me to see so much about life through a totally different lens. Their simplicity was inspiring to me. Some things were just different. I'll never forget the first time I took communion with my brothers and sisters over there—I was a little taken aback the first time. They had one loaf and one cup; they passed it around, and everybody drank from that one cup. I thought, “This is great! We’ve got one Lord, one faith, one baptism—and now we’ve got one viral infection for all!” After that, I sat in the first seat in the front!

I started out today talking about bricks and buildings—which is actually a powerful biblical metaphor to talk about us, not just as individuals but as a community of believers. In 1 Peter 2, we’re called “living stones,” being built together into a spiritual house. That’s an incredible visual image. It speaks to the fact God isn’t just saving us from something; He’s building us into something—something sacred, something eternal.

1 Peter 2:4–7, 9–10:

“As you come to Him—the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to Him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in Scripture it says: ‘See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame.’ Now to you who believe, this Stone is precious... But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have.”

We’re “living stones,” Peter says. I like, in verse 9, where he says we are God’s special possession. We are God’s prized possession—His pride and joy—like this brick is one of mine. Every time I look at it, it says, “God finishes what He starts.”

The only thing He asks is that we put our whole selves in. It’s kind of the spiritual Hokey Pokey, this life we live. You know the song, right? “You put your right foot in; you take your right foot out; you put your right foot in, and you shake it all about.” And at the end of it—if you’re a Hokey Pokey person—you might remember: “You put your whole self in.” And that’s what it’s all about. That’s what God is looking for in us.

Second Chronicles 16:9 says, “The eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him.” He is

looking for people who put their whole selves in. Sometimes we think about people looking for God. This verse is about God looking for people.

We stepped off that plane in Kiev into a skyline of abandoned projects—seemingly frozen in time. Buildings forever stuck between what could have been and what never was. But not this brick. This brick is from a stack that stood in that community as a silent witness that “He who began a good work will be faithful to complete it.”

Maybe today that’s what some of us need to be reminded of: we are not an abandoned project. God has not walked off the jobsite. He will never call it quits on you. Even if it feels slow. Even if, at times, all you hear is silence. Even if all you see sometimes are setbacks and scaffolding and signs that say “Under Construction.” Even if all that—He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it.

And this—what I hold in my hand right here—it's my silent reminder: He’s still working here.