

SHARING LIFE AT FBC BLACK FOREST ON OCTOBER 1, 2017 BY BOB BENDER
“EXPERIENCING GOD AT WORK” FROM PHILIPPIANS 1:6
PRESSING IN/PRESSING ON PHILIPPIANS SERIES

Our theme this fall as we journey through Philippians and it through us is “pressing in/pressing on.” But before we press in and press on, we are first to allow God to press in/press on to us.

Do you recognize this intersection? (Picture of Woodmen and Union). This of course is the construction project of Woodmen and Union. Help me preach today. What characterizes this project? What are some things you have to deal with or to be mindful of as you travel through it?

- It’s taking a long time to complete.
- You have to slow down going through it taking you longer to get to your destination.
- Be observant and follow the directions for safe navigation.
- It’s inconvenient.
- It’s costly.
- There are detours, but eventually you get back on track.
- It started with a plan for our good and will end that way.
- There is a tearing down or destroying stuff that looked good at first.
- There is the ripple effect as this project impacts other areas of your journey down the road—Academy to Lexington.
- Be careful as you might hurt the very people used in the project.
- I can’t figure it out now; it looks weird, but one day I will see the big picture and it will make sense.
- Somebody is sitting in a big office somewhere overseeing this project. He knows what he is doing as he calls all the shots.

This experience is a parable on life. We will re-engage these specific items again in a moment. But first, you, like this intersection, are under construction (pic). Let’s discuss experiencing God at work (title). Those of us who have been through the “Experiencing God” study learned an important principle: God is at work in my life completing His purpose, which is the theme of our verse of the morning—Philippians 1:6. God is at work in your life completing His purpose.

This word, perfect, or complete, is the Greek word *telos* (occurring 42 times in the Bible), meaning to finish or move toward an end or design. The teleological argument for God’s existence (the argument from design) is based on this word and concept.

For God to complete His purpose in our lives, we must ...

/EXPERIENCE GOD’S WORK

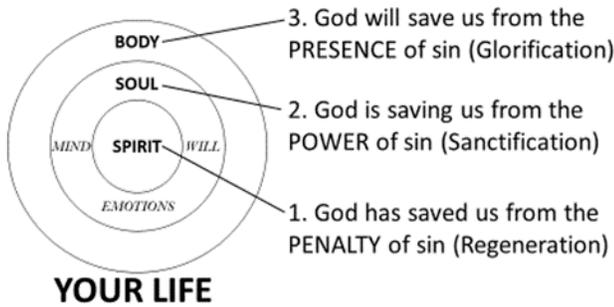
Paul says, “I am confident.” He does not say “I am confident in me, in the church, in you, in my political party, in my position, in my family, or in my disciplines.” Paul says he is confident in God. It is God’s work and it is God Who was at work in their lives. This same God is at work in your life.

Experience God’s work of salvation—God for us. Paul reflects upon those early days in Philippi. He remembers God’s work of salvation in the lives of Lydia and her husband—those first European converts. He remembers the conversion of the Philippian jailor and his family. Paul refers to that work of salvation as a work just begun. This salvation is God for us on the cross where Jesus said, “It is finished”—His work of salvation. Jesus did something for us we could not do for ourselves. However, that does not mean that God is finished with us. No; He has only begun. The Greek verb, “has begun,” here refers to a past deliberate and decisive act that continues into the present.

God’s primary work has been, is now, and will always be, the saving of people from ourselves, this world

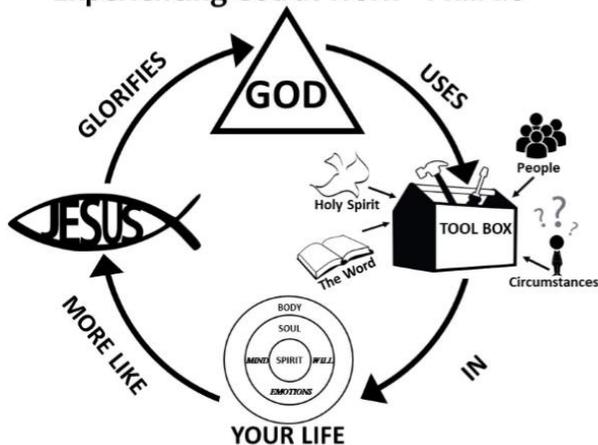
system, and a devil's hell. Evangelist Angel Martinez used to say, "Salvation is like hitting a home run. You still have to run the bases but nobody can put you out!" Have you experienced God's work of salvation through faith in Jesus alone for your salvation? If we were to enter heaven and Jesus were to ask you, "Why should I let you into my heaven?," what would you say? Any answer other than something like, "Lord, nothing in my hand I bring; simply to Your cross I cling" will not do. Let's say Philippians 1:6 together...

Experience God's work of sanctification—God in us. See 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 as to God's work of sanctification (making us like Christ) works (see insert).



"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely. And may your spirit, soul, and body be kept sound and blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it."
 -1 Thes. 5:23-24

Experiencing God at Work -Phil. 1:6



Now let's see how this concept fits into the bigger picture (see Phil. 1:6 insert). When God saved you, He not only began a work of salvation, He began a work of sanctification—God making you like Jesus. This work of Christlikeness is progressive—inch by inch, day by day. God loves you like you are, but He loves us so much that He doesn't want you to stay there.

God is at work making us ready for heaven, so it won't be a culture shock. He is perfecting His work of sanctification. Jeremiah 48 is interesting. Notice God's word to Moab in verse 11. The imagery is wine making. Wine usually grows better with age. However, this was not the case with the Moabites. God says that the Moabites were like old wine that was

full of dregs or impurities. These were referred to as lees. Wine was usually poured from vessel to vessel and strained to take out the particles of grape and to improve its flavor by ventilating it. The Moabites had not been disturbed; they had not changed; they had been at ease. Their flavor remained unchanged (like bad wine that had become insipid) and their scent was unimproved (like wine that lacked freshness). Many a Christian, instead of improving with age, only becomes insipid and unimproved—sit, soak, and sour is their mantra. Notice God's word to you in verse 12. He wants you to have that fresh walk with Him and He will go to any means for you to have it. Allow God to work in you. The result is that you will be ashamed of your pagan god (Chemosh).

What "god" needs to go so you can become flavorful? What does God have His finger on in your life? Is it bitterness or unforgiveness; is it strife or self-will; is it insecurity; is it self-pity; is it an addiction or compulsion like nicotine, drugs, or alcohol; is it sexual impurity or lust; is it fear or self-rejection; is it deceit or lying; is it

pride or self-righteousness; is it criticism or cynicism; is it love of money or materialism; is it a spirit of religion? What is it that is keeping your life from being like Jesus? Every one of us in this room is dealing with something. Experience His work of sanctification by yielding to Him as the clay in the Potter's hands.

Here is a plea from me to you—PBPGINFWMY! Bill Gothard says this stands for, Please Be Patient, God Is Not Finished With Me Yet! Thanks for your patience with me. Now this does not give us carte blanche to not progress; it just reminds all of us what God is doing in our lives. I am not what I ought to be, but thank God, I am not what I used to be because I am not what I am going to be! With this aspect of God's work in mind, let's say Philippians 1:6 together...

Experience God's work of service—God through us. Remember our word from last week—fellowship, or *koinonia*? Here, Paul is reflecting on their partnership in the gospel (v. 5) and their being partakers of grace (v. 7). He is talking about their serving the Lord together in ministry.

The Philippians had served Paul in their giving to his work. He thanks them for their support and expresses confidence for their future involvement. Slaves serve; that's what they do. Are you experiencing God's work of serving? He further explains this aspect in Philippians 2:12-13. Do you need a spiritual workout? Don't be a fat, flabby Christian. Some of us need to get in the game of serving the Lord and quit being an arm-chair quarterback criticizing the way someone else is doing a pretty good job. D. L. Moody was once criticized by a woman for the way he witnessed. He replied, "I like the way I witness better than the way you don't!"

As you discovered or rediscovered your spiritual gift in Life Group recently, what are you **DOING** about it? Allow God to work through you as you experience Him in service. With this aspect of God's work in mind, let's say Philippians 1:6 together... So, we are not only to experience God's work of salvation for us, sanctification in us and service through us, we are to...

//EXPERIENCE GOD'S GOOD WORK

God is doing a good work in your life. He is doing it for your good (Rom. 8:28-29). He is doing it for His glory (Phil. 2:13). I do not pretend to know what is going on in your life, but I do know that it is a good work. How do I know that? Because God is a good, good Father. God began a good work and He will complete it. We fail, falter, and are faithless, but God never fails. Jesus is the author **and the finisher** (telos) of our faith!

Fourteen chapters of Genesis are given to the story of Joseph. If anyone in Scripture had the right to gripe at God, it was Joseph. He was unjustly treated by his brothers and sold into slavery. He wound up a slave in the house of Potiphar, an Egyptian officer of Pharaoh. He excelled and became his personal servant. He was then unjustly accused by Potiphar's wife and imprisoned again. While in the jail for the king's prisoners, he correctly interprets the king's cupbearer and baker's dreams. He tells the cupbearer to plead his case before the Pharaoh upon his release. The cupbearer forgets Joseph's request, so he rots in jail for two more years. Finally, the Pharaoh needs a dream interpreted, so the cupbearer remembers Joseph as one who can do that, and Joseph is released upon his correct interpretation of that dream. Do you know how many years it has been since he was thrown into the pit by his brothers? Thirteen years—from 17 to 30—the best years of his life were spent in prison. Where was God during all of this time? More than once in the inspired record, we read the words, "And the Lord was with Joseph (You!)." Later, he is restored to his family, including his brothers who had started this mess. How did Joseph view all of this? The answer is found in Genesis 50:20.

The great artist Michelangelo once said, "Every block of stone has a statue inside it and it is the task of the sculptor to discover it. I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free." Consider that this is what God is doing in your life.

Folks, God's work in your life is a good work in spite of what it might seem through human eyes. Friend, the Lord is with you in your challenges of life. If you don't see it now, you will later, so why not just affirm it now? He is doing a good work. Remember the poem of the footprints in the sand? The one set of footprints

means that He is carrying you even in your financial mess, your singleness or divorceness, your widowhood or widowerhood, your failing health, your work experiences, your parenting challenges, your educational tests, your relational encounters, your personal trials, or your physical difficulties. With this aspect of God's work in mind, let's say Philippians 1:6 together... So, we are not only to experience **God's** work of salvation, sanctification and service, and God's **good** work, we are to...

///EXPERIENCE GOD'S ONGOING WORK

Notice Paul does not say that God will perfect this good work in the day of Christ Jesus, but until the day of Christ Jesus. We are living in the "great until" Jesus comes for His church. God finishes what He begins and He is doing so in the now.

God is doing an ongoing work in your life of perfecting you. This life is merely training for heaven. We are being made perfect (*telos*) (Mt. 5:48). The trend toward which we are going is toward perfection. So that when the day of the Lord's return arrives, we merely arrive at our destination. God is at work in your life. Dare you sabotage His work? Cooperate with Him in His ongoing work in your life. Experience God's ongoing work in your life every year. Experience God's ongoing work in your life every month. Experience God's ongoing work in your life every week. Experience God's ongoing work in your life every day. Experience God's ongoing work in your life every hour, every minute, and every second.

One day He will perfect it in a miraculous moment—the day of Jesus Christ. But what shall we do in the meantime? In the words the song, "Until Then," by Stuart Hamblin, "But until then my heart will go on singing; until then with joy I'll carry on, until the day my eyes behold the city, until the day God calls me home." What are you doing until then? Until then, we are to carry on with joy (James 1:2-4). In the words of Jack Taylor, "God's people need to look like we are on our way somewhere. Most of us look like we have already been somewhere and didn't like it!" Until then, we are to participate with God in His ongoing work.

God's work is an ongoing work that takes time. Most of our concepts of change are the sudden, complete, dramatic, or magical kind involving new feelings or instant spirituality. Our concept of change is like the frog changed into a prince. As Christians, we are looking for the kind of change God hasn't promised. As we search our souls, instead of being like the miner whose digging is rewarded by the glistening of precious metal, it seems the more we dig, the more mud we uncover. We, like the Moabites of Jeremiah 48, simply cover up the mud we find, rather than finding God's way to rinse it clean or thrust it from our lives altogether. Ever since Adam, we have been hiding rather than dealing with the hurts and sins in our lives. The relieving of pain is not an instant work but an ongoing one.

Let's review the concepts I introduced at the beginning and see a spiritual significance of the construction zone project at Woodmen and Union through the lens of God's working in your life as His construction project.

- It's taking a long time to complete.
- You have to slow down going through it taking you longer to get to your destination.
- Be observant and follow the directions for safe navigation.
- It's inconvenient.
- It's costly.
- There are detours, but eventually you get back on track; in fact you are on track in the detour.
- It started with a plan for our good and will end up that way.
- There is a tearing down or destroying stuff that looked good at first.
- There is the ripple effect as this project impacts other areas of your journey down the road.
- Be careful as you might hurt the very people used in the project.
- I can't figure it out now; looks weird, but one day I will see the big picture and it will all make sense.
- Somebody is sitting in a big office somewhere overseeing this project. He knows what he is doing as he

calls all the shots.

Rick Warren says regarding Philippians 1:6, “What God starts, He finishes. Where God guides, He provides. And where God leads, He meets our needs. But He is going to test you first, because there is no testimony without a test.” The contemporary, pointed question for all of us is, “Am I experiencing God’s good and ongoing work in my life?”

What does that look like? I would like to call up Mike Molsen, one of our seminary students and Life Group leaders to get his take on this subject (Mike Molsen interview). Thanks Mike. Let’s say our verse of the day—Philippians 1:6 one last time; this time without any help (quote verse).

There is an old children’s song that speaks to this truth—“He’s still workin’ on me.” Let’s sing it...

Central Idea of Text (CIT): Paul shares his confidence in God’s work in the Philippian church.

Big Idea of Message (BIM): God is at work in your life.

Major Objective (MO): Commitment

Specific Objective (SO): I desire FBC members to cooperate with God’s work in their lives.

Primarily Addressed Need (PAN): What is God doing in my life?