

May 31, 2026

“God’s Work in Us”

Philippians 1:3-6

Intro:

When King David had Bathsheba brought to his bedroom, I’m not 100% sure that he was thinking that what he was doing was wrong. He was the king, after all and this was the kind of thing kings did. It was a sign of their power and position. But things didn’t go as planned. She got pregnant. That complicated things for David. At that point, he was thinking that he had to somehow legitimize this unborn baby. Most of us are familiar with the story... he first tries to create an opportunity for Bathsheba’s husband Uriah to have a legitimate claim to this pregnancy. When that doesn’t work, he then has Uriah killed and officially marries Bathsheba – which while messier, still legitimizes the pregnancy. Once that was done, everything went back to normal.

Then Nathan the prophet comes along and tells David a story about abuse of power, which is really a parable about David’s own abuse of power in his sin towards Bathsheba and Uriah. It is at this point that David clues in that he has done something wrong, or if you prefer, admits to doing something wrong.

David’s response is what I want us to focus on here. For most of us, when we are caught doing something wrong – cheating on a test, stealing something, sneaking out when we weren’t supposed to, faking a sickness to get out of work in order to go play golf, and so on – our reaction (if we are honestly sorry about what we have done) is to commit to doing better. We take the opinion that better behaviour is entirely up to us, and that any forgiveness that we expect to have from the injured party rests entirely on our ability to convince them that we are changed people and will never do whatever got us into trouble again. We work extra hard or extra long, we go out of our way to be nicer to people, go to extremes to make sure that the people who need to know where we are, know where we are at all times.

David's response is different. He doesn't make a promise list of how he is going to be a better person, and all the good things he is going to do to make things right. As we read from Psalm 51, he goes straight to God and says "change me". He understands something about our nature that we also need to grasp. And it is the first part of the next lesson in our baptism classes.

Growing as a Christian:

After we have spent time in baptism class talking about who Jesus is, what a Christian is, and what the purpose of the church is, we then move on to talking about what happens next. After the decision to follow Jesus, and after there has been a public profession of faith through Baptism, what happens next?

Committing our lives to Jesus is just the beginning. We now come to a lifetime of learning about Jesus and growing as a Christian. We don't "arrive", or "know everything" just because we got baptised. We have to take the time and make the effort to get to know Jesus more and more, and to grow in our faith. When we first become a Christian, we are like babies – brand new to the born-again life. But we can't stay infants for eternity. We have to grow. And that is what the fifth lesson in the curriculum focuses on. Growing.

Christianity has a unique feature that no other religious practice has. That feature is that we are ultimately not the ones responsible for our growth. Let me unpack that a bit before you run me out of the church as a heretic. We do have a role to play, and we will get to that next week, but growth doesn't happen based on our efforts alone.

It begins with God working in us. The thing that David went straight to was asking God to change him, to create in him a new heart – a new and renewed desire to follow and be obedient to Him. David didn't make excuses or promises of being better; he knew he couldn't. It is only God that can restructure our character and nature to come into line with His own.

Next week we will talk about how we participate in this, such as daily reading of our Bible and prayer, but if God is not the primary worker then all of those

practical things we should do will be hollow. We might gain information, but we won't realise a deeper life change.

God Started it; He will Finish it:

So David goes back to the source. He asks God to create in him a clean heart and to renew a loyal, or right, spirit within him. He wants to grow. He wants God to prune out of him that which caused him to sin, and graft in a deeper understanding of God, so that he can have a closer relationship with him.

The Apostle Paul, in Philippians 1, tells us that God is the one who has started this work in us. And just like God's work with creation, He doesn't just get the thing going and then wander off to some other project. Paul is confident that not only is God the initiator of this new life of faith that we have, but He is also the primary figure to see that new life come to completion. He has taken the controls. He knows what the blueprints read and mean, and He knows where the road of faith we are travelling on ultimately leads to.

Our growth as Christians is God's work in us. This is something that should give us confidence. It should make us relieved that it isn't all up to us, but that isn't how we react.

Conclusion:

As parents, we want what is best for our kids – we want them to do well in their school work and to succeed in all aspects of their lives. The problem is that they don't always want to listen to us. They think that they know better than we do, and so we end up with a recurrence of the same conversation: It starts with Cindy or me offering advice on how they can get ahead of something – usually schoolwork – or how they could be more efficient. They then reply with a list of reasons as to why what we are suggesting won't possibly work and there is no way they will be able to finish something or whatever the case may be. After this has gone back and forth long enough for everyone to be thoroughly frustrated and upset, I usually end up in a one on one conversation with whichever child it is, trying to explain that we aren't trying to be mean, we are trying to help them so

that they will be able to succeed. What I then ask is that they stop fighting our efforts to try and help them.

For some reason, we as humans have the default setting of fighting against help that is given to us for our growth. We do the same thing with God. He is at work shaping, changing, restoring, and renewing us and we are at work fighting against Him. We need to stop doing that. We need to swallow our pride and replace it with humility. We need to humble ourselves and allow God to do the work in us that He knows needs to be done. He is a good God. He knows you better than you know yourself. He knows what will break you, and what will build you up. He knows what the best version of you looks like, and that is what He is trying to build. He sees your holy potential and is at work so that you can reach it. But if we don't humble ourselves in submission, then God's work gets frustrated.

Next week we are going to look at some of the practical ways we can work with God instead of against Him, but for this week I would encourage you to carve out some time to take an honest look at how God is growing you, and where you are working with him, and where you are not. For the areas you are not working with him, ask yourself what it is that is causing you to fight against that growth. Then release that control and with humility, give it back to God.

Let's pray.