**KEY VERSES**

‘Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.’ (Philippians 1:6)

‘I am confident that the Creator, who has begun such a great work among you, will not stop in mid-design but will keep perfecting you until the day Jesus the Anointed, our Liberating King, returns to redeem the world.’ (Philippians 1:6 *The Voice*)

‘You’re here to be light, bringing out the God-colours in the world.’ *(*Matthew 5:14 *MSG)*

**Introduction**

Do you have that friend who, as soon as they walk into a room, makes the room light up? (Maybe we have friends that do the opposite too …?).

I wonder what it is that they have that makes them shine like they do? I cannot imagine that their life is without a care in the world. It may be that they naturally have a positive spirit, always seeing the bright side of life.

Many of us have chosen joy, through the understanding of God’s love to us and by the sacrifice of his son, Jesus Christ – giving us freedom from our sin and the opportunity to live life in relationship with him.

In a world of many demands and pressures, we hear a lot about the importance of our mental health and the need to practise some self-care. Our confidence and wellbeing often take a beating by the impact of the world around us.

Today we want to remind ourselves of where our confidence comes from – to hear again the reassurance of just how amazing, special, unique and loved we are, not by anything that we do, but simply because each of us is God’s child and loved by him, more than we can ever fully comprehend.

**Creator**

One of the most amazing experiences in life is to hold a newborn baby in your arms. There is a fascination in holding and watching the most perfect of all creations simply sleeping in your arms (let’s ignore the moments of screaming through the middle of the night, just for now!). In that moment, we see a perfect example of our creator God in action. From the moment of conception, God is doing his work, in the secret of that mother’s womb.

Psalm 139:13-14 says, ‘For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.’ This is not just about our physical being – this is about who we are.

We hear today more and more about mental health and our wellbeing, and this is probably something that many of us have struggled with at some time or another. Surely this has something to do with the world forgetting who our creator is. We have forgotten just how miraculous our very existence is; we have forgotten in whose image we are made.

Someone once said that ‘God don’t make no junk!’ And Paul writes in Philippians: ‘I am confident that **the Creator**, who has begun a great work among you, will not stop in mid-design, but will keep perfecting you until the day Jesus …. returns to redeem the world’ (*The Voice*)

When we can really accept and believe that we are part of his creation, then our lives are transformed, knowing we are loved, cherished, valued, and have a part to play in God’s work on this earth.

**Commitment**

We seem to live in a world that is very transient – one in which some people are reluctant to commit to things. Even when you try to commit people to a date to meet, they might not reply until very late, almost as if they are waiting to see if they get a better offer!

‘Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.”’ (Matthew 16:24-25)

God’s ways and values are different from those of this world. Jesus spent so much of his ministry turning perceptions and understanding upside down.

God requires from us a commitment to him, that in the self-denial, we gain life itself.

**Confidence**

Paul says, **‘Being confident of this**, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.’ (Philippians 1:6)

In what or in whom do we put our confidence?

We can often put our trust and confidence in other people, who inevitably will let us down. Or we invest in material things that will not last or we might get bored of. We live in a world that entices us to believe that what we own determines who we are.

If you speak with any confident person, the biggest battle they are likely to have faced is the belief in themselves. The success of a sports person is not just about their physical strength but also of their mental strength.

Paul writes, ‘I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me’ (Philippians 4:13 *NKJV*). This does not mean I can do absolutely anything, all the time. But it is reassurance that God will give us all we need to do what he requires of us when we need to do it. Our confidence is in him.

 **Continuance**

‘I am confident that the Creator, who has begun such a great work among you, will not stop in mid-design but **will keep perfecting you** until the day Jesus the Anointed, our Liberating King, returns to redeem the world.’ (Philippians 1:6 *The Voice*)

We know full well that no one is perfect, despite some thinking so from time to time! We know that we are never going to get everything right and we will continue to make mistakes. But God calls us to aim for perfection, for completeness, in his strength.

Perhaps one of the greatest struggles for Christians today, in a world that says everyone can do whatever is right for them, is working out how we live relevantly by the standards that God sets for us. It has to be an ongoing process that comes by living in his word and with him by our side guiding us each day.

There’s a saying which goes, ‘Don’t practise until you get it right; practise until you never get it wrong.’ To perfect something, we must practise over and over again. For that moment of getting it right, there are hours of practice and practice. Think of footballers - the amazing free kick does not just happen, it is hours and hours of practice, repeating over and over again.

We are works in progress, and God continues to call us to be the best version of ourselves.

 **CONCLUSION AND REFLECTION**

**Creator** – God is our creator and the creator of all things, who knows us well and calls us to fulfil his purpose in this world.

**Commitment** – God requires commitment, a dedication to spending time listening and learning from him.

**Confidence** – our confidence is in him alone.

**Continuance** – We continue to strive for perfection! To be the very best that we can be, with God’s help and direction.

When we give of ourselves to God, let us do it not out of a sense of obligation but from a heart of desire to give thanks to our God for who he is and what he has done for us and is doing in us.