

“He who started an good work in you” Philippians chapter 1 verse 6

It's worth reading the full verse. Paul says “I am sure of this, that he who started a god work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ.” We all know we are not perfect, and will never be in this world, but if we know God through faith in Christ, we are on a journey which leads to perfection one day.

This is because we Jesus inhabits our lives by his Holy Spirit, who is not just a passenger. He is actively working in our lives to make us into what God intends us to be in the end. That's not to say that he doesn't love us and accept us just as we are now, even with all our faults and failings, but he loves us too much to leave us as we are now. He has plans for what he wants us to do, but deeper plans for what he wants us to be.

Paul tells the Ephesians Christians that they are “God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared ahead of time for us to do.” The word translated “workmanship” also carries the meaning of “poetry” or “masterpiece”. We are not just mechanical creations, but God's creative artistry. I know a fine artist. He spends weeks, months and even years working on a painting, carefully attending to each and every tiny piece of colour and texture until it is right.

What are we going to look like when God's masterpiece is completed? John's first letter tells us. He says "Dear friends, we are already God's children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is." Paul assures us that we will be conformed to the image of Jesus.

I suppose my artist friend might at times look at a painting he has been doing and realise that it is never going to be right. Then he might paint over it, or discard it completely. But God is not a human artist. We might fear that we are lost causes, that God might finally conclude that we will never become what he wants us to be.

But the work he is doing in us is something that he has initiated. His own reputation is invested in its completion, and bringing us to the place he finally wants us to get to depends far more on his ability than ours. I am convinced that he is able to use us in ways that are unique to wherever we may be on our journey at any one time.

And we have the assurance of scripture, which tells us that, even if we are still not fully formed by the time we come to the end of our lives, yet “we will all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.”

Prayer

Father, thank you for the work that you have been doing in my life since the day I came to faith in Christ, and even, I suspect, before that. I know that my nature fights all the time against the changes you want to bring in my life, but I am grateful that your will is sure to be fulfilled in the end, and that when I see Jesus at last I will know him because I will be like him. Help me to submit to what your Spirit wants to work in me. In Jesus' name, amen.

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