



# God Will Complete His Work

Brownsburg Church of Christ

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## Introduction:

I have never run a marathon. Or even a half-marathon. I respect people who have. I admire them. I put them on a bit of a pedestal. There is one huge reason why I've never run a marathon; in fact, never even tried to run one. It's not because I hate running. Though I hate it, I used to run quite a bit and even dreamed of doing a marathon. It's not because my knees hurt when I run. My knees hurt when I play Ultimate Frisbee, but I play that anyway. It's not because I don't have time. I find time to do a lot of things. No, the real reason I've never run a marathon is because I'm convinced I can't finish. I'm certain there is just no way I'd make it. Even when I was doing my best at running I was convinced I couldn't complete a marathon, so I never did. I never even tried.

I've known some people to treat the Christian race this exact same way. One fellow told me he just wasn't good enough to be a Christian; so he wasn't going to even try. One woman told me she didn't think she could keep it up her whole life; so she wasn't even going to start. I've also seen Christians drop out of the race for the same reason. "I'm just not going to make it," they think. I once heard of a sister whose husband was not a Christian. He gave her a hard time about it. The pressure mounted and she told the brethren she just didn't think she could bear up under his pressure for the rest of her life. She quit the Lord. I've known others who struggled with some sin that just seemed to have their number. They were convinced they couldn't possibly go the rest of their lives without committing sin again, so they decided to just not try. After all, they'd rather be lost than be a hypocrite.

What is the real problem here? The real problem is not that the person is weak. The real problem is not that they lack self-control. The real problem is not that they are some kind of addict who has no hope. The real problem is they've forgotten that they are God's workmanship (cf. **Ephesians 2:8-10**). They've forgotten that they are the Master Sculptor's work in progress. And they've forgotten that God cannot be thwarted. They have neglected what Paul says about our God and His workmanship in **Philippians 1:6**.

**And 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 (ESV).**

Some suggest this merely refers to the good work of supporting Paul in his evangelism. Paul is convinced that God started the good work among the Philippians of partnership with him in the gospel and God would make sure they completed it. However, this is a good work that is until the day of Christ. This is talking about preparing them for that day of judgment and blessing (cf. **Philippians 1:10, 2:16**). We often talk about the Philippian letter as the letter of joy, and certainly it is that. However, the reason it has such joy is because it is also a letter of encouragement. Throughout this letter, Paul shows the Philippians that **Philippians 1:6** is true. He is lifting them up and in turn lifts us up to put our faith in God through Jesus Christ. We will make it—not because we are good enough, strong enough, awesome enough. We will make it because God is able to bring His work to completion.

## Discussion:

### I. What is God's good work?

#### A. **Philippians 1:9-11** demonstrates six things God is working on in the Philippians and us:

And it is my prayer that your <sup>1</sup>love may abound more and more, <sup>2</sup>with knowledge and discernment, <sup>3</sup>so that you may approve what is excellent, and so <sup>4</sup>be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, <sup>5</sup>filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, <sup>6</sup>to the glory and praise of God (ESV).

#### B. Understand God is not simply working on getting us to heaven. Certainly, those who have been completed in the preceding six ways will be with God forever in heaven. Sadly, however, there are some who don't want God's work in themselves. Sure, they want heaven. But they don't want increased love, better knowledge and discernment, to approve what is excellent, to pursue purity and blamelessness, to produce the fruit of righteousness, or to bring glory and praise to God. Rather, they hope they can check off enough rules and regulations for God to look the other way regarding their unrighteousness. That is not the work God is doing. God's workmanship is not about getting us to heaven despite our unchanging sinfulness. God's workmanship is about changing us, growing us, lifting us out of the sinful mire in which we have so willingly entrenched ourselves. Do you want these six things in your life? If so, God can work on you. If not, God doesn't have any work for you.

## II. God will complete His work.

- A. If you want these six things in your life, you have probably been repeatedly stressed by your failure to measure up. You have likely thought about giving up and quitting. But let me repeat our introductory point. Don't put your faith in yourself, put it in God. He will complete His work.
- B. Consider the following passages.
  1. "And 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" (**Philippians 1:6**, ESV). God will complete the good work He has begun.
  2. "This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God" (**Philippians 1:28b**, ESV). Salvation is from God.
  3. "And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (**Philippians 4:19**, ESV). God will provide all we need to complete His work in us.
  4. "But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself" (**Philippians 3:20-21**, ESV). The Lord Jesus **will** transform our lowly bodies.
- C. Don't give up. Don't quit. Don't back down. Why? Because you are strong enough? No. Because you can work harder and make it? No. Because you just don't really know how awesome you really are? No. Because God is working in you, and He will complete His work. Put your faith in His work, not yours.

## III. Three examples of God's completing work.

- A. *Jesus*: In **Philippians 2:5-11**, God completed His work in Jesus Christ. Jesus left the glories of heaven. He left behind the radiance and obvious glory of His deity to be one of us. In fact, at one point it looked like God's work was going to be overthrown. Rather than being seated on a throne, Jesus was nailed to a cross. How many, looking on that scene, believed God's work had failed? But what happened? God completed His work. Jesus Christ was exalted in His resurrection, ascension, and enthronement. He is sitting at the right hand of God, reigning from heaven. God completes His work.
- B. *The Philippians*: In **Philippians 2:25-30**, Paul uses the partnership the Philippians have had with him in the gospel as an illustration of God completing His work. The Philippians had commissioned Epaphroditus to take a gift of support to Paul. However, because of his journey he became sick. Paul said he nearly died for the work of Christ. It looked like God's work through the Philippians wasn't going to be completed. However, God had mercy on Epaphroditus, the Philippians, and Paul. He healed Epaphroditus who was able to "complete what was lacking in [the Philippians] service to [Paul]" (ESV). God completes His work.
- C. *Paul*: In **Philippians 4:10-13**, we see God completing His work in Paul. Do you remember what Paul's illustration of sin was in **Romans 7:7-8**? Covetousness. However, by the time Paul writes to the Philippians he is able to say, "I have *learned* in whatever situation I am to be content...I have *learned* the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need" (ESV; emphasis added, *ELC*). The man who was once so plagued with covetousness of every kind that he cried out "wretched man that I am" is now able to say that he has learned contentment. God has been working in him. God completes His work.

## IV. Satan's attacks

- A. Throughout Paul's letter to the Philippian Christians, we can ascertain several attacks Satan uses to get us to give up. He wants us to quit and he will attack in any way he can to get us to despair and abandon God.
- B. *Suffering*: In **Philippians 1:29-30**, Paul talks about the suffering that both he and the Philippians were going through. We don't know the exact extent or cause of the Philippians' suffering, though it is apparently persecution driven. Paul's suffering is his imprisonment and all that went along with that. We know from the story of Job that Satan will use suffering to get us to abandon God.
- C. *Distress*: In **Philippians 2:26**, Paul wants to ease the distress the Philippians had felt when they heard about Epaphroditus' illness. This distress is an anxiety caused by normal life circumstances. People get sick. It happens. Some of them even die. In fact, eventually, all of them do. Distress might be caused by financial trouble, relational trouble, health trouble, spiritual trouble, family trouble. It may be distress about something in your own life or something in someone else's. Whatever the case, Satan wants us to believe life should be stress and distress free. If we are going through distress, God must have abandoned us, we might as well abandon Him.
- D. *Confidence in the flesh*: In **Philippians 3:2-11**, Paul talks about the confidence many put in the flesh. This applied especially to those who relied on the Old Law and its legal requirements like circumcision in the flesh. However, this is not just a problem for those who want to trust in circumcision. Anyone who puts their trust in their own ability and strength to keep any legal requirements from God are falling prey to this

attack. It is a little different than the others. In fact, folks who put their confidence in the flesh don't even realize they are abandoning God. They still go to church, read their Bibles, even pray. The problem is rather than focusing on God as the source of their life, they focus on their strength and hope God will notice how awesome they are. This is like that Pharisee in **Luke 18:11-12**.

- E. *Imperfection*: In **Philippians 3:12**, Paul shares a shocking point. Even as a Christian, even as a Christian for several years, even as an apostle, he wasn't perfect yet. I've been in multiple venues where I asked for a show of hands of anyone who was perfect yet. This means Paul wouldn't raise his hand either. I've asked for people to indicate by a show of hands if they still sinned sometimes. This means Paul would raise his hand. In this verse, Paul indicates imperfection might be a reason some quit pressing on. But he will keep pressing on. We are growing. God is giving us progressive victory over sin. But when we struggle and fall, Satan is right there to beat us down. "See, I told you you couldn't do it. You might as well give up."
- F. *Struggles with brethren*: In **Philippians 4:2-3**, we see another shocking point of Satan's attacks. Let's face it. If we are imperfect, that means we are imperfect in our relationships with each other. That means even here in the midst of our congregational relationships, we can have some serious problems. Paul tells about two sisters who are having some kind of problem with each other. Usually relationships are great in a local congregation. But sometimes they can turn really sour. They can carry on for years and impact all kinds of issues in the congregation. Satan wants us to get frustrated with each other and then attribute the weaknesses of those in Christ to Christ Himself. If all these people around us are just hypocrites, we might as well not even bother trying to serve the Lord with them.
- G. No doubt, this list is not an exhaustive one. However, I share it because we need to see that Paul's belief in God's complete work is not based on some pie-in-the-sky, rose-colored-glasses view that ignores reality. Paul knew there were problems. Paul knew there were attacks. Paul knew there were reasons the Philippians might question the working of God. He didn't ignore that. Rather, he looked these full in the face and still claimed that God was completing His work in the Philippians. God will complete His work.

#### V. What God does to complete His work in us.

- A. *God uses even negative circumstances to complete His work*: In **Philippians 1:12-14**, Paul looks his own imprisonment right in the face. Surely that indicated that God wasn't working. But Paul saw otherwise. Because of his imprisonment, the gospel was spreading in surprising ways even into the imperial guard. Plus it was giving many brethren confidence to speak the Word. God will complete His work.
- B. *God uses even enemies to complete His work*: In **Philippians 1:15-18**, Paul talks about people who were enemies of Christ. They were teaching about Christ, but not really to promote Him. They were trying to make Paul look bad. Surely this demonstrates that God is not working. But Paul saw otherwise. God can use even these enemies to complete His work and plan. Because though they were enemies, Christ was still being preached. God will complete His work.
- C. *God makes sure the people we need are around us*: In **Philippians 1:19-26**, Paul was certain he would be delivered from this imprisonment. Why? Because the Philippians needed him. Don't miss how important this is in the context of God completing His work in the Philippians. God would make sure the necessary people were around. Of course, that is also seen in **Philippians 2:25-30** when God spared Epaphroditus. God will complete His work.
- D. *God provides the necessary sacrifice*: In **Philippians 2:5-11**, we are reminded of the sacrifice of Jesus. God completed His work in Jesus even in negative circumstances, even at the hand of enemies. But the reminder is if God would sacrifice His Son so He could work in us, how much more will He do whatever else it takes to complete His work in us (cf. **Romans 5:10; 8:32**). God will complete His work.
- E. *God will transform us*: In **Philippians 3:20-21**, Paul reminds us of what is coming. We need to think beyond just what is going on now and remember the promise God has given us of the end. Our Savior does have the power to transform these lowly bodies to be like His glorious body. God does have that power. God will complete His work.
- F. *God will guard us by His peace and presence*: In **Philippians 4:4-9**, Paul talks about prayer and mental focus. As we surrender to God in prayer and proper thinking, His unfathomable peace will settle around our hearts. As I heard one person put it, God will send a troop of soldiers to stand guard over the citadel of our hearts, removing the anxiety, distress, and struggle that so want to attack. God will complete His work.
- G. *God will teach us how to live His way*: In **Philippians 4:11-12**, Paul makes a subtle but profound statement twice. We've already noticed it in a previous section of this lesson. Paul "learned" contentment. How did he learn it? He was taught it. By whom? By God. I can't help but think of Paul's own statement in **Titus 2:11-**

**12**, in which he claimed the grace of God trains us to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives. God, by His grace, taught Paul contentment. He will teach us, train us to live His way. God will complete His work.

- H. *God will strengthen us*: I've heard many people cite **Philippians 4:13** as their favorite verse. "I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (ESV). God is strengthening us. And His strength gives us the ability to do all those things we thought we couldn't. All those times we thought about quitting because we can't make it denied this promise of God. He strengthens us. God will complete His work.
- I. *God will supply our every need*: In **Philippians 4:18-19**, Paul brings up the example of Epaphroditus and the Philippian aid to his work again. Just as God made sure that Paul was fully supplied for his work, Paul explained that God would also provide for the Philippians all that they needed. He has given us everything that pertains to life and godliness (**II Peter 1:3**). He wants us to make it. He wants us to surround His throne for eternity. He wants us to be with Him for all time. He will give us all we need to make that happen. God will complete His work.
- J. The big question is do we believe in this God? Do we believe His promises? Do we believe He is telling us the truth in this letter? Or will we believe the father of lies who wants us to neglect every encouragement this letter is giving us?

#### VI. What must we do?

- A. I'm guessing at this point, some of you are afraid. Some of you are afraid that I'm saying Christians don't have to do anything. Some hear that God will complete His work and conclude that means we don't have to do any work. However, Paul's conclusion is exactly the opposite. Note **Philippians 2:12-13**. Paul's faith was completely and totally in the completing work of God. His confidence was in God's work, not his own. But did Paul say, "Guess I'll sit on my hands and wait on God to move me?" No, his direction was to work out our salvation. Then again in **Philippians 3:12-14**, Paul said that even though he wasn't perfect, he was going to keep pressing on. He was going to forget what went before and simply press on for what is ahead, the resurrection from the dead. To Paul putting faith in the work of God was not the reason to do nothing; it was the motivation to keep working for God. To Paul, God will complete His work, therefore we can keep working. Notice some of the directives Paul gives throughout this letter.
- B. *Live worthy of the gospel*: In **Philippians 1:27**, Paul told the Philippians to live in a manner worthy of the gospel. That is, they should live in a manner that befits the good news of salvation that comes through the death of Jesus Christ. He then explained what that looked like in **Philippians 1:27-28**. First, it means standing firm in one spirit. Second, it means striving side by side for the faith of the gospel. Third, it means not being frightened by our opponents. No doubt, we fear we can't live worthy of the gospel. But that is what this whole study has been about. Any command God gives, He provides the power to follow. God will complete His work, therefore we can keep working.
- C. *Count others more significant than yourselves*: In **Philippians 2:3-4**, Paul explains how we should treat each other. We've already learned that one of Satan's attacks is trouble in our relationships. We might want to give up. But we know God will complete His work. Therefore, we need to strive to treat each other properly, pursuing a deeper unity among this congregation. We may look at interpersonal problems we've had and think it is impossible, but Paul tells us to work on it. Why would we try? God will complete His work, therefore we can keep working.
- D. *Don't grumble and complain*: In **Philippians 2:14**, Paul demonstrates that there is more to working out our salvation than just going through the motions. We must also do so cheerfully, not grumbling or complaining. Why would we? God has saved us. He is saving us. He is working on us. Let's be happy as we see the progress and growth. God will complete His work, therefore we can keep working.
- E. *Hold fast to the Word of life*: In **Philippians 2:16**, Paul explains that we need to hold fast to the Word God has given. That means we need to get into it. We need to know it. We need to live by it. We need to let it govern us and our lives. There are many competing voices. Many sources of supposed wisdom. But we need to hang on to God's Word. That is where life can be found. God will complete His work, therefore we can keep working.
- F. *Count everything else as loss*: In **Philippians 3:7-11**, Paul explains that he pressed on by giving up anything that would get in the way of pressing on. He wanted to know Jesus Christ and the power of His resurrection so badly that wouldn't let anything get in the way. If it did, he cut it off. God will complete His work, therefore we can keep working.
- G. *Watch those who are good examples*: In **Philippians 3:17**, Paul explains that we should look up to people who are making it. There are good examples. No doubt, we all struggle. But there are Christians who have grown. Paul himself was an example of that. Some have said if you want to be rich, you have to do what rich

people do. If you want to be poor, do what poor people do. There is a great deal of truth to that. If you want to grow in Christ, then be around growing people and do what they do. This really will work. God will complete His work, therefore we can keep working.

- H. *Stand firm in the Lord:* In **Philippians 4:1**, Paul teaches us to stand firm in the Lord. Hang on to the Lord. Understand that the only place you can stand firm is in Him. Don't let go of the Lord. He is working on you if you will just hang on. Look to His promises. Look to His faithfulness. Stand firm in Him. God will complete His work, therefore we can keep working.
- I. *Pray:* We all know **Philippians 4:6**. Paul tells us to combat anxiety through gratitude filled prayer. When we do that, God's peace will guard us. Why pray? Because we know God is working. God will complete His work, therefore we can keep working.
- J. *Rejoice in the Lord always:* I took this one out of order, but it caps off our list nicely. In **Philippians 4:4**, Paul repeated his theme of joy and rejoicing. We can rejoice in the Lord. Why? Because He is working on us. But not only that, because we can know that He will complete the good work He has started in us. We don't have to quit because we are afraid we'll never make it. We don't have to quit just because we've messed up. We can hang on to Him. We can hang on to faith in Him. And we can rejoice. We can take joy in our God who works and who never fails. God will complete His work, therefore we can keep working and we can rejoice.

#### Conclusion:

To me, the most encouraging principle in this letter to the Philippians is found by connecting **Philippians 3:12-13** with **1:21-23**. Paul explains that he is not perfect, rather he is pressing on. However, he was absolutely convinced that if he died at that time, he would be with God. He knew God was working on him and God would complete His work in this life and the next.

Perhaps you have considered quitting. You are in good company. Probably most who are listening to this lesson have considered it. I have no doubt there are days when you tell yourself you just can't make it. Don't listen. That is a lie that has infiltrated your heart from the father of lies himself. You can make it. Not because you have the strength and power. Not because I know you can try harder. Not because you just need to believe in yourself more. I know you can make it because I know who is working on you. And I know He will complete His good work. So don't quit. Keep working. Stand firm in the Lord. And above all, keep on rejoicing!