

"Chip a Canoe"

"Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

--Philippians 1:6

In one episode of the show "Home Improvement" the main character, Tim, is in his backyard, as happened in every episode, talking over the fence with his neighbor, Wilson. While they talk, Wilson is working on a hollowed-out log with a chisel and sandpaper, meticulously shaping it exactly as he wants. He tells Tim he's carving a canoe. Tim remarks that it must be really difficult, and Wilson responds, "Not really, Tim. You just take a log and chip away anything that's not a canoe."

That would take more talent and foresight than Wilson realized. To be able to see the end product from the beginning and visualize what he was making. A canoe, after all, barely resembles the raw material from which it was carved. Wilson had to take that log and completely empty it of its center, while chipping off all the rough edges on the outside, and finally sanding everything down to smooth out every curve, crevice, and blemish in the wood.

The Bible tells us that God our Father is continually at work to conform us to the image and likeness of His Son. When we look at what we were before we were saved, and compare that to what Jesus is, we see how monumental this task really is. But God saw from the beginning what the end product would look like. At our salvation, he hollowed us out, tearing away the inside of all that we were to begin the process of making us like Christ.

As the Craftsman continues His work day by day, He reshapes, reforms, and remakes our hearts. He removes, little by little, all of the crud and gunk of what we once were, and replaces it with His character. The moment we trusted Christ, we received the Holy Spirit of God to dwell in us and become part of us forever. So the raw materials are already there. And God will be faithful to complete the job, like a man in his backyard on a Saturday, determined not to quit or be deterred or distracted until his building project is complete.

Each day, we become a little more merciful, because Jesus is merciful. We become more loving, more compassionate, more wise, and more diligent in service to perform acts for the kingdom of God.

But sometimes we lose sight of what God is doing and forget to rejoice in it when it grows unpleasant. He starts to sand an area we would prefer He let stay rough, and we protest. Or we look at ourselves and remember the old nature He is doing away with to make us new, and we say, "God, being

conformed to the image of Your Son is too great a task. It can't be done. I'll always be the bumpy log I started out to be. I'll always fail to be pleasing to You. You'll never be able to make me any more righteous than I am today; so You might as well not even try. Just let me go my way and do what comes naturally. It's too difficult for You to make me what You want me to be."

And He just shrugs, and says, "Not really. I just take what you are and chisel away everything that's not like Jesus." And indeed, for Him, that great task is not difficult.

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