

Week 1: The Work God Begins

Overview: God begins the “good work” of salvation in us. We’ll explore what salvation truly is, how God starts his work in our lives, and how we can respond to him with gratitude, confidence, and faith.

Key Scripture: Philippians 1:1-11

CONTENT

Key Takeaway: God starts the work of salvation, and He promises not to “quit” on us.

Overview of Philippians: Philippians is a letter written by the Apostle Paul to the church in Philippi – the first church he started in Europe. Paul writes from prison, but the whole letter is full of joy, encouragement, and confidence in God. Philippians shows what it means to follow Jesus with gratitude, unity, confidence, and purpose, even in hard circumstances. Paul deeply loves this church. They supported him, prayed for him, and partnered with him in spreading the gospel.

Chapter 1 Overview: In Philippians 1:1-11, Paul thanks God for the Philippians and tells them he is confident that God, not them, started the good work in their lives (6). He reminds them:

- They are partners in the gospel (5)
- God’s grace holds them and shapes them (7)
- He prays they will grow in love, purity, and spiritual maturity (9-11)

Overall, Paul reminds us that salvation begins with God’s initiative, not our effort. God rescues us, changes us, and promises to finish what He started.

Key Points

- Salvation: God rescuing us from sin and giving us new life in Jesus.
- Salvation starts with God, not us. (v6)
 - Paul begins his letter by reminding the Philippians that God himself started the work in their hearts – “he who began a good work...”.
 - The gospel is the good news that God saves sinners through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus lives the life we failed to live, dies the death we deserved, and rises to give us new life by grace through faith. Salvation is God’s good work from beginning to end, not ours.
 - We don’t earn/achieve or deserve salvation – we receive it.
 - People often feel they need to “earn” God’s love, fix themselves before coming to Jesus, or try hard to be a “good” Christian. Paul emphasizes to the Philippians: God began the work. God keeps the work. God finishes the work.
- Salvation creates a new identity (v1)

- Paul calls the Philippians “saints” – holy ones – not because of their behavior, but because of belonging.
- Salvation makes you new and defines who you are before you ever do anything for God.
- It’s easy to define yourself by grades, sports, mistakes, relationships, comparison, or pressure. God calls us to something better and truer – we are called saints.
- Salvation gives us a growing love and purpose (vv9-11)
 - Paul prays for their love to grow in wisdom – not just emotional love, but purposeful, Spirit-led love. Saved people grow. Saved people love differently.
 - NOT to earn God’s love – but because we already have God’s love.

Gospel Application: Salvation is God’s work from start to finish. Jesus lived the perfect life we couldn’t live and died the death we deserved – and rose so we could live in Him. Salvation is not achieved – it’s received.

Key Question: In what ways are you trying to earn God’s love? Surrender this to God and embrace the gift of salvation.

APPLICATION

Activity Suggestions

- God’s activity timeline: have students draw a timeline of how God has worked in their life so far
- In small group, pair up and practice reciting the Gospel to one another, emphasizing that works cannot save.

Community Group Questions

- What stands out between a saved vs unsaved person?
- How has God used this message to change your perspective of salvation?
- Think of something you do every day. If no one ever saw you do it or never congratulated you, would you still choose to do it?
- In what ways are you trying to **earn** God’s love? Surrender this to God and embrace the gift of salvation.