

Natalie Bell
September 13, 2026

God Isn't Finished With Us Yet!
Philippians 1:3-11

Philippians was a ***letter from Paul***, written to the church he founded in Philippi. It would have been read to that congregation, so let's ***listen*** carefully to it today:

3 I thank my God every time I remember you,

4 constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you,

5 because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now.

6 I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.

7 It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

8 For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. 9 And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight 10 to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless,

11 having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

Listen to verse 6 again: ***I am confident of this, that the one who BEGAN a good work among you will bring it to COMPLETION by the day of Jesus Christ.***

Have you ever started something you DIDN'T FINISH?

Maybe a renovation? Or a book? A project?

Or even a new year's resolution?

Or a dream for the future?

I usually finish things...

but I always have a pile of HALF-FINISHED quilting projects at home.

We ***ALL KNOW*** what it is to start something and not finish....

Why?

Because maybe we ran out of ***time, or money, or interest***, right?

Maybe we needed to move on to the next thing,

Or thought we shouldn't focus on that project anymore!

Have you ever wondered if your ***LIFE is an abandoned project?***

If we're honest, ***ALL*** of our lives ARE, right?

We keep *falling, and failing*.

So it's only natural to wonder if God is still working in our lives!

We might even wonder if God has given up on us!

But here Paul reminds us—from prison, no less—
that **GOD IS NOT FINISHED WITH US.**

That God will keep working on us,

Until the day Jesus returns.

Imagine him writing from PRISON, to dear friends,

To give them that kind of **HOPE!**

HOW could he do that?

How can he say God will keep working on us, and never give up?

Well, think about WHO GOD IS.

In Jeremiah 18, God is compared to a **Potter**, and we are the Clay.

The Potter can do absolutely anything to use and re-use the clay.

Later, in **Jeremiah 29:11** God promises a plan for us---

a plan to give us a future with hope.

In the Psalms, God is often referred to as a Creator,

In **Psalm 139**, we hear:

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.

² *You know when I sit down and when I rise up;*

you discern my thoughts from far away.

³ *You search out my path and my lying down*

and are acquainted with all my ways.

⁴ *Even before a word is on my tongue,*

O Lord, you know it completely.

*For it was **you who formed** my inward parts;*

you knit me together in my mother's womb.

¹⁴ *I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*

God is the Creator who works ON us, and IN us,

And in our world.

It is God who **BEGAN** the good work in us.....

Life and faith is **NOT about our own efforts!**

It is about God's grace at work in us.

We didn't **START** the work,

And we do not have to **SUSTAIN** it or **COMPLETE** it!

UNDERSTANDING THAT makes all the difference in our faith.

Which is not what our world tells us.

Our society encourages us to always improve our own lives,
to put a happy face on everything,

and look like we have it all together, right?

We are always urged to compare ourselves,

And try to keep up with others...even if it's impossible!

Think about the BIGGEST section in any BOOKSTORE,

It's called '**SELF-HELP**'.

Same with the overwhelming majority of social media posts,

They are about 'improving ourselves'---

by telling us what to buy, eat, wear, or how to act!

Social media influencers—exist for this!

And what is the RESULT of all this pressure?

Well, we often feel **BAD** about ourselves,

And inadequate,

In our work or finances or family....

In how we look, or where we are in life.

Think of recent JUDGEMENTS against Facebook and their influence on teens.

Teens take these messages to heart,

and might decide they no longer want to live.

But it affects all of us, doesn't it?

It's kind of like the effect of near-perfect PICTURES

of people and families...on Facebook, or Christmas cards,

giving us the impression that those people have it all together!

*(when we all know that it might just be the 30 seconds that they were not
screaming at each other!)*

Paul wants us to know that there is a BETTER way to live.

We can STOP trying to be like others,

And STOP trying to make our own lives better.

And instead, we can rely upon God, and what God can do in our lives.

Have you ever watched HGTV?

Sometimes it's **IMPOSSIBLE to envision** what a renovation will look like, right?

We see the demo work, everyone swinging a sledgehammer to the kitchen cabinets,

We see the dust, the wood framing....

And *worse*—we witness their discovery of termite damage, or water leaks,
(*I mean, they need some drama in those shows!*)

*And when they talk about moving the kitchen, adding a bathroom,
making it ‘open-concept’.... maybe we can see it, but often we can’t picture it!*

But those designers are super confident—

They have a master plan,

And no matter what kind of leaks or damage or unseen issues arise,

They are sure they can deliver a renovation that will make dreams come true!

Well, Paul is talking this way---about OUR LIVES!

He is *completely CONFIDENT* in God’s plan and God’s work!

How can he be so confident?

Well, he knows that God is *always faithful*.

And God is *loving*.

And God *sustains and empowers* every one of us---

Just as God did for Paul.

Any idea what CHALLENGES Paul faced?

In 2 Corinthians 11, Paul recounts being beaten, imprisoned, stoned, shipwrecked,
but God sustained him!

Do you remember PAUL’S STORY?

He started as a *zealous Jewish leader named Saul*,

Highly educated, and *willing to persecute Christians*.

And one day, he was walking on the road, when he was blinded by a light,

And he heard the voice of Jesus saying...*why are you persecuting me?*

After that experience, Saul was given

A NEW IDENTITY AND A NEW MISSION---

he became **PAUL**, *a zealous follower of Jesus*,

called to preach and teach and help people become Christian!

So when Paul says that GOD IS THE ONE who started the work in us,

And will complete it---he knows what he’s talking about—*firsthand*.

We might want to give up on ourselves, or one another,

But *if God didn't give up* on Saul,
 If God gave *that man a second chance*,
 Even a new mission and ministry---
God can give ANYONE a second chance,
 Even us!
God is always at work—creating masterpieces—like us!

When we see a messy, dirty, bare bones construction site,
 It's ***HARD to see a masterpiece***, right?
 And we might feel this way with *our own lives*, right?
 We have messy relationships, broken families, stressful work, crazy schedules,
 strained finances, and dreams that seem out of reach---
 So, it can be pretty challenging to see a masterpiece in the works!

But God is a DIVINE ARTIST, and God sees a masterpiece.
 God is in the business of taking broken pieces and making a beautiful *mosaic*.
 God is a *Potter*, who keeps working with the clay,
 No matter how long it takes!

Because God has a PLAN, and God knows the future,
 God knows that all the delays and disasters,
 All the pain and suffering we face---
 And how ***NONE of that is the END of our story!***

Paul reminds us in *Romans 8:28 that in all things God works together for good!*
 God can ***use everything*** in our lives for good—everything.
 Just like using every strand of yarn for a beautiful tapestry.

Paul says: ***I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.***
By the day of Jesus Christ literally means, at the end of this life....
 So, God is working on us until our heavenly life begins!
 The Christian radio station I listen played a testimony of a woman who describes her husband's battle with cancer as
being healed here or healed in heaven, but either way, healed.
 That's a powerful attitude and perspective, isn't it?

If we take God at HIS WORD—that God isn't finished with us yet,
 What ***should we DO***, right now, as followers of Jesus?

What if we started *by LOOKING BACK?*

At just how far we've come?

Sometimes we only see an unknown future, and we feel scared or down.

But what if we looked back, to see how far *God has already brought us?*

In the Bible, God often encourages people with words like:

"Remember, I am the God who brought you out of Egypt..."

Just the *act of remembrance* can bring us hope, peace, and a renewed trust in God!

After we look back, we can LOOK TO GOD'S PROMISES.

Believing those promises is not easy, but it sure is powerful.

What if we memorized verses like Jeremiah 29:11?

*For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord,
plans to give you a future with hope.*

*Looking back, looking to God's promises,
can HELP US TO TRUST in God's work and power.*

And what happens when we TRUST?

We can *REST* in what God is doing, instead of trying to do it all ourselves!

Remember the image of the *Sailboat Church?*

How we can rest in the power of the Holy Spirit in our sails,

Instead of trying to use our *own power, like rowing a ROWBOAT!*

Rowing is exhausting, and burns us out!

*Instead we can SURRENDER---to God's work, God's power,
And God's creative construction...*

using all the pieces of our lives, to make a masterpiece!

We DON'T HAVE TO BE BOTH THE POTTER AND THE CLAY!

We are just clay—God is the Potter!

If we let God work, in trust and faith,

we can *avoid the pain and exhaustion* from trying to do everything alone!

Does this mean we are JUST PASSIVE?

Absolutely not!

Looking back, looking ahead, trusting, surrendering—that is work!

We are not passive participants in the process of God's work,

We are *participating through our own TRUST, FAITH, AND OBEDIENCE.*

Friends, hear the GOOD NEWS of the Gospel today:

God is not finished with us!

God started a good work in us, and God will bring it to completion.

You are a masterpiece—in progress!

If we can ***believe that, trust in that, and surrender*** to that---

We can find the **JOY AND PEACE** of allowing God
to make us into ***new creations!***

And for that, all God's people can say together, Amen!