

Unfinished Business

I. **Michelangelo started forty-four statues but completed only fourteen. In a museum in Italy you can see his thirty unfinished works. There are huge blocks of marble with only a hand or a foot completed. Are our lives like those unfinished statues? Is our potential for service still locked up within us?**

A. Some of the saddest and most frustrating things in life are the things that are unfinished.

Show Pictures

- Unfinished Dreams – Unfinished Education – Unfinished Books
- **Unfinished Relationships – Unfinished Projects - Unfinished Life**

1. It's sad because you have already paid the price to start.

Luke 14:28 *“For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost, to see if he has enough to complete it? “Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’”*

2. It's frustrating because in most cases it's not because they weren't able to finish, it's because they weren't willing.

a. **It's not because of lack, but because of laziness.**

Proverbs 12:27 – *“A slothful man does not roast his prey, But the precious possession of a man is diligence.”*

Proverbs 18:9 – *“He also who is slack in his work Is brother to him who destroys.”*

b. People can finish books but they have to be willing to sift through a ton of dirt in order to gain an ounce of gold.

c. **People can develop a gift or ministry if they are willing to embrace the fighting, failure, and frustration.**

B. **The “Good News” for us who are Christians is that God always finishes what He starts.**

Philippians 1:6 - *“And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.”* NLT

“There has never been the slightest doubt in my mind that the God who started this great work in you would keep at it and bring it to a flourishing finish on the very day Christ Jesus appears.”

THE MESSAGE

1. He is known as the :
- Alpha & Omega
 - **Beginning & End**
 - Author & Finisher of our faith

2. **This scripture is a guarantee that God will finish what He started.**

a. The proof that He will finish is found in the provision of the start.

b. The faith to finish is generated through the knowledge that He started.

3. God starts the “good work” during this life but He will finish it at the start of the next life.

1Corinthians 15:51 – *“Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.”*

a. There is an imputed righteousness, which happens through our faith in Jesus Christ.

1) This is what theologians call “positional righteousness.”

2) It’s this “positional righteousness” that guarantees our ultimate or “permanent righteousness” through the resurrection of the dead.

b. But we are able to get started now because we have been given the “Helper,” the Holy Spirit.

1) It’s His job is to take what we already are inwardly and begin to work it outwardly into our lives.

2) This is called “sanctification” or what some call “progressive righteousness.”

3) Jesus dies for our positional righteousness

4) The Father raises us to our permanent righteousness

5) The Holy Spirit descends to help us with our progressive righteousness

c. In other words, Jesus starts the work, the Father completes the work, and the Holy Spirit helps us make progress in the work.

1) As a result, the converting of a soul is the miracle of the moment, but the manufacturing of a saint is a work of a life time.

2) And though I will never be sinless in this life, because of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit I will sin less and less.

C. In the “sanctifying” part of this process we have a part to play is this “good work” being accomplished.

1. We don’t initiate, and we do not terminate, but we do cooperate.

2. We can either slow down or speed up the process by how much or how little we cooperate. The wildernessForty Years or Forty Days?

D. Here are two practical things we can do to cooperate.

1. Set Realistic Goals

a. **How do you eat an elephant? - Small drops of water in time will hollow out a stone.**

b. God's way is "little by little"

Deuteronomy 7:22 - "And the LORD your God will clear away these nations before You little by little; you will not be able to put an end to them quickly."

c. Jeremiah 48:11-12 - The Spirit uses the "Vessel to Vessel" process

1) **The imagery here is that of purifying wine.**

2) The "vessel" is something that God is trying to do in our lives that is designed to tax us, to stretch us, to push us beyond our comfort zones into the next level.

3) **The first thing that the new "vessels" will do is expose impurities, which come in the form of:**

- weaknesses - inconsistencies - attitudes - feelings of inadequacy
- **selfishness** - **Anger** - **pride** - **self-sufficiency**

d. Let me give you some personal examples:

<u>Vessel</u>	<u>Shape</u>	<u>Impurities</u>
- Prison	(Round)	Arrogance & Independence
- Share my faith	(Oblong)	Fear & Intimidation
- Teaching Vessel	(Triangle)	Inadequacy & shyness

e. **Some examples from scripture.**

1) Jacob - God changed him from deceitful and scheming brother, to humble loving brother by pouring him into the vessels of exile and servant hood.

2) **Joseph - God changed him from arrogant proud brother. To loving and compassionate leader by pouring him into the vessels of slavery and incarceration.**

f. This is how the Spirit moves us forward in our progressive righteousness

Psalm 84:7 - Romans 1:17 - 2Corinthians 3:18

1) **Each new vessel will require more strength and more faith from us.**

2) Which will then produce more glory for us.

2. **Sow Regularly and Generously - Galatians 6:7 - "Don't be under any illusion: you can not make a fool of God! A man's harvest in life will depend entirely on what he sows."**

a. In order to sow regularly you have to understand the three basic laws of sowing and reaping.

1) **1st Law - Seeds determine the fruit.**

- Sowing and reaping refers to all of your behavior. - *"You shall be treated as you have treated others. Your deeds will recoil upon your own head."* Obadiah 1:15
(All behavior is a boomerang)

"However you want people to treat you, so treat them, for this is the Law" Matt 7:12

"Don't pick on people, jump on their failures, criticize their faults — unless, of course, you want the same treatment. Don't condemn those who are down; that hardness can boomerang. Be easy on people; you'll find life a lot easier. Give away your life; you'll find life given back, but not merely given back — given back with bonus and blessing. Giving, not getting, is the way. Generosity begets generosity." The Message - Luke 6:37-38

- **All of your behavior will return:**

Deception will return - 2 Timothy 3:13 - Judgement will return - Matthew 7:1-3

Unforgiveness will return - Matthew 6:9 - Mercy will return - Matthew 5:7

Blessing will return - Luke 6:31-38

2) 2nd Law - There is always a waiting period between when you sow and when you reap.

- If bad seed got you into a bad place, then good seeds will get you into a good place.
- **New seeds = New crops**
- If you want a better harvest, then sow better seeds.
- **This will be difficult because you will have to eat the bitter fruit of the seeds you sowed before while you are sowing good seed.**

3) 3rd Law - You always reap more than what you sow

- **This is a blessing if you are sowing good seed.**
- It is a curse if you are sowing bad seed.

b. In order to sow generously, you have to sow not expecting anything in return in this life.

- Generosity is defined as "a desire to promote prosperity and happiness at no cost."
- **You can't extend kindness with an agenda**
- The moment you attach a condition or requirement to your kindness you strip it of its power.
- **Kindness pays most when its done for no pay**
- Kindness is most powerful when it is done without thought of profit.
- **Our Sacrifice and suffering in this life is eternally linked to our rewards in the next life.**
- 2 Corinthians 4:17 - *"for this momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison."* NASB
- ***"These hard times are small potatoes compared to the coming good times, the lavish celebration prepared for us. There is far more to this than meets the eye."* Message**