



Finish What You Started

“For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work among you will complete it by the day of Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 1:6

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to desire and to work for His good pleasure.

Philippians 2:12-13

In my studio are numerous sculptures that have not been completed. It has always been this way. I eventually do get around to completing some of them. Sometimes someone will see one and want it in its unfinished state, and I give it to them. I have even had another artist ask if they could have it and finish it, which they did. And some of them just continue to be unfinished, collecting dust, ending up in other parts of the house, the small ones often ending up in drawers or boxes. Maybe someday I will finish them, maybe not. Life is busy and I am just doing it for fun. But God is not like this.

God finishes what He starts. I remember as a brand new believer reading this verse, and memorizing it. Whenever it seemed that living as a Christian was a hopeless endeavor, I would remind myself of this verse, remind myself that God finishes what He starts. My sanctification is not dependent on my ability to buck up and overcome sin thru the power of my flesh. It is God who is at work in me, changing me into the likeness of Jesus Christ, slowly but surely. Each year I notice the changes He has made in me. I am different. I am more like Jesus, more like the things the Bible says about me. And the changes are from the inside out, not from the outside in. I am not accomplishing them thru some power or grit of my own, but it is the Holy Spirit of God inside me that is changing me. It is amazing.

That is not to say that I have no part in it. When the Spirit directs me, I must follow. I must let the Spirit do His work, being obedient to God’s leading, to God’s word. It is sometimes like a dance or like following a map or road signs on my way to a destination. Other times it is more like a horse or a donkey being dragged by its bridle. But slowly God moves me in the direction He intends, and I become more loving, more kind, more gentle, more compassionate, more humble, more patient, more obedient, etc. I am becoming less like a wild bull and more like the man He has called me to be, created me to be. My part is to go along, to be led by the Spirit. It is truly a wonderful experience. He is not finished with me yet, but we have come a long way. I say we, because it is me and Him, me and God’s Holy Spirit. I am not alone in this. None of us are. It is the dance of sanctification. Like hiking through the Rocky Mountains with a friend, it is a grand adventure full of awe and wonder. It is truly an amazing thing to be a part of.

I've always told my four sons that they are going to go to Nineveh, whether they like it or not. All of us who are called by God will go to Nineveh eventually, just as Jonah did, and accomplish God's purposes for our life. The only question really is how will we get there – by boat or by whale? The choice is ours to make. We can be like a young couple dancing on their wedding day, or like a dog being dragged to its bath because it has rolled in a dead fish again. We decide how we get to Nineveh. I recommend the boat.

God will finish the work He has started in you, rest assured. And it is His Spirit that is at work in you. The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead, so do not lose hope when times are tough and the going is rough. Take comfort in the knowledge that ultimately your sanctification is in the hands of the Master Sculptor. He has not set you aside in his studio to collect dust. You are not lost in a drawer or a box. He has not given you away, or given up on finishing the work He started in you. He is still working on you each day. There is great joy to be found here. There is an incomprehensible peace when we cooperate with God and let Him do His work in us. Each moment is filled with wonder, if we will only open our eyes to see it.

What are some of the ways that God has changed you since you were first born again? Are you a more loving person today than you were then? Do you feel compassion more for others now? Are you more humble, kind, gentle, patient, joyful? Do you depend less on circumstantial realities for your happiness than you did then? Do you depend more on Him daily to show up in your life and the lives of those around you? Do you hear his voice more clearly now when He is speaking to you?

Would you describe your process of sanctification more like a dance or more like a stubborn mule being dragged to the barn? What are some ways that you can let God more freely work in your life? Maybe you have not been born again yet, and God has been calling you into a relationship with Him – what is holding you back? Maybe you are still struggling with a besetting sin – why is this sin so hard for you to overcome? What is driving it? Why does it matter to you? I pray that you will let God's Spirit lead you and guide you in all things. That you will follow Him all your days, and that the work that He began in you will be finished by the "day of Jesus Christ". I pray that you will ask God to finish the work He has begun in you, and then let Him do it.

Lord God Almighty, I come before you in Jesus name, and confess that I often lose heart and feel like I am hopeless in my struggles with sin. I am harsh when I should be kind, rough when I should be gentle, impatient when I should be patient, arrogant when I should be humble. I pray that you would finish the work that You began in me, that you would continue to change me from the inside out. Help me to fully cooperate with your Spirit. Teach me to be obedient to your voice and your word. Give me ears to hear and eyes to see so that I do not miss your presence when you make yourself visible in my life. I pray that you would sanctify me in your truth, in Jesus name, amen.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 3:5-6

Other Verses to Consider

“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”

Romans 8:28

“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”

Ephesians 2:8-10

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

¹² So then, brothers and sisters, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— ¹³ for if you are living in accord with the flesh, you are going to die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Romans 8:11-13

(recommend reading all of Romans chapter 8)

“In all labor there is profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.”

Proverbs 14:23

“for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.”

1 Timothy 4:8

“Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”

Philippians 4:11-13

“Looking at them, Jesus said, “With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God.””

Mark 10:27

“Now may the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever.

Amen.”

Hebrews 13:20-21