

THE GOOD WORK OF SALVATION

Sermon preached at Union Chapel, Bethersden, on the 4th December, 1960, by the late Pastor, Mr. Herbert Dawson.
(Afternoon sermon, following one on the same text in the morning.)

TEXT: 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. (Philippians 1 :6)

I would like to feel that many of you have the mercy to have this good work begun in you. How great a mercy it is no tongue can tell or mind conceive, but if this good work is begun in you you will not be able to take it for granted that it is, you will need to be assured from God that the good work is indeed begun. You will be exercised unto Godliness that the good work, being begun, shall be carried on and that the evidence of it may be seen in your lips and lives:

“Let our lives and acts express
The holy Gospel we profess”.

The Word of God says: “The root downwards, and the fruit upward”, and so if this good work is begun in you, then others will discern it, see the evidence of it: “And they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus”. I showed you in the morning sermon just a little about this good work, as to the beginning of it, some evidences whereby you might be assured that it is begun, and I want to show you some further evidences, as grace is given, that you may be able to weigh matters up between your conscience and God as to whether this good work is indeed begun in you, and remember it is a matter of unspeakable importance to have this good work begun in our breasts, a work of God, what an amazing consideration it is. Oh, to think that God, Who in the beginning created the heavens and the earth, should work in a sinner's breast and do this good work which the text refers to and fit that sinner for the skies, and make such an one to be: “Meet for the inheritance of the saints in light”. It might be well in approaching the subject again to say just a word or two about the great difference there is between that work which God wrought as the Creator, when “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”, and this good work which He creates in a sinner's breast. Now if I can make it plain, if right words can be found to put it together, it was Almighty God Who is the Maker of the heavens and the earth, but when you think of Him Who is the Creator of the good work in the sinner's breast, when it is begun, you must think of Almighty God, not as the Creator alone, but you must seek grace to think on Almighty God like this:

“Almighty God sighed human breath,
The Lord of life experienced death;
How it was done, we can't discuss,
But this we hope, 'twas done for us”.

Ere this good work could be begun in any sinner's breast God had to do that which He alone could do, and it is beyond words to describe

the doing of it: “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life”. Now that is the work which God the Father was pleased to do, and while it was an easy matter for Almighty God to create the heavens and the earth, God the Father opened out the love of His heart in an infinite fulness when He sent down into this sin-cursed earth, His dear, His only begotten Son, the eternal Son of God in His divine nature, and He sent Him down into the world to save sinners, and every sinner on whose behalf He came will have this good work begun within, and it will be carried on, and completed, and that sinner will be found at length around the throne of God in glory, a sinner saved by grace. Remember that. It is said of Jesus Christ: “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied”. Let us go on to consider this good work, and you weigh matters up before God with Whom you have to do as to whether you have got some evidence well grounded “that He hath begun a good work in you”, and you will remember that I said a little that when this good work was begun in a sinner's breast there was a beginning in that sinner's life to reality; what I mean is that things in that sinner's life become real, time becomes real, and eternity too; sin becomes real and it is to be gauged not by its extent, but by its intent, the motive governs it: “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he”; life becomes real, and you realise when this good work is begun:

“Only this frail and fleeting breath
Preserves me from the jaws of death;
Soon as it fails, at once I'm gone,
And plunged into a world unknown”.

and you begin to journey on through life like Moses, the man of God, describes: “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom”. Yes, life becomes real, death becomes real, and you know not any day that dawns whether that day is your dying day, and it will be well if you can live your life in the light of that truth. It is not a gloomy theme, although you may think it is. It is a safe life to live:

“Teach me to live that I may dread
The grave as little as my bed”.

Yes, when this good work is begun it makes things to be real, and it makes religion to be real. You are made aware there is religion that is just outside show, it is no more than veneer, it will not do either to live by or die by, it is just “religiosity”; but you want religion that God is the Author of, as fire ascending seeks the sun, so when this good work is begun there is a going up from that sinner's breast to Him Who is the Author of that good work, that he will carry it on as He alone can do, and how you will be taught this truth:

“Myself I cannot save, myself I cannot keep,
But strength in Thee I fain would have,
Whose eyelids never sleep”.

"Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it." I said, accompanying this good work there would be repentance unto life. Not only so, the word in Zechariah is fulfilled: "I will pour upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication", where this good work is begun, it is said: "Behold he prayeth". Do you?

Then there will be this word entered into: "Which shall know every man the plague of his own heart", because with this good work begun, as it is carried on it brings an increasing conviction of sin into a sinner's conscience, so that as he journeys on through life, although as you look on the life that sinner lives it is consistent, upright, what it should be; but that sinner feels more and more as he appears before God: "Unclean, unclean", "Behold, I am vile", and that is the root going downwards, yes, and very desirable: "That the soul be without such knowledge is not good", "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick", and then where this good work is begun it brings with it living faith, and makes the sinner possessing it a believer. He is not always filled with joy and peace in believing, but from the time he is born again he is a believer, and he is "asking the way to Zion with his face thitherward", and he has this feeling in a right mind: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple". Let us go on from that viewpoint: "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it". There will be arising from this good work what we call a good hope through grace. Hope is a sweet, blessed principle, that lives and moves in a sinner's breast, there is something in hope, good hope through grace, that is inspiring in its nature. What I mean is this:

"All through the wilderness below,
Good hope expects more good to know,
And thus is kept alive
The soul . . ."

Go back as you can to when hope dawned in your breast, hope in God; what have you been doing from that day to this? You have been hoping in God as grace has been afforded to do it, but sometimes it has been to hope against hope, and your hope has been brought very low and you have felt at times:

"Zeal extinguished to a spark,
Life is very low;
All my evidence is dark
And good works I've none to show",

but the good work has been evidenced even then, because you have been made to feel: "Though I am cast out of Thy sight, I will look again toward Thy holy temple", "Who can tell, but that God will be gracious to me", and there is hope doing its proper work within, hoping in God, and remember what we used to sing:

"Every saint is saved by hoping
In the great Redeemer's blood,
Round His footstool view them stooping,
Humbly to adore their God".

That is the evidence of the good work being begun. Then there is that outstanding evidence of love. Maybe it could be said that this is the chief evidence of the good work being begun: "He that loveth is born of God", "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren". But it is not enough to quote the Scriptures, it is what is known and felt within, and it cannot be known and felt as you are by nature; as you were born you cannot love the truth although you listen to it, and some of you, it may be, do listen to it and you just hate it. I am not making any reflections on any of you, or fitting any caps on; I am just telling you what I know in the truth of the matter. I aim to have a good conscience before God in how I try to preach, as I am in the latter days of my ministry, coming to the end of it, and it is the truth of the matter that as you are born: "When we shall see Him, there is no beauty in Him that we should desire Him". It is a terrifying thought to those of us who preach, especially a Pastor, that you can listen long to the truth and not love it. But when this good work is begun within, what then? "Ye did receive the love of the truth." Have you received it? Do you listen to the truth that is proclaimed in your hearing all the year round if so be you can feed thereon and grow:

"Go on to seek to know the Lord,
And practise what you know"?

Great evidence, love to the truth, and Him Whose truth it is. A wonderful mercy to love the truth: "Blessed are your ears, for they hear", "Blessed is the people who know the joyful sound, they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance". That love of the truth brings with it love to the house of prayer, and you go with willing feet:

"We love the place, O God,
Wherein Thine honour dwells,
The joy of Thine abode,
All earthly joy excels";

"I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness". Much might be said along that line of thought, concerning love. Godly John says much about it: "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and he that loveth knoweth God", and love is the evidence of being born again, remember that, love of the truth, which means that you love those who do love it, and your concern is:

"With them numbered I would be,
Now, and in eternity".

That will be what you will aim at:

"Let me among Thy saints be found",

and as you hope this good work is indeed begun in you, you will have your eyes opened to see some evidence of it being begun in those round about you, and when you discern those signs which assure you that the good work is begun in this one and that one, you will be like Barnabas, who: "When he came to Antioch, and saw the grace of God, he was glad".

One more thought about this good work: there will always be, accompanying it, Godly fear: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom", and when this good work is begun in a sinner's breast it creates in his conscience a solemn awareness: "Thou God seest me", and he wants to live his life in the light of that truth; oh, if people could do it more than they do, what an alteration there would be in the Church of Christ professing, and amongst us all as a people: "Thou God seest me", "And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord". Now this good work, where'er it is begun, will have Godly fear as:

"An unctuous light to what is right.
A bar to what is wrong".

It can be summed up like this, as to these evidences of the good work being begun: "Unto you therefore which believe, He is precious". There is a word, if you have this good work wrought in you, that you will have to weigh up before God and seek divine aid that you may come inside it: "Be ye conformed to the image of His Son", which means that in this good work being begun and carried on there must be, do listen, dear friends, I say there *must* be in our lips and lives a reflection of the image of Christ: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His". You know that when the goldsmith holding the crucible has to keep it heated until he can look on the molten metal and see his own countenance reflected therein as in a mirror, and when he can do that, then he knows that the metal is ready for him to do what is in his mind to do with it; so you and I, if this good work is begun in us, must be brought to that line of things in our souls' experience:

"As the image in the glass,
Answers the beholder's face;
Thus unto my heart appear
Print Thy own resemblance there",

"And they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus", it was reflected in their lips and in their lives, and that is the evidence; "He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it".

Let us look at the subject from yet another viewpoint: "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it", the margin is "finish it", but this word "perform" is very suggestive. The Psalmist says: "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me", and he has a petition: "I will cry unto God most high, unto God which performeth all things for me", mark that wording "Unto God which performeth *all* things for me". The Psalmist realised

his inability to do good, and he could not on his own initiative, in his own strength, do anything at all in carrying on the good work which God had begun; God alone could carry it on and complete it. Now that is a very salutary lesson to lay to heart: "Without Me ye can do nothing", "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me". This good work, when it is begun, will have God to carry it on in accordance with His own will, His purposes for that sinner in whom it is begun, and it will be carried on in accordance with the Word of His grace. All that God does in dealing with His people is in accordance with the Word of His grace. Such is the pattern, and so the good work is carried on, and there will be one word you will learn the meaning of, among many more, but this word will stand out: "We must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God", and it will be as you enter into that "much tribulation", whatever the nature of it, that will make manifest the good work in you, and that God is carrying it on:

"Trials make the promise sweet,
Trials give new life to prayer,
Trials bring us to Christ's feet,
Lay us low, and keep us there",

and from the time that this good work is begun in you, being God's work wrought in you, you will find opposition from earth and hell without, and from what you are by nature within. So the life of the righteous is ever a conflict, a struggle; you will remember that the Apostle Paul encouraged Timothy: "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold upon eternal life". There will be opposition; sometimes there will be "heaviness through manifold temptations", oh, Satan will seek to undermine or to obscure every evidence you may possess that this good work is indeed begun. He may call into question what you humbly hope God has been pleased to do, all to rob you and spoil you, and to bring you into a cast down state. Sometimes the world will oppose you, "Everyone that will live Godly shall suffer persecution". You might think on that word, you will need it in the more or less immediate future in the world at large, especially those of you that have to go out into it to earn the bread which perisheth: "Every one that will live Godly *shall* suffer persecution", that is: "Marvel not if the world hate you, but know this, it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own". You remember it said in the Book of the Revelation that a man is not going to be allowed later on, the time is very near, it is almost upon us, "to buy or sell unless he has the mark of the beast", and that means if you and I have this great mercy to have this good work begun within, that we shall have to evidence separation from the world more than ever before. It will then be seen: "Know that the Lord has set apart him that is godly for Himself", and you will need Divine aid to endure whatever test or strain is set upon you, especially if your name is on a Church Roll. You will know then "He which hath begun a good work in you", He alone can carry it on, and help you to endure to the end of it: "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved". You must expect it, dear friends, it will come—"Much

tribulation". There may be adverse circumstances, in all that you see happening round about you, in England, the vagaries of the weather, the inclemency of it, the floods, and all these things, are but the judgments of God abroad in all the earth, and when they are, those who have the good work begun within are expected to show becoming behaviour, not as the man in the street who reviles the weather and God Whose weather it is. Strictly speaking, whatever time of day it is you could say, in fact you ought to say, Good morning, Good afternoon, Good evening, because it is to do with God that the weather is like it is, it is not by chance or haphazard; men in weather reports tell us how it comes to be it is like it is, but the truth of the matter is: "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord", and where this good work is begun in a sinner's breast, he will "humble himself under the mighty hand of God", and however bad the weather is he knows, being the sinner that he is, it would be a great deal worse if he had the weather he deserves. Remember that. Therefore every day it will be a good day, and whatever the night is like it will be a good night, if you and I have the good work begun within, because we know that: "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose". Remember that! You and I have to learn this line of things:

"When all created streams are dried,
Thy fulness is the same;
With this I would be satisfied,
I'll glory in Thy Name".

The Apostle Paul said to the Godly Philippians: "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice", yes:

"Should poverty or loss
Of all created good,
Conspire to make our weighty cross,
Our helper still is God".

Yes, "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it", it will be in the midst of much tribulation, it may be amidst manifold temptations, it may be adversity will befall you, you must expect setbacks, and you will get opposition from earth and hell without, and what you are by nature within, and it may be to evidence the good work God will lay affliction upon you: "He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men", but it is to evidence this good work. Think of dear Job: "He knoweth the way that I take, when He hath tried me I shall come forth as gold", and that gold really means I shall have evidence upon evidence that the good work is begun and is being carried on. What did Job say when he came forth as gold? "Behold I am vile", and what did Job do when he came forth as gold? "The Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends", when he reflected the image of Jesus Christ Who on Calvary's cross said: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do". Much might be said under that heading. "He which hath

begun a good work in you will perform it." It will be carried on in accordance with what is laid down in the Word of God. That, and that alone, is the pattern, and as a rule you will learn and gain evidence that it is being carried on in the means of grace. Sometimes when you sing the songs of Zion you will find that the hymnwriter felt just like you do; the things that he asked for, you ask for; what he felt, strange as the feelings are, you feel too; and that will be a help to you: "As in water face answereth unto face, so does the heart of man to man". Sometimes when you look into the Word of God you will see your own soul's experience outlined in detail as some other person has travelled along that road long before you, and you will find that you are: "Followers of them who, through faith and patience, have inherited the promises", and oh, you will say, and sweet it is to say it: "I rejoice in Thy word as one that findeth great spoil". "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, a light unto my path", but most of all, I was going to say, and I have said it, most of all you will find if you get evidence about this good work being in you, and being carried on as you hear the Gospel preached and hear it in the power of it when you can say: "The watchmen that go about the city, they found me":

"The Gospel bears my spirits up",

and as you feel it bearing your spirits up you have sweet confidence that the good work is begun within and is being carried on. So along life's way you get waymarks set up, high heaps you have raised, tokens for good to treasure up, sweet answers to prayer, and:

"When trouble, like a gloomy cloud,
Has gathered thick and thundered loud"

you can tell of deliverances, you can declare: "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knoweth them that trust in Him", and so you are assured: "He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it", and says the dear Apostle Paul to these Godly Philippians: "Until the day of Jesus Christ". Now there are three days that are days of Jesus Christ: one day is when the Sun of righteousness arises with healing in His wings, and chases every *if* and *but* and *how*, every doubt, every questioning from your heart, your conscience, and in heaven's own light enables you to feel it is well between your soul and God; when you see Jesus and can say:

"Oh, my Jesus, Thou art mine
With all Thy grace and power,
I am now and shall be Thine,
When time shall be no more",

oh, that is a day of Jesus Christ, dear friends. It comes to these people in the text: "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ". You say: "I wish that day would dawn in my life". You must be like the Psalmist: "I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope—more than they that watch for the morning", he said, and God help you to do it too, and you shall find that word a blessed reality: "Unto you that hear My Name shall

the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings", "The vision is for an appointed time, though it tarry, wait for it; in the end it shall speak and not lie, it will surely come, it will not tarry". But that day of Jesus Christ may not come to some with the good work begun within until the day of death, but it will come then, none will ever miss it, the text tells us the truth: "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun the good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ", and if not till then, when you come there, poor sinner you will get the top stone put on, the good work begun and carried on will at length be completed, and you shall find the bottom to be good in Jordan's swelling, and you shall realise that God, having given you grace to live, has now granted unto you grace to die, yes, "the day of Jesus Christ". Then there is a day of Jesus Christ that has not yet dawned, but it will inevitably dawn, strange to say, when time shall be no more. You will remember that the Saviour said, in John's Gospel, about "He that doeth the will of My Father, I will raise him up at the last day". Now that day is "the day of Jesus Christ", when the dead in Christ shall rise first, when all the redeemed dust all over this world, and that means hundreds of millions of sinners saved by grace, whose redeemed spirits are in heaven before the Throne of God, all the redeemed dust of those saved sinners will be raised at the last day, and the redeemed spirits will re-tenant the redeemed body, yes, "The dead in Christ shall rise first", and that will be "the day of Jesus Christ", and all that vast host making up the elect of God, every sinner in whom the good work has been begun, carried on and completed, will be there, and the Saviour will appear before His Father, and say: "Behold I, and the children whom Thou hast given Me". Oh, will you be there? Shall I? Let that be our chief concern as we live out our lives, to be numbered with them, living and dying, and to know this good work is indeed begun, to watch unto prayer, that He Who has begun it will carry it on and complete it:

"This prayer and this ambition mine,
Living and dying to be Thine".

Amen.