

FINALLY!

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I think a lot about our remodel project... Every week I examine the progress (walls painted, restroom counters installed, doors hung, carpet on order). It is becoming what we had imagined! And one day soon—before Easter 2017—the new sanctuary will FINALLY be completed!

What are you waiting for, with eager anticipation?

- A new baby?
- A new job?
- Graduation?
- Christmas?

Romans 8:15-23

¹⁵ So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶ For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. ¹⁷ And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.

¹⁸ Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. ¹⁹ For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. ²⁰ Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, ²¹ the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. ²² For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us.

Here is the end of this passage from The Message:

Romans 8:21-25 (MSG)

Meanwhile, the joyful anticipation deepens. All around us we observe a pregnant creation. The difficult times of pain throughout the world are simply birth pangs. But it's not only around us; it's within us. The Spirit of God is arousing us within. We're also feeling the birth pangs. These sterile and barren bodies of ours are yearning for full deliverance. That is why waiting does not diminish us, any more than waiting diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the waiting. We, of course, don't see what is enlarging us. But the longer we wait, the larger we become, and the more joyful our expectancy.

Did you get that last statement? *“The longer we wait, the larger we become, and the more joyful our expectancy.”*

We wait... until... finally!

Can you feel it? Swelling, eager anticipation!

Now, let's apply that imagination to the promised redemption that Jesus Christ has bought for us.

How long has it been since you received the new birth? For some of us, it has been a long time. And we are still pressing on in faith, as Paul said, *“to possess that perfection for which Christ first possessed me.”*

Philippians 1:6

And I am sure that God, who began the good work within you, will continue His work until it is finally finished on that day when Christ Jesus comes back again.

Let's unpack this wonderful verse from the apostle.

“I am sure that God”

Paul reminds us that God is DEPENDABLE. His promises are sure. As said Moses: *“God is not a man, so He does not lie; He is not human, so He does not change His mind”* (Numbers 23:19), and the psalmist: *“God's Word is forever settled in heaven”* (Psalm 119:89).

Elsewhere, Paul affirmed, *“All the promises of God in Christ are ‘Yes’ and in Him ‘Amen’”* (2 Corinthians 1:20). And Isaiah concluded, *“His words always accomplish the purpose for which He sent them”* (Isaiah 55:11).

Such assurance is GOOD. It's a comfortable feeling and a happy contemplation. Assurance FUELS my part(nership with God), as we'll see again in 3:12.

“God, who began the good work “

We ought never to forget that this was HIS idea. He INITIATED the work of our salvation. He planned it from the beginning; not in reaction to our sin, but in anticipation of our need.

And, it is a GOOD work.

Why is it GOOD? Because it is MERCIFUL (looking past our sins with forgiveness), it is GRACIOUS (showing kindness that we never deserved), it is STEADY (Christ praying over us, Holy Spirit working within us), it is ETERNAL (having hope in this life AND the next), and it is CERTAIN (backed by the promise and power of God Himself).

“The good work within you”

This good work is an INTERIOR project. Jesus promised, *“The Holy Spirit is with you, and He shall be IN you”* (John 14:17).

Also, this good work is PERSONAL, for *“Anyone who declares that Jesus is the Son of God has God living in Him”* (1 John 4:15).

“Will continue His work until it is finally finished”

God is FAITHFUL to continue what He has started. His work has an END-DATE and a certain conclusion, which Paul describes:

“It is finally finished on that day when Christ Jesus comes back again”

God will continue what He has begun until THAT (specific) DAY—the Day when Christ Jesus RETURNS (from heaven to earth).

For now, God’s work remains UNFINISHED (though it is always in progress). We may confidently say, “God is not finished with me yet!” “I am a work in progress!”

But let us not forget, “There is coming a day...!”

This wonderful verse expresses God’s part in this saving work. But you and I also have a part to play, without which our salvation cannot be completed. Paul announces it in the third chapter of this letter.

Philippians 3:12

But I keep working toward that day when I will finally be all that Christ Jesus saved me for and wants me to be.

Let’s see what he wanted us to learn:

“I keep working”

This is MY part in the salvation process; it is my partnership with God.

It is FUELED (“I keep”) by my assurance that God is doing HIS part (remember 1:6?).

It is “work” because it involves EFFORT. NOT the effort to DESERVE, but the effort to RECEIVE. To RECEIVE HIS LOVE in spite of my faults and weaknesses, and to GIVE HIS LOVE to others in spite of their faults and weaknesses. These challenge every one of us.

“Working toward that day”

We are working with a GOAL in view (a finish line before us), and it is this: *“Above all, you must LIVE AS CITIZENS OF HEAVEN, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ”* (Philippians 1:27).

“That day when I will finally be all that Christ Jesus saved me for and wants me to be”

WHAT A DAY that will be! What a day that will FINALLY be! Not a day just to *do*, but the Day we will finally BE—be ALL that CHRIST dreamed for us, and paid for with His life. Remember who started this. This is not just *your* dream; it is HIS!

Salvation is about all that He WANTS me to be (Christ’s likeness in me), and all FOR WHICH He saved me (God’s purpose for my life)—finally fulfilled!

It is a joint project. You cannot achieve it on your own, and God will not do it without your FAITHFUL and COOPERATIVE PARTICIPATION. His grace and power, plus your faithful obedience.

God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, has given His very best for you. *Will you give your very best for Him?*

It is the investment that promises the greatest return: the SALVATION of your soul and the FULFILLMENT of your God-given purpose.

Colossians 3:1-4

Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God’s right hand. ² Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. ³ For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.

I am reminded of the lyrics of an old hymn, *“What A Day That Will Be.”*

*There is coming a day
when no heartaches shall come*

*No more clouds in the sky,
no more tears to dim the eye
All is peace forevermore
on that happy, golden shore
What a day, glorious day, that will be!*

*There'll be no sorrow there,
no more burden to bear
No more sickness, no pain,
no more parting over there
And forever I will be
with the One who ransomed me
What a day, glorious day, that will be!*

*What a day that will be,
when my Jesus I shall see!
And I look upon His face,
the One who saves me by His grace
When He takes me by the hand
and leads me through the Promised Land
What a day, glorious day, that will be!*