

Text: Philippians 1:6-7

Title: Issues in Philippians 1:1-8

Truth: In which we learn about the defense and confirmation of the Gospel, how God works in Christians, and how we can better support our missionaries.

Date/Location: Sunday November 28, 2021 at FBC

Introduction

The Apostle Paul loved the Christians in Philippi. He had seen them in their pre-salvation state and was privileged in that God used him to lead them to saving faith in Jesus Christ. He had baptized some of them and formed the infant church. He may have directed Luke minister there in his absence; he was moved with gratitude that the church remembered him and supported him and partnered with him in his missions work. He prayed frequently for them.

I. What is the Defense and Confirmation of the Gospel?

- A. The Greek words are ἀπολογία (*apologia*) and βεβαιώσει (*bebaiosei*).
- B. The first, *apologia* is where we get our word “apologist” or “apology.” This does not mean someone who says they are sorry, nor is it someone who makes an excuse. An *apology* in this context is a defense, a reply. Think of it in a courtroom setting as a statement by the defense attorney on behalf of the defendant. Acts 22:1 is an example like this. Paul defended his rights as an apostle in 1 Cor. 9:3.

Socrates was brought up on charges of corrupting the young of the nation and Plato and Xenophon offered a defense for him.

- C. The second word, *bebaiosei*, is also a term used in solemn and legal contexts. Hebrews 6:16 uses it of the oath of God used to confirm His prior promise. It is by this means utterly confirmed. It was used of guaranteeing something, of verifying, of making sure. The word means to establish something, to validate it.
- D. Think of the defense and validation of the gospel in light of the attacks on it during Paul’s day, and during our own. For Paul, the

gospel was claimed to be a departure from the Jewish faith instead of its fulfillment; it was claimed to be anti-government instead of what it truly teaches, which is submission to government. Later it was claimed that Christians were cannibals in their communion meal. Today it is claimed to be intolerant when it is the truest love of God to tell someone of their need of salvation. Today people claim the message of God is immoral because it is bigoted or against science, when it is the message that confronts the immorality of the world and offers forgiveness for it, and teaches the true basis for all science, logic, human reason, and morality.

- E. These terms *defense* and *confirmation* are used in the field of Christian apologetics which is focused on just what these words mean: the defense of the faith and the positive proclamation of the truth claims of Christianity. As Paul experienced the first century Roman version of apologetics, he had to provide a legal defense for himself and a positive teaching of what the Christian message is. His life depended on it because he was facing death in the Roman penal system. Additionally, the entire Christian ministry was under attack in this attack on him. He had to offer a defense of the gospel because he was its primary proclaimer in terms of the Roman government and ministry to the Gentiles. His defense of himself was intertwined with his defense of the message he preached. He was truly a prisoner because of Jesus Christ, not because he had done any criminal act. If he lost the case, it would be much more difficult for Christianity to thrive in the empire.
- F. There are various schools of thought of apologetics: the presuppositional (which I hold to), the rational, and the semi-rational, among others. There are the arguments for the existence of God, and why evil can exist in God's world, and explanations of the justice of God and rationalizations about divine sovereignty and human responsibility. These are all part of the larger school of thought known as apologetics—defending and validating the Christian faith. You can take seminary classes and get a degree in this area and read dozens of books and articles on the topic. The apostle was in on the action at the ground floor.

II. What is God's Work in Us? How Does God Work in Us?

What is God's work and is it a mystical thing that is completely inexplicable except by "feeling"? Are there means to it that are normal or natural or is it entirely a supernatural thing?

- A. Paul's introductory prayer mentions that Paul is confident that God will complete the good work—the work of salvation—in the lives of the Christians there. God started that work perhaps ten years earlier in some of their lives, and He is committed to carrying it through for every single person who comes to Christ. Without a single exception, those who turn from sin to Jesus Christ will be brought to a place of blamelessness before Christ (1 Cor. 1:8).
- B. We should carefully know *what* that work is before asking how God does the work in us. It consists of three parts:
1. Initial salvation, which includes justification (legal) and regeneration (experiential). Regeneration is the initial impartation of life. Justification is the imputation of righteousness to the unrighteous sinner from the righteous Christ. Initial salvation puts you in a new realm and on a new path of life and gives you the assurance that you are free from the eternal penalty of sin.
 2. Ongoing salvation, which is sanctification. This is the part of spiritual life that we spend most of our time in if we are Christians for any duration. In it, God works to eradicate sin from our lives and cause us to live godly, increasingly holy lives. It is mortifying the flesh and increasing in godliness. Ongoing salvation saves you from the practice of sin.
 3. Final salvation, which is glorification. This refers to the part of our spiritual life after the rapture or after we die in which our sin tendency is completely eliminated, we have a new body, and we live with Christ forever. Here we are saved from the very presence of sin and all of its effects.
- C. How does God do this marvelous work?
1. By the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God works savingly and sanctifyingly in those who believe by applying the blessings

of the work of Christ. He dwells in us, regenerates us, baptizes us into union with Christ and His body, guides us, and teaches us.

2. Through the work of the Word of God. We are reborn by the word of truth (James 1:18, 1 Peter 1:23). We are sanctified by the word, which is truth (John 17:17).
3. By the will of God. We are sanctified by that will (1 Thess. 4:3). We are taught to be thankful to follow God's will (1 Thess. 5:18). We are to live for the will of God (1 Peter 4:2).
4. By the Father's special care. We trust in Him that He will sanctify us entirely (1 Thess. 5:23).

D. The fact that it is **God** who does this work gives us hope and confidence because He cannot be stopped. That fact also gives us humility because it is God's work – not *ours*.

E. We have a very big part to play in this. God's work goes on in us and in our churches in an almost imperceptible kind of way. But our work is visible, requiring diligence and effort.

III. How Can We be Better Partners with our Missionaries?

A. We must give them generous support. A church that boasts in large numbers of missionaries while supporting them with a paucity of financial resources really has nothing to boast about. In general, the fewer supporting churches a missionary has, the better in the sense of quality of support. Of course, too few would be a risk because if one drops out, that leaves a big hole. But in general, I am thinking of missionaries with 50 supporting churches versus those with 20 or 12. They can have a much more substantial relationship with those 12 churches than they can with 50.

B. We must be in frequent prayer for them. 1 Thess. 5:25, 2 Thess. 3:1, Acts 12:5.

C. We must be in constant communication with our missionaries. Otherwise, we cannot truly know them, or know what is going on that we might intercede for them better. We must stay in touch in order to know what their needs are, and to help keep them accountable for the work they are doing.

D. We should visit our missionaries if we can.

E. We need to be better partners with our missionaries so that we can be better Christians. That partnership makes us more aware of God's work, more aware of challenges, more aware of poverty, more thankful, more intent to carry out the great commission in our own neighborhoods, more caring, less worked up about our own little problems, etc.

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