

DO GOOD WORK!

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Shalom,

While living in this world, men are never free from mild or severe problems. As Christians, if our heart bears a very heavy burden, we come to God screaming for His help and read the Bible to find comforting verses. Unfortunately, once our heart is calm and we get help from Him, we often forget Him, as the Helper. Instead, we are busy with His blessings rather than the Giver of blessings. Therefore, let's grow mature spiritually!

The Apostle Paul wrote an Epistle to the congregation and also to the overseers (elders) and deacons (councils) in Philippi. The Letter to the Philippians was then read by the early church for over ± 2,000 years. Now we read it also to find answers and solutions to the problems we are facing.

Can we find it and does it fit in to what we need? Illustration: when sick, we look for and try to get help from one doctor to another doctor who is smarter to treat our illness. Do we do the same to heal our broken heart and lift the heavy burden of our problems? The Bible - God's Word - is the 'most effective medicine' that can provide solutions and heal our inner wounds!

Sound strange, is it possible for us who have heavy burden to come to look for a solution to the Apostle Paul who was burdened and suffering in prison? How is it then? If we are sick we go to a healthy doctor not a sick doctor but the apostle Paul set a good example, he could still give thanks and rejoice despite suffering greatly in prison. He even gave advice, reprimand and solutions to the church in Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippians etc. What advice and solutions did the Apostle Paul give in his letter? Phillipians 1:5-6 wrote "**for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now**, being confident of this very thing, that **He who has begun a good work** in you **will complete it** until the day of Jesus Christ;

If we just read the two verses above, it seems there is no correlation with the problem that we are facing, but if we read Paul's letter wholly, we will find how the Philippians were released from the problem that entangled them. The Apostle Paul had a favorable and very basic reason in dealing with the problem. We know that the Philippians were eager to sacrifice for the preaching of the Gospel, but they also

faced various problems including disputes between Euodia and Syntyche, both of whom had fought with Paul in preaching the Gospel (Philippians 4: 2-3).

For the Apostle Paul, it was not just a lip service when he stated 'fully convinced' that He who started good work would continue and end it. Who is meant by Him? That is the Triune God. Illustration: Even a genius cannot master all disciplines; we who are adept at playing music may not be able to solve problems that are different from our abilities. Only the Triune God - God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit - with each of His roles is able to solve any problem.

The Philippian epistle according to the Tabernacle teaching pattern depicts to the Gold Candlestick. For the formation of candlesticks, pure gold is moulded to be formed according to the desired model (stem, petal, button, flower). There must also be oil and the wick burnt to produce light in the dark.

Application: we are the light of the world (Matthew 5:14) and we also must be ready to suffer when we are moulded by a skilled expert to become a 'gold candlestick' which shines in the darkness of the world and is also willing to sacrifice when the 'wick' is trimmed in order to produce constant light.

Notice, the Son of God begins a beautiful spiritual work within us and the Holy Spirit is with us forever (John 14:16) to continue until we are perfect on the day Christ Jesus returns. It is clear that good work has a beginning and must be done to perfection. If we love Jesus, we will obey His Word then the Father will love us and the Father and Jesus will dwell with us (John 14:23). In other words, the Triune God is in our lives.

Since we believe in Jesus, He does good work in us and perfects it to the end of life if we are able to survive in facing the problems. The problem is whether our faith is still strong and burning while waiting for His coming? The process of refinement takes place through the forging of life - trials and tests - until God comes again or we die as experienced by the Apostle Paul. In spreading the gospel of Christ, the Apostle Paul experienced ups and downs but he received the support of the church. This made him even more excited and happy.

Application: Theology graduate students should not only produce smart people but also have a heart to evangelize. God's servants and theologians should carry out God's great commission so that evangelism can continue until it reaches perfection.

Please note, the Word of God knows every aspect of our lives because

He created us and as the Guardian, He knows the problems faced by His creation and how to solve them.

What lessons can we take from the Apostle Paul's writing in Philippians 1:6?

◆ The Apostle Paul was **fully convinced** that the Triune God (no other person no matter how great he was) began a good work → faith

By faith, Paul was able to give thanks and rejoice in the midst of suffering in prison.

Application: we must respect the great senior servant of God but do not worship him because it can cause him to fall into pride.

◆ The Apostle Paul was convinced that He (the Triune God) began a good work and would continue until the end → hope

Application: we hope that this good work will produce something beautiful in our lives.

◆ The Apostle Paul was sure the Triune God continued the good work until finally **meeting Christ Jesus** → love

Why did the Triune God start good work; Was it not good before? Remember, God is eternal - without beginning and end - and perfect is His goodness. He created the universe and its contents very well (Genesis 1:31) but men's sin ruins all of God's good works; as a result, only a crime arises.

Jesus declared "I am Alpha and Omega" three times which are written in Revelation 1: 8; 21: 6; 22:13; that's why He is the One who started it, He will also be the One who ends it. The plan of God the Father was realized by sending Jesus into the world for the work of saving sinful man.

What good work does God do in Christ Jesus?

The Heavenly Bridegroom will come to **bring rewards** to everyone according to his deeds (Revelation 22: 12-13). He will bring blessings and 'whips' to punish. Beware lest Christians sin again: lying, cheating, doing corruption etc.

After we believe in Christ Jesus and receive salvation from Him, Jesus' work is finished and He returned to Heaven. Then the Father sent the Holy Spirit - a Helper and Comforter - to be with us forever. The Holy Spirit is in charge of teaching and reminding us of God's Word (John 14:26) and leading us into all truth (John 16:13).

Obviously, the Holy Spirit cannot possibly do bad things and He lives with us forever to guide us until the Lord comes again.

Jesus who leads us into faith brings our faith to perfection (Hebrews 12: 2). Be aware, that our faith in the Triune God is tried to be shaken! For example: changes in the original translation of the contents of the Bible so that the Bible is no longer the Word of God but has become a philosophy of the world; there are also such interpretations of the verses to take side LGBT and so on. It is important for children to be introduced to hear and read the Bible at an early age so that they understand the truth of the Word; if not, they become victims who are easily trapped by many versions of the 'Bible' wrapped in interesting language and easily downloaded from Google.

Introspection: how far does our faith in God extend while we live freely and we are not bound in prison as the Apostle Paul experienced? The Apostle Paul's faith remained strong even though he was isolated in prison.

The Apostle Paul was so sure that the Triune God began good work, He would also finish it till the end. Paul was martyred ± 67 AD while the Apostle John wrote Jesus was the Alpha and Omega in the Book of Revelation ± 95 AD on the island of Patmos. Although Paul did not read the Apostle John's writings about the Alpha and Omega, he knew God began and ended good work because of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We also have the Holy Spirit in our hearts so that we can consider and judge the sermon which is delivered at the pulpit and in the social media, whether it is true or not. The Bible must always be a guide and a benchmark for there are other gospels that distort the true gospel.

What is the form of good work? Is it only related to moral ethics, decency, law - no stealing, no adultery, no killing etc.? For example:

□ **A young rich man** came and knelt before Him, and asked Him, **“Good Teacher, what shall I do** that I may inherit eternal life?” So Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. (Mark 10:17-18) Jesus wanted this young man to see Jesus not just because He was a teacher but also to perceive Him as God. This wonderful young man already did the command of God: not murdering, not committing adultery, not stealing, not deceiving, honoring his parents since childhood, but Jesus saw one weakness, and He said, *“Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and **follow Me.**”* But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. (c.22). It turns out that so many good deeds considered

true according to culture and politeness have no value without Jesus because they only aim at pride.

Application: God does promise that if we work hard, we will be blessed with wealth (Proverb 10: 4). But don't stop here, we should be ready to be used by God with the blessings we receive from Him.

□ **Judas Iscariot** followed Jesus for ± 3½ years and got the best learning from Him, but finally he sold the goodness which he obtained from his Master for the sake of 30 silver coins (Matthew 26:15). He felt guilty, Judas ended up by hanging himself and all his insides spilled out (Acts 1:18).

□ **Demas**, who was faithful at first to be a partner of the Apostle Paul in the ministry, finally left Paul because he loved the world more (2 Timothy 4:10).

Unfortunately, a rich young person loves money more and consequently he did not get the eternal life. This does not mean that we cannot have a lot of money but don't let wealth become our pride for the love of money is the root of all evil (1 Timothy 6:10). In fact, many people who are unbelievers are far richer than Christians.

Judas Iscariot and Demas received the best from Jesus but left Him to pursue the less good. If the best is left behind, we will never get what is good again and the good deeds we do have no value in God's eyes. The Apostle Paul realized this; that's why he shamelessly confessed, *"For I know that **in me** (that is, in my flesh) **nothing good dwells**; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will do, I do not do; but the evil I will not do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me."* (Romans 7:18-21)

Let us be honest, we easily judge others who make mistakes and feel that we are better than they. Truly, no one does good and right (Romans 3: 10-12); all have sinned (v. 23) and sin is the reason we cannot do good.

Furthermore the Apostle Paul admitted, *'For I delight in **the law of God** according to the **inward man**. But I see another law in **my members**, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into **captivity to the law of sin** which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will **deliver me from this body of death**? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. '* (Romans 7:22-26)

There is always a conflict between a mind that is eager to the law of God and the members of the body who are taken captive to the law of sin! For example: our heart wants to sacrifice for God's work but the mouth and hands prevent us giving the offerings; the heart wants to read the Word of God but the eyes are sleepy; yet, our eyes are even wide-eyed when we are reading novels and texting on mobile phones and so on.

The Apostle Paul cried out to be free from the bonds of death that bound his body and he knew that only Jesus Christ who was able to free him because He was willing to die to crush the cruelty of sin and the power of darkness. It is our job to trust Him and receive the grace of salvation from Him (Ephesians 2: 5).

It is obvious that we are saved by faith not because of our good works (vv. 8-9). In other words, any good deed cannot bring us into Heaven. For example: Saul/Paul had a reason to be proud because he was an Israelite, circumcised on the eighth day, from the tribe of Benjamin, a native Hebrew, a Pharisee who obeyed the law without blemish and so on (Philippians 3: 4-6) but after he encountered Jesus, he claimed to be the most sinful person (1 Timothy 1:15).

Honestly, it is often that our good deeds are according to church and organizational regulations, which can make us proud and then we can easily judge people who cannot do the rules of the church. Remember, God comes with good deeds; He who starts with good thing will also continue to do good so till the end.

What good deeds does God want us to do? Do not give in to evil but defeat evil with good (Romans 12:21). It is true that it's not easy to practice it but in fact we were the creations of God created in Christ Jesus to do good work (Ephesians 2:10). Such goodness must keep going and the Holy Spirit will help us.

What is the work of the Holy Spirit?

» The Holy Spirit was sent by the Father to dwell in us forever so that whenever and wherever we are, we can worship God in spirit and truth (John 4:24). The Holy Spirit **helps us** how to pray; The Holy Spirit prays for us to God (Romans 8:26). Do not be arrogant if we can pray and fast, because many times we fast because we have self-interest.

» The Holy Spirit **leads us into all truth** (John 16:13); therefore, make reading the Bible our habit that tells us how God arranges our lives so that our lives become beautiful and perfect.

» The Holy Spirit helps us **overcome the lusts of the** 5: 16-18). Notice that the desires of the Holy Spirit always contradict to the desires of the flesh; and it's up to us to obey the desires of the Spirit or the desires of the flesh!

Which are included in the deeds of the flesh? Fornication, uncleanness, lust, idolatry, magic, feud, strife, jealousy, anger, self-interest, harming, spirit-breaking, envy, drunkenness etc. Those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (vv. 19-21).

While the fruit of the Holy Spirit is: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, loyalty, gentleness, self-control (vv. 22-23).

Application: we dare to resist the will of the carnal desires and to obey the will of the Holy Spirit.

What should we not do to the Holy Spirit?

♣ Do not grieve the Holy Spirit through filthy words that come out of our mouth but use constructive words so that those who hear them get grace (Ephesians 4: 29-30). If we are not eager to read the Bible, it also grieves the Holy Spirit because it is the same as we disrespect the writings which are inspired by the Holy Spirit.

♣ Do not extinguish the movement of the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19).

♣ Don't blaspheme the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:31).

Jesus became a perfect example, He never insults sinners, it is because there is the Holy Spirit in Him. He forgave the adulterous women. Yet, it is different when he dealt with the scribes who felt themselves holy, Jesus rebuked them as hypocrites. Jesus did not come to call the righteous but sinners (Mathew 9:13) because He wanted to make them good.

There is no slightest good in ourselves, but we are equipped to do good work and the Holy Spirit helps us to be able to do it. Therefore we should obey the will of the Holy Spirit and reject the deed of the flesh. The Holy Spirit is our guarantee that enables us to reach our final goal of meeting the heavenly Bridegroom and living together with Him forever in the new Jerusalem (cf. Ephessians 1: 13-14). Amen.