

THE CHURCH'S HEART

By Rev. Will Nelken

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Philippians 1

⁶ *And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.*

This wonderful promise is based on a knowable, but invisible fact: God has begun a good work in you. Before He began it, it did not exist. It is *His* work, within you.

Furthermore, this good work is rooted in God's own intention to bring His work to completion. God does not start and stop. When He began to create the heavens and the earth, He did not stop until it was done. Then, He rested. Therefore, you may depend upon Him to continue this good work within you until it has been completed, whatever it takes. He will not take a day off. He will not take a vacation. He will finish the work.

Some of you may be unaware of His work. Nevertheless, He *is* at work. You are not here today by accident. God wants to awaken and inspire your confidence in what He is up to in your life, so that you might partner with Him in the work.

Some of you may be unaware of His progress. You may have invited Him to have His way in your life, but you seldom think of it as you go about your day-to-day affairs. God wants to reignite your confidence and hope today and cause your joy to overflow.

Let's get a picture, from Paul, of the work that God is doing.

Philippians 2

¹ *Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate?* ² *Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.*

Agreeing, loving, and working together — this is the picture of the church in action, fully following Jesus Christ.

Is this what we look like? Is this what people see when they visit our meetings? When people speak about Trinity Community Church, is this what they mention?

What is it that gets in the way of our living this way? Just one thing: selfishness.

Philippians 2

³ *Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.* ⁴ *Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.*

When we focus on the impression we will give other people, we are focused on ourselves — we care most about ourselves and how we appear. Do I look the part? Am I using the right words? Do I sound intelligent? Informed? Will I make a good impression?

Instead, we should focus on the needs and interests of others and how we might serve them. Why? Because that is what Jesus did.

Philippians 2

⁵ *You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.*
⁶ *Though he was God,
he did not think of equality with God
as something to cling to.*
⁷ *Instead, he gave up his divine privileges;
he took the humble position of a slave
and was born as a human being.*
When he appeared in human form,
⁸ *he humbled himself in obedience to God
and died a criminal's death on a cross.*
⁹ *Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor
and gave him the name above all other names,*
¹⁰ *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,*
¹¹ *and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.*

It's a matter of attitude. Jesus was not self-protective of His role or appearance. He did not try to meet other people's expectations of a son of God. Instead, He simply served the Father as He served their needs.

The extraordinary result was that even though some people dishonored Him, the Father honored Him highly. If you seek the honor of men, you forsake the honor of God. Which do you want more?

And, trying to please people, who are naturally fickle, is an elusive goal. Are you ever sure you have what it takes? The demands can be groundless and endless.

Philippians 3

² *Watch out for those dogs, those people who do evil, those mutilators who say you must be circumcised to be saved.* ³ *For we who worship by the Spirit of God are the ones who are truly circumcised. We rely on what Christ Jesus has done for us. We put no confidence in human effort,* ⁴ *though I could have confidence in my own effort if anyone could. Indeed, if others have reason for confidence in their own efforts, I have even more!*

⁵ *I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin—a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law.* ⁶ *I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church. And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault.*

⁷ *I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done.* ⁸ *Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ* ⁹ *and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith.* ¹⁰ *I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death,* ¹¹ *so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead!*

The keys of this passage are these: *“We rely on what Christ Jesus has done for us. We put no confidence in human effort.”* And, *“I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done.”*

Notice, the entire focus is on *“what Christ has done.”* What did Jesus do?

First, He was motivated by a servant-attitude, which Paul described. Then, He displayed corresponding servant-actions — those actions which demonstrated His attitude and accomplished God’s purpose. As He prayed before His arrest, *“Not what I want, but what You want be done.”* This was the focus of Paul’s reliance.

Jesus didn’t just subscribe intellectually to the Father’s will; He actually *did* what the Father wanted Him to do. He placed Himself in the hands of men who did not understand who He was or what He had come to do. He let them falsely accuse Him and mistreat Him, even though it cost Him His life, for He was confident that God had the power, if necessary, to raise Him from the dead. And that’s exactly what God did! Paul was determined to trust God in the same manner.

Paul refused to put his confidence any longer in his own efforts to be good. That is to say that he continually did what he thought was the right thing to do, but he no longer trusted that doing the right thing would necessarily yield good results. Paul did not believe in *karma*.

The Sanskrit word, *karma*, means action, but it refers to the Buddhist or Hindu theories of moral causation, that is, your moral actions (including their motivating thoughts) always produce the result that you justly deserve. The inequalities of life are attributed to past deeds, either in this life or a previous life.

Some have likened this theory to what has been called “the Golden Rule,” which Jesus expressed in Matthew 7:12: *“Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you.”* But Jesus did not suggest that others would necessarily return the favor; He only suggested that you use the treatment you would desire as your guide. In other words, *“Love your neighbor as you would like to be loved.”*

Paul ascribed to Jesus’ rule. He did what was right because it was right, and He left the outcome in God’s hands. He had spent a lifetime trying to impress people with his religiousness, his uprightness, his heritage, his zeal — until he realized it did not impress God at all.

The only thing God wanted from Paul was that he believe the Good News and put his trust in what Jesus had done for him.

The only thing God wants from *you* is that you believe the Good News and put your trust in what Jesus has done for you. Quit trying to impress others and prove yourself to them. Be carefully “careless” about their impressions. And, quit trying to prove your goodness to God. Instead, put your trust in Jesus as your Substitute — the One who was good in your place, the One who paid your sin-debt for you, the One who arose to give you power and life everlasting.

You cannot at the same time trust in Jesus *and* depend upon your own goodness (or promised goodness). So, instead, make up your mind to *“become righteous through faith in Christ. For God’s way of making us right with Himself depends on faith.”*

If you believe in God, trust also in Jesus, for God has made Him alone both Savior and Lord.

“Trusting faithfulness” is all that counts, for time and eternity. It is the attitude *plus* the corresponding actions. Carefully discard all the rest. Do not depend on people’s praise or blame. Simply trust and be faithful to Jesus Christ.

Are you challenged by contrary or difficult circumstances? Have you been misjudged? Have you been wounded by someone you had trusted? Have you experienced a loss? A setback? A reverse?

Don’t waste time blaming others for your misery. Even if they were responsible, “*your help come from the Lord.*” It’s time to forgive and reset your focus on the Lord where it belongs. Stop arguing about your goodness and how you deserved better. Put your trust in what Jesus has done, not what you have done.

And if you messed up, don’t beat yourself up about it. If you misspoke or acted out, admit it and ask God to forgive you. If you mistreated someone, offer to make amends. Then, trust in Jesus to cover your fault and follow Him faithfully.

Whether you think highly or lowly of yourself, self-centeredness cannot lead you where God wants you to go. Jesus-centeredness is what you need. He will make the needed changes in your life. Let *Him* do the work.

Philippians 3

¹² *I don’t mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me.* ¹³ *No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead,* ¹⁴ *I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.*

Jesus chose you to make you whole. He didn’t choose you because you were such a fine specimen of human morality, so quit telling yourself that nonsense. He chose you as you were — however flawed or broken down — in order to demonstrate what *He* can do, to reveal the glory of God in the redemption and restoration of your life.

You have not fallen so far that He cannot lift you up. You are not so broken that He cannot repair you. You have not disrespected Him so much that He cannot forgive you. You have not disqualified yourself to the point that He cannot re-qualify you and use you.

Trust in what Christ Jesus has done. Depend on His heart. Depend on His cross. Depend on His resurrection. Depend on His power and His presence. Do it today. Do it right now. Let go of everything else you have depended on and put your trust fully in Him. He will not let you down.

He is the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of the Living God. And He wants to be your Savior and Friend.

The Church’s heart is to be the Savior’s heart — Christ, by measure, reproduced and represented among us. And for this to be so, each one of us must dispense with other things, and own Him, trust Him, and follow Him. Be the Church that reveals His heart.