

The One Thing We Can Be Confident About in 2021

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[0 : 00] Well, as you look down the road at this new year, what attitude best describes your outlook? Are you optimistic?

Not many of us are. Would you be maybe cautiously optimistic? Wishful thinking. Are you confident? I don't know anyone who is confident as they look over the horizon of 2021. There's just so many unknowns, aren't there? We've got a new president as of January the 20th and a new Congress. There's just a lot of unknowns of how that's going to affect the economy, the job situation.

Health care. Race relations. Religious liberty. And other issues that we care about.

[1 : 11] It's hard to begin this new year with confidence when so many people are still coming down with the coronavirus. So many hospitalized.

People that we know. People connected to our church family who have died from it recently. When you look at all that's happening in the world right now.

Just on the earthly level. There really isn't much to be confident about, is there? But I want to direct you to a place in God's Word this morning.

Where every Christian. This is a message directed to Christians. Where every Christian can find not only confidence, but comfort.

Not just at the beginning of a new year, this new year. But every day of our lives. It's Philippians chapter 1 verse 6. It's one verse.

[2 : 15] I'm going to put it on the screen. Paul is writing to a church. Christians. He says that I am sure of this.

That he who began a good work in you. Will bring it to completion. At the day of Jesus Christ. The NIV and New American Standard translations.

They translate this. And I am confident. The ESV says. I am sure of. Others say. I am confident. Of this.

That he who began a good work in you. Will bring it to completion. At the day of Jesus Christ. This message this morning is designed. To be.

Heard and received. As an individual. I'm speaking to individuals. Who claim to be Christians. The message is designed for true.

[3 : 14] Children of God. You know. Some messages. Especially here lately. We've been thinking about. Our country. The church as a whole. Families.

But this is. This is for you. As an individual Christian. To let sink in. Think about you. Paul is writing. To you.

About something. About something. About something. That you can. And should. Be confident. About. Today. And every day. Of your life.

No matter. What else is happening. God. Has. Is. And will continue. To work in your life.

To make you more like Jesus. Be confident. Be confident. Be confident. Of that. Let's look at it. Number one. We can be confident.

[4 : 11] That God has begun. His work of salvation. In us. And again. I'm writing to Christians. Paul is writing to. Christians.

In the church. At Philippi. And he knows. Most of them. Personally. God used him. To go there. And preach. And many people.

Were saved. And formed. That church. As he writes. This letter. He has people. In mind. One. For an example. Is.

A woman. Named Lydia. And her conversion. Really. The way it's described. In the book of Acts. Really helps us. To understand. How God. Is the author.

Of our salvation. Look at this. The Lord. Opened her heart. To pay attention. To what was said. By Paul.

[5 : 05] That's Luke's way. Of saying. The Lord. Opened her heart. To hear. To believe. To respond. To the gospel. That Paul preached. We're told. That she was baptized.

That she asked. Or invited. Paul. And his traveling. Companions. To stay at her home. While they were in Philippi. She really. As soon as she was converted.

The Lord. Opened her eyes. Opened her heart. Opened her mind. To see. The truth about Jesus. She trusted him. And.

By inviting Paul. And. His associates. To stay with her. That would have been. Where the first. Church. In Philippi. Would have met.

Where the first teaching. Would have been taking place. What I want us to see. Is that. Throughout the Bible. Salvation. Is. First. And foremost.

[6 : 01] Described. As the work of God. Think about it. Like this. I want you. Boys and girls. Young people.

Middle-aged people. Old people. See the older I get. I can just say. Old people. When you're young. People think. Well he's in being insulting. I wouldn't have.

An AARP card. But I could. Unfortunately. Age wise. So this applies. To everybody. Before you were born.

If you're a Christian. God. Chose. You. To be his. God. God. Chose. You. To be his.

In. Christ. Paul. Describes. That. Very. Clearly. In Ephesians. Chapter 1. In several.

[6 : 58] Verses. But here's the one. I want you to look at. God. Chose. Us. In him. That's Christ. Before the foundation.

Of the world. Before. Before. He got started. God. Planned. For you. To be you.

And he. Chose you. To be his. Born again. Child. To live with him. Forever.

To have a relationship with him. Throughout your earthly life here. And then for all eternity. In heaven. At some point. In your life.

God. Graciously. Worked. To have the gospel. Taught. Preached. Explained.

[7 : 55] Shared. However you want to describe it. To you. Maybe. Several times. But at some point. In your life. God. Worked.

In your life. Graciously. To enable you. To hear the gospel. And he gave you. The gift. Of faith. To believe.

That gospel. To believe. Understand. That you were a sinner. And that Jesus. Came into this world. To die on the cross. To pay the penalty. For your sins.

And you trusted Jesus. Jesus. Paul explains. This. Or how this works. In Ephesians chapter 2. Verses 8 and 9. Look at this. For by grace.

You have been saved. Through faith. And this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God. Not a result.

[8 : 50] Of works. So that no one. May boast. You are not a Christian. Because. You were so smart.

That you figured it all out. You are not a Christian. Because you were such a. A nice person. That it just sort of. You know.

Came naturally for you. You are a Christian. Because. God worked in your mind. In your heart. In your thinking. In your feeling. To bring you under conviction.

That you were a sinner. In need of a savior. And it may have been your parent. Or a grandparent. Or a Sunday school teacher. Or a pastor. Who shared with you.

The good news about Jesus. And you exercised. Faith. In him. You trusted him. Paul. Paul.

[9 : 50] Talks about it. That salvation. Is a gift. From God. But no one. Is saved. Until they believe. Like this. For everyone. Who calls.

On the name of the Lord. Will be saved. People who don't call. On the name of the Lord. Will not be saved. I want you to understand. That God is sovereign.

In salvation. He initiates. Everything. He does the work. Of bringing about. A new birth. Regeneration. He opened. As he says.

He opened. Lydia's. Spiritual eyes. And ears. And heart. For her to understand. That's what he does. In everyone's life. But God.

Calls us. To exercise. Faith. And our responsibility. To act on what he makes. Clear to us. To respond. To what he's doing.

[10:44] By us. Actually believing in Jesus. Trusting him. Calling on him. To save us. Turning from our sins. All this. Goes together.

Now Jesus. Confirms that salvation. Is the work of God. And originates with God. Very clearly. In what he said to Peter.

After Jesus asked him. Who do you say that I am? Look at this. It's in Matthew chapter 16. He said to them. Who do you say that I am?

That's Jesus speaking to his disciples. Well Simon Peter spoke up. Simon Peter replied. You are the Christ. The son of the living God.

And Jesus answered him. Blessed are you. Simon bar Jonah. Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood. Has not revealed this to you. But my father.

[11:41] But my father. Who is in heaven. Peter didn't figure it out. Nobody explained it to him. God.

Revealed it. Made it clear. Turned the light on. For Peter. And the others. To enable them to understand. Who Jesus was.

And to respond to him. As they did. I say all that to say. If you are a Christian. Be confident. You didn't by accident.

Become a Christian. And maybe fade away. God chose you. Before you were ever born. From the foundation of the world. To be his child.

You are chosen. You are special. And you responded. You. At some point in the past. Trusted Jesus. As your Savior and Lord. And you still trust him.

[12:44] You are a follower of his. Right now. That assures us. That God loves us. He didn't have to.

He chose to. And it's not based on anything. That we are. Or have done. It's. All originated with God.

Just part of his purpose. Part of his. Heart. For you. Now. If God has. Begun at the work. In you. And that verse.

We're looking at. Says. He's going to bring it. To completion. When Jesus returns. We can be confident. That he is. Continuing his work. In us. Right now. Number two. We can be confident. That God. Is continually. Is continuing. His work of salvation. In us. Right now. Right now. God chose you.

[13:40] And called you. You trust in Jesus. God's working. In your life. Right now. He is developing you. More and more. As time goes by. Into the image.

Of his son. Jesus. We read in Romans 8. 29. God's shaping. And molding. Your character. Through good times. And bad. Through hard times. And easy times.

Through people. That's easy. To get along with. And people. That's hard. To get along with.

Through everything. That you go through. God is working. Working out.

His salvation. And practically. Making us. Or developing. Our character. So that we'll be. More and more. Like Jesus. Jesus. Now.

I want you to look at. A comment. Sort of an extended comment. New Testament. Scholar. D.A. Carson. Some of you were involved. In a study. We did on Sunday nights.

[14:37] A long time ago now. On the prayers of Paul. Well Carson says. That this verse. Is almost. A definition. Of what a real. Christian is.

Look at what he says. The New Testament. Affords. Not a few examples. Of people. Who made professions. Of faith. That were. Spurious. Now some of those.

You know. Carolina people. In here. I put in there. That means. False. Fake. Not real.

Look at what he says. New Testament. Affords. Not a few examples. Of people. Who made professions. Of faith. That were spurious. Evidenced. By the fact. That they did not. Endure.

They did not. Persevere. They didn't continue. In their faith. For an example. At the end. Of John. Chapter 2. Many people. Believed. In Jesus's name. When they saw.

[15:36] The miraculous. Signs. That he was doing. But Jesus. Would not. Entrust. Himself. To them. The scripture says. We are told. He knew.

That their faith. Was not genuine. A few chapters later. Carson continues to write. To those who had professed faith. Jesus declared.

If you hold to my teaching. You are really my disciples. Or as Hebrews 3.14 puts it. We have come to share in Christ. If we hold firmly.

Till the end. The confidence. The confidence. We had it first. Then last paragraph. Because God is preserving the Philippians.

Paul is convinced. That they will persevere. Paul gives thanks to God. Because he is entirely confident. As he has watched the Philippians.

[16:33] That God did indeed. Begin a good work in them. And the God who begins a good work. Finishes it. Here is one way.

That most of us. Are not like God. If you go to your house today. Your garage. Your barn. Your house. Can't you see signs.

That you don't always start. You don't always finish. What you start. Aren't there some unfinished projects. God never has that. God never sees anywhere.

Things that he has started. And just abandoned. Now. Every one of us. Can look in the mirror. And see a project. That God has not completed.

But he is still working on us. You and me. Now here are some examples. Of how God. Did this.

[17:33] Among the Christians in Philippi. How God continued. To work. In their life. Work out their salvation. Develop their Christian character. Look at this.

First. These people. Supported Paul. And his ministry. With their prayers. And their financial support. He says in verse five. Your partnership.

In the gospel. From the first day. Until now. When God saved. These people. They were concerned. About other people. Here in the good news too. And so they supported Paul. First of all.

With their prayers. He says in chapter one. Verse 19. For I know that through your prayers. And the help of the spirit. Of Jesus Christ. This will turn out. For my. Deliverance. And then.

They put their money. Where their mouth was. They supported him financially. Chapter four. Verse 18. I have received. Full payment. And more. I am well supplied.

[18:27] Having received. From Epaphroditus. The gifts. You sent. They sent. A messenger. Representative from their church. To where Paul was.

To meet some needs. They knew he'd have. They wanted to be. Partners. In the ministry. The missionary. Evangelistic activity.

Of Paul. Now. They were also willing. To endure. Suffering. Sacrifice. As a part of their calling.

To follow Jesus Christ. Look at this. Chapter one. Verse 29. 30. He says. For it has been granted to you. That for the sake of Christ. You should not only believe in him.

But also suffer. For his sake. Engage in the same conflict. That you saw. That I had. And now here. That I still have.

[19:26] These Christians. They knew. They knew. From seeing. Paul. What he went through. Hearing some of the things. He told. And from the situation.

Where they were. Where they were. A very very small minority. That it was going to be costly. For them to live out their faith. But they did not.

Shrink back. Now let's just pause here. And think about this. Personally. What signs. Can you see. In your life. That demonstrate.

The reality. Of your faith. In Jesus. Let's just. To start with. Look at. The signs. That were in the. Philippian Christians.

Do you care. About the spiritual condition. Of the people. Around you. Just think. Do you. Take an interest in.

[20:25] Have concern for. The spiritual condition. Of the people. Around you. Now if you are a Christian. And you really believe the Bible. Then you believe.

That everyone. Is born a sinner. And until they come to faith. In Jesus. They are separated from God. And if they die. In that condition. They're going to spend. Eternity away from God. In hell. Do you ever.

Look at people. That you know. That you love. That are akin to you. You're good friends. That you work with. You go to school with. Do you ever look and think. If they're not Christians. What's going to happen to them. If. They don't come to Christ.

Do you ever pray. For such people. By name. Do you. Look for ways. To. Share the gospel.

With them. Just say a word. From time to time. Plant some seeds. Do you invite them to church. And are you careful.

[21 : 27] To try to live a faithful Christian life. Before them. To provide an example. To maybe. Show them that. The Lord has done something in your life.

Or to show them. Yeah. The Lord has done something in your life. With the hope that. They'll see that. And see that. Well he could do that in my life as well. So.

Your attitude. Your thoughts. Your activities. Toward other people. Do you really show an interest. In other people's spiritual. Condition. That's a sign of the spirit of God.

Working in us. If we're Christians. Let's use another example. From the Philippians. What do your spending habits reveal. About your Christian faith.

Yes. It does. Matter. See. How we spend our time. How we spend our money. Are the loudest two statements.

[22 : 33] We can make. About what. Means the most to us. What our priorities are. Where our heart lies. And so. Do you give generously.

To the work of the Lord. Through this church. And other Christian organizations. Maybe. And I want to pause here.

And say. I have no idea. What anybody in this church. Gives. All I know. Is what I see. In the newsletter. Just like you. And I want to say.

It appears. That we either have. A lot of people. Who give. Faithfully. Or we've got. A few people. Who give a tremendous amount.

Because. A lot. Of money. Is given. In terms of. Tithes and. Offering. Offerings. To the Lord. Through this church. And if you're faithful.

[23 : 31] In your giving. I want to thank you. For that. Now. I know you don't give to me. Hope you don't give to me. But I just want to thank you. And commend you. For being faithful to the Lord.

In that way. But if you don't give. Why not? It is a part of our Christian responsibility. What we do with our money.

Shows what is most important. To us. Then. What are you sacrificing. Or willing to sacrifice.

That demonstrates. You are a real. Committed follower of Jesus. Jesus. Let's just think of it this way.

How do you spend your time? See the most. Two most precious commodities. That we have today. Time and money. And for a lot of people. Today.

[24 : 28] Their time is more important. Than their money. Some people will give. Their money. When they won't give their time. So I want to ask you. How do you spend your time? Is it all.

Just about you. Doing what you want to do. When you want to do it. How you want to do it. Maybe it. It includes your family. But. Do you just only spend your time.

On you and your family. Or do you give. Of your time. Make some hard decisions.

Sometimes. Make some sacrifices. At times. To actually. Be faithful to the Lord. And getting involved. In someone's life.

Or being involved. In some kind of ministry. And you're doing it. Unto the Lord. And to those people. Think about this. In terms of sacrifice.

[25 : 30] Maybe suffering. Do you ever shy. Away from. Identifying yourself. As a Christian. As a Christian. In front of certain people. In front of certain people.

Maybe at school. Or at work. Or in your neighborhood. Because you're afraid. That it might cost you something. If people really perceive you.

As a serious minded Christian. Maybe it's just. They'll laugh at you. Make fun of you. Or maybe they'll exclude you.

From their group. It could deny you. Cost you a promotion at work. Are you willing to sacrifice.

Suffer. Ridicule. Exclusion. Or more. In order to be faithful to the Lord. Sometimes that is what the Lord calls us to do.

[26 : 33] God continues to work in the life of every Christian. To give us the desire. And the ability. To serve him. To please him.

To do his will. If you don't have such desires. You have no reason to think. That you are a Christian. On every child. Every teenager. Sit up. Pay attention to what I'm about to say.

A lot of you. And maybe adults. Made professions of faith. When you were young. You were baptized.

There's several people in here. I baptized you. I want you to understand. That if you are truly saved. If you're truly a Christian.

[27 : 34] The Spirit of God lives within you. And he gives you the desire. To please God. To want to. Do what God wants you to do.

For an example. If you're really a Christian. Boys and girls. Young people. The Spirit of God within you. Gives you a desire. To not tell lies.

Even though it may get you in trouble. The Spirit of God. Will give you the desire. To speak the truth. Even if you suffer for it.

To treat other people. The way that you want to be treated. To love people. To serve people. To serve people. And I want you to understand.

Whether you're eight years old. Or 88 years old. If you don't have those desires within you. If the Spirit of God is not within you.

[28 : 39] Prompting you. Giving you the desire. To please God. To do his will. To speak the truth. To love people. To forgive people. You think. You think. I don't know what you're talking about.

There's no way in the world. That you're a Christian. You may have professed faith. You may have been baptized. That was all meaningless. Unless there.

Are evidences. Of a work of God. Within you. In your desires. Let's go a little bit further.

The Spirit of God works in us. To give us the desire. And the ability. To serve God. If you don't use any of your time. Talents or treasure.

To serve the Lord. Because. You don't really care about pleasing him. You don't even think about pleasing him. I don't see how you can have.

[29 : 40] Any confidence right now. That the Lord's working. In your life. It's just not. Something the Bible. Will give you confidence about.

Because. Everyone in whom God. Has worked. He continues to work. And he gives us. The desires. And the ability. To please him.

To do his will. But if you have those desires. You have those heartfelt desires. And you find ways. To serve him. Because you want to. It pleases you. To please God. Then you have every reason. To be confident.

That God is working. In your life. That's one of the ways. That God gives you assurance. He's the one. That gives you those desires. He's the one.

[30 : 38] That gives you that ability. Now. If we have confidence. That God has started to work in us. And we see signs. That he is still working in us.

Then we can also be confident. That he will finish that work in us. Number three. We can be confident. That God will complete. His work of salvation in us. Look at that verse one more time. Now I am sure of this. Or I am confident of this. That he who began a good work in you. Will bring it to completion. At the day of Jesus Christ. This is one of the clearest promises.

You'll ever find in the Bible. That God. Will never give up. On you. God's goal. Is for you to develop. Christ like character. He's going to work in you. He is working in you. Throughout your life. Until Jesus comes. To perfect that.

[31 : 35] Now. If you're a Christian. Let this encourage you. Right now. Because the truth may be.

As you came in here this morning. Before you came in here. But as you came in here this morning. And you're thinking about all this. It may be. That you would have to say. I am a.

Poor excuse of a Christian. It may be. That you would say. I know that God has saved me. And that he is working in my life. I know what you mean.

About those desires. But lately. Or maybe for a long time. I've sort of been at arm's length.

With God. It may be. That you'd have to admit. That. My heart's. A little bit harder. My conscience.

[32 : 32] A little more calloused. Than it used to be. You may. Feel like a failure. And you may be.

Far from being truly. A faithful. Child of the Lord. But I want you to know. God hasn't given up on you. There's a lot of parents.

And grandparents. And aunts and uncles. And teachers in this room. And in those kind of positions. We have invested ourselves. In a lot of young people. And every one of us.

As parents. Grandparents. Aunts and uncles. And teachers. We've had students. To disappoint us. Disappoint us. Even break our hearts.

But if we truly. Love them. No matter what. We continue to love them.

[33 : 35] Sometimes we want to smack them. And sometimes God disciplines us. I've worn out my boys.

To my hand hurt. When they were growing up. Hadn't done it lately. But when they were little. But I never stopped loving them. There's times I wanted to kill them.

But I never stopped loving them. You know. You've been there. You've done that. There's times that God does. Truly. Severely.

Discipline us. Put us flat on our backs. Because he loves us so much. He's not going to let us go. He's not going to let us destroy our lives. But God never gives up.

Faithfulness matters. Don't misunderstand. How we live matters. But God never washes his hands of us. His children.

[34 : 35] God has been. Is. And will always be faithful to you. If you are his son.

Or his daughter. You can count on it. Read the whole chapter of. Chapter 8 of Romans. One of the best statements on this. Especially.

About verse 31 to the end. I want to encourage you right now. If you know you're a Christian. But you're.

Just not faithful. You're not. You're more. You're suppressing more of those desires. That the Lord has given you. You're just not obeying him.

Admit that to God. Confess it as the sin that it is. Repent of it. He will forgive you. He'll cleanse you.

[35 : 33] The scripture says. He'll restore you to closeness with him. If you're far from God this morning. Draw close to him. He will.

The scripture says. Draw close. To you. If you're not a Christian. Call on Jesus to save you. Humble yourself.

Even if you're a baptized member of this church. But you know. That you never experienced a work of God's grace. Admit that. Cry out to God. Repent of your sin. Put your trust in Jesus for real.

Now. You know we've begun a new year. No one knows. No matter what they tell you. No one knows what's ahead of us.

As individuals. As families. As a church. As a nation even. But God knows. But God knows every detail.

[36 : 34] About this year. For you. For your family. For this church. For this country. He can be trusted. No matter what.

As a Christian. Trust him. Have confidence. He who began a good work in you.

Will bring it to completion. At the day of Jesus Christ. And don't forget. One of the ways that God works. Is to give us the desires.

And the ability. To please him. So. This year. Spend time with him every day. Asking him. To help you to.

Be have a tender heart. And conscience. And act on those desires. That he gives you. Let that be a part of your. Daily.

[37 : 35] Reading the Bible. Praying. Ask God. Please help me to be sensitive. To your spirit. To know what to do. How to please you. And then. Ask him to help you to do it.

To discipline yourself. To do it. To please him. We don't know what the future holds.

We don't know what's going to happen this year. But we can be confident. That God is with us. And that we can please him. If we'll listen to him.

And obey him. Let's pray.