

REVIEW: WHAT WE ARE SEEING

1. We are tying in the life of Gideon with the faith we see in Ephesians 3

Eph 3:16–19 (ESV) that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ⁽¹⁷⁾ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ⁽¹⁸⁾ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ⁽¹⁹⁾ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

A. What we are looking for is to define what real faith looks like

2. The flow of Ephesians 3

A. Paul starts by praying that God will strengthen us in the inner man by His Spirit

- 1). Strengthened to desire what is on offer in this prayer – it is fantastic
 - a). God give us the desire - Don't let us settle for so little when you want to give us so much
 - 1a). A conscious awareness of Christ in our life – as real as anybody we know
 - 2a). To experience that love of God that surpasses human understanding
 - 3a). To be filled with the fullness of God

2). Strengthened to do what we must do for that to happen

- a). V. 17 Paul says this is the experience of those that Christ is at home in their hearts
 - 1a). Where we aren't blocking off any areas from him – he has access
- b). We saw the incredible things that happen when we surrender

Jn 14:23 (ESV) Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, **(There is the surrender – now the results)** and my Father will love him, and ***we will come to him and make our home with him.***

1a). Watch what else happens when that happens

Jn 14:21 (ESV) Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him ***and manifest myself to him.***”

- 2a). There is that amazing reality of Christ in our life
No longer talking about him but walking with him – talking to him – enjoying him
- 3a). This is when we start experiencing his love – because he's manifesting himself
This is when we start enjoying that fullness of God

3). Then Paul says this happens through faith

Eph 3:17 (ESV) so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...

- a). Trusting that God really wants us - to enjoy this kind of Christianity – this is for me
- b). Trusting that full surrender to God is really worth it – flesh and devil will tell you it's not

Thought: I love the way the Bible works – it calls us to action – obedience – service - surrender

A. But that call is always preceded by why it's worth it

- 1). Here is what will happen so do this – don't be passive
- 2). God puts in the desires by telling us what is available to us
 - a). Then as we response we experience what he's told us is available

B. We saw last week that true faith will always move us to obedience – it is never passive

- 1). True faith always begins with God – and is always sustained by God
 - a). But it will always call you to action – to obedience
 - b). An obedience we discover is empowered by God

Transition: We could say the successful Christian life always three stages – let's look at that

Php 2:12–13 (ESV) Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, *work out your own salvation* with fear and trembling, ⁽¹³⁾ for it is *God who works in you, both to will and to work (will and to do)* for his good pleasure.

1. The three phases in Philippians 2 - how God works

- A. **First phase** – God works in you to will – He initiates those desires in us
- B. **Second phase** – it moves to us – we work out those desires he has worked in
 - 1). We aren't working for our salvation – we are working out what God has done in us
- C. **Third phase** – it moves back to God – He gives us the power to work those desires out
 - 1). He meets us at that point of obedience with the necessary power

2. This is exactly what is happening in Ephesians

- A. The Spirit works into our inner man that strong desire to have what he is offering
- B. By faith we work that out – we pursue it – we do whatever is necessary
- C. Then when we begin to work it out by faith – what is necessary for Jesus to be at home in our heart
 - 1). We make that choice – step out to do it – God strengthens us to do it
 - 2). God starts it with desire – we respond with a YES – God strengthens us to live that YES out

Transition: Turn to Joshua 3:1 to see these three stages worked out

3. The three phases of God's working

Jos 3:1–5 (ESV) Then Joshua rose early in the morning and they set out from Shittim. And they came to the Jordan, he and all the people of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over. ⁽²⁾ At the end of three days the officers went through the camp ⁽³⁾ and commanded the people, “As soon as you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God being carried by the Levitical priests, then you shall set out from your place and follow it. ⁽⁴⁾ Yet there shall be a distance between you and it, about 2,000 cubits in length. Do not come near it, in order that you may know the way you shall go, for you have not passed this way before.” ⁽⁵⁾ Then Joshua said to the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.” (NIV Amazing things)

- A. **Stage one** - God initiates it – He works a desire in – by telling them what is going to happen
 - 1). You are going to see God do great wonders amongst you
You're going to go into your own land – you're going to realize the promises of God
- B. **Stage two** – The call to act – to work it out
 - V. 5 “Consecrate yourselves – give yourselves to God entirely – separate yourself unto him
 - 1). That is John 14:21 isn't it – those who respond properly will see God move
Jn 14:21 (ESV) Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, *and I will love him and manifest myself to him.*”
 - 2). That is Ephesians – surrender to Christ so he is at home in your heart
 - a). Those who do will experience the love of God in an incredible way
And will enjoy the fullness of God in your life

Transition: Here is where it usually falls apart – we see what God has to offer us

- A. But we don't want it bad enough to act – so we don't experience it
Our Christianity stays dull and lifeless
- B. But watch the necessity of the second stage – how God waits until it happens

Here is the Second Stage: Here is how you are to work it out – the faith and obedience it takes

Jos 3:6–13 (ESV) And Joshua said to the priests, “Take up the ark of the covenant and pass on before the people.” So they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people. ⁽⁷⁾ The LORD said to Joshua, “Today I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. ⁽⁸⁾ And as for you, command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, ‘When you come to the brink of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan.’ ” ⁽⁹⁾ And Joshua said to the people of Israel, “Come here and listen to the words of the LORD your God.” ⁽¹⁰⁾ And Joshua said, “Here is how you shall know that the living God is among you and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, the

Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites. ⁽¹¹⁾ Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is passing over before you into the Jordan. ⁽¹²⁾ Now therefore take twelve men from the tribes of Israel, from each tribe a man. ⁽¹³⁾ And when the soles of the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off from flowing, and the waters coming down from above shall stand in one heap.”

A. Just to show you God will call us to risky obedience

Jos 3:14–15 (ESV) So when the people set out from their tents to pass over the Jordan with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, ⁽¹⁵⁾ and as soon as those bearing the ark had come as far as the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the brink of the water (*now the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest*),

- 1). God waits until flood season – Jordan is raging – white water – up to a mile wide
 - a). Why? Like Gideon’s army – there will be no mistake God has done it

B. So they have been encouraged – consecration to God is worth it – you’ll see wonderful things

- 1). God is going to manifest himself to you in ways that are going to amaze you
 - a). He is going to give you your land – you’ll enjoy the promises
 - b). He is going to separate the Jordan like he did the Red Sea! Amazing – at flood season
- 2). Now the ball is in your court – here is what you must do to see that – how you are to work that out
 - a). Choose 12 men who will pick up the ark and carry it across the river

C. But notice when they see God move – not when they were thinking about obedience

- 1). Not when they were talking about going across that river – being really sincere about it
 - a). Not when they were letting go and letting God – trying to be as passive as possible

Jos 3:15–16 (ESV) and as soon as those bearing the ark had come as far as the Jordan, *and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the brink of the water* (now the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest), ⁽¹⁶⁾ the waters coming down from above stood and rose up in a heap very far away, at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan, and those flowing down toward the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. And the people passed over opposite Jericho.

- 1). God did not move until their feet went into the water
 - a). That took faith to march into that rushing water with the ark in front of multitudes
What if the water doesn’t stop – do we just keep going until we are washed away

D. First stage: God works in the desire – this is what I want to do

Second stage: The people work that out by faith that leads to action - to obedience

Now the third stage: God does everything necessary for that obedience to be effective

- 1). As soon as their feet hit the water – as soon as their faith turns from good intentions to action
 - a). God moves in amazing power and they walk into those promises given before
 - 1a). *They leave the wilderness and walk into the promised land*

E. Did you notice where the water stopped – *at the city of Adam* – now get this

- 1). The ark is a type of Christ in the OT going before the people into the promised land
- 2). Protecting them from raging waters – death - a picture of judgment

Ro 6:23 (ESV) For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- a). This is a beautiful Gospel portrait
In Christ we are protected from the death Adam brought upon mankind

4. The point – the Bible calls us out of passivity

A. It tells us that God has so much for us to experience – Him and all the promises

- 1). It also tells us those who experience that are those who respond properly
 - a). You won’t experience this if you want to be a indifferent spectators in Christianity
 - b). You won’t experience this is if you just settle for having nice desires

- 1a). I feel good about myself because I have warm thoughts towards God
 - 2a). Those desires must turn to action
 - B. All this is meant to move you – inspire you to do whatever it takes
 - 1). Like I said this passage in Ephesians has placed strong desires in my heart
“Lord whatever might be blocking this – show me – remove it – help me to come to a place of full surrender. Don’t let me miss this. Trade it in for the lightness of this world.”
 - a). Don’t let me miss that experience of knowing the fullness of you in my life
 - 1a). I want this! This is too good to miss! That is what it is supposed to do
 - C. Again – this is how it always works – the offer of what is available
 - 1). The call to live the kind of life that will experience it
 - 2). The power of God that meets us as we step out to live that kind of life
 - a). You’ll see this over and over in the Scriptures
 - b). But like we saw last week you won’t ever see passivity – letting go and letting God
- Transition:** back to Gideon and how God prepared him – how he responded
- A. What have we seen in his life so far?

REVIEW OF GIDEON SO FAR: GO TO JUDGES 7

1. We’ve seen that God uses ordinary folk like us

- A. Gideon was timid, fearful, apathetic and indifferent
- B. We saw that Gideon hadn’t experienced God for who knows how long
 - 1). And he was blaming God – I feel abandoned by God
 - 2). But God said why Israel wasn’t experiencing God – it was because of their sin

2. We saw the beginning of Gideon’s personal revival

- A. God encouraged him – I’m going to use you to deliver Israel – There’s the encouragement
 - 1). Then there was the necessary response – he began to say YES
- B. God showed him there was something wrong in his own home
 - 1). He had to tear down an idol before God could use him
He couldn’t have a divided affection – God and this other god – God must be number 1
- C. Gideon said “Yes” to that first call – he worked out what God was working in
 - 1). That opens the door for the rest we see – God begins to manifest himself to him
- D. We will see Gideon come to the next YES – then the next YES – all the time responding properly
 - 1). Just YES to the next command – one YES at a time - it’s all your responsible for
 - a). But that YES opens the door to see God do great things
 - b). That YES bring growth – brings experiencing God into your life
 - 1a). “No’s” Stop all that

Transition: Gideon says “Yes” to God’s initiation – now we are going to watch God begin to develop him

- A. Moving him carnality, indifference and apathy – to enjoying the fullness of God!
 - 1). It’s all initiated by God – Gideon’s responsibility – just say YES to what God is doing
- B. Let’s look at some of the lessons Gideon must learn – we must learn too

I. GIDEON MUST LEARN TO BE GOD DEPENDENT

1. God is calling Gideon to go up against Midian and its allied forces

- A. We are told later in Judges that they have amassed 135,000 men
- B. So Gideon does what we would probably do – puts out the call for men to join him

- 1). If he thinks like me – He is probably hoping for at least 136,000 men – 150k would be better
- 2). But his plan falls short – he gathers only 32,000 men to face 135,000

Thought: If Gideon was fearful before – he is probably petrified now

2. Gideon must learn that the battle is the Lord's

A. He must learn that he can trust the Lord no matter how difficult the circumstances might look

B. How does God teach him this? He lets him try his best and fail

- 1). He lets him put that call out to Israel and fall far short of the men he thinks he needs

Thought: But God knows if he gives Gideon the victory with 32,000 men

That's not much against 135,000 but still enough that Gideon would take the glory

A. Gideon would probably to on a nationwide touring telling how he did it

- 1). Write a book "How I massacred the Midianites. The story of one man, a brilliant plan, and an amazing victory."

B. But God knows how to remove any chance of boasting

- 1). He looks at Gideons with his army of 32,000 men and says
"Gideon, we have a problem." "I know, not enough men! Right?"
"No, Gideon your problem is you have to many men"

Jdg 7:2 (ESV) The LORD said to Gideon, "The people with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand, *lest Israel boast over me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.'*

- a). God is not going to let us accomplish things that produce boasting in us
- b). Our salvation leaves us no room for boasting

Eph 2:8–9 (ESV) For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁽⁹⁾ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

- 1a). That design carries through the whole of our life

C. The reduction

Jdg 7:3 (ESV) Now therefore proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, 'Whoever is fearful and trembling, let him return home and hurry away from Mount Gilead.' " Then 22,000 of the people returned, and 10,000 remained.

- 1). 22,000 men say "Praise the Lord – grab their gear and head home"
- 2). Now put yourself in the place of the 10,000 who remain – what's going on in their mind
"Well done Gideon. Great job of leading there! It wasn't bad enough to be outnumbered 4 to 1. You had to make it 14 to 1. Way to go Einstein."

Transition: At this point it's looking like an epic fail – a total disaster - but God isn't done yet.

A. Man is so proud they still won't give the glory to God if they have victory

- 1). 10,000 against 135,000 will still probably produce even greater boasting
"It would have been something to beat them with 32,000 but with 10,000 we were awesome"

B. So God reduces the numbers again!

Jdg 7:4–5 (ESV) And the LORD said to Gideon, "The people are still too many. Take them down to the water, and I will test them for you there, and anyone of whom I say to you, 'This one shall go with you,' shall go with you, and anyone of whom I say to you, 'This one shall not go with you,' shall not go." ⁽⁵⁾ So he brought the people down to the water. And the LORD said to Gideon, "Every one who laps the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set by himself. Likewise, every one who kneels down to drink."

- 1). Keep those who lap water like a dog – send home those who kneel down to drink
- 2). 9,700 kneel down to drink – ONLY 300 lap water like a dog

C. God has now reduced them down to a place where he will get the glory

- 1). Listen, if these 300 would still boast – he would have reduced it again
- 2). But 300 against 135,000 highly trained soldiers – that leaves no doubt who gets the credit

Thought: Did you notice that everything in this story is contrary to human wisdom

- A. This is why we must pray to get his mind – he thinks so differently than we do
- B. We are content when we have more than enough – 136,000 against 135,000
 - 1). He is content when the odds are so against us we don't have a chance
 - 2). When there is absolutely NO possibility of our boasting

Point: We hate it when things look impossible – BUT GOD LOVES IT

- A. He will lead his people into impossible situations – so he is exalted
 - 1). Why because he's proud – Glory hog! No! Because he wants us to see his power
 - a). He wants us to learn to rest – to trust – even when the odds are set against us
 - b). He wants us to learn that odds don't matter when he's involved
- B. See this when he lead Israel out of Egypt – Leads them right up to the edge of the Red Sea
 - 1). Mountains to left – mountains to right –Red Sea in Front – Pharaoh closing in from the rear
 - 2). Well Thanks God – we're done! No way out!
 - a). But this is just an opportunity for God to display his greatness
 - b). He is going to do something that will be talked about for 1000's of years
 - 1a). He just opens up the Red Sea and they walk across on dry ground!
 - 2a). Obstacles to God are just opportunities – remember that next time
- C. But if He blesses our plans done in our strength - what would happen?
 - 1). That would send the message - I CAN DO THIS – I don't really need Him
 - 2). And what we accomplish would be limited to the abilities of the flesh
 - a). Which is not going to achieve much for the kingdom
 - b). Plus we'd lose all the benefits of seeing Him do the impossible

Summary: So If God is going to use us as a church or as individuals

- A. He MUST let us flail and fail enough to learn the task is too big for us
 - 1). We must come to a place of need – where we finally cry out
“I can't do this...HELP... your plan... your power”
 - 2). That is a place of great strength - because you're finally depending upon Him
- B. Maybe you're there this morning - be encouraged - trust Him

Transition: There is something that will stop you from saying “Yes” – working it out

- A. Let's look at that in Gideons life

II. GIDEON MUST LEARN TO DEAL WITH HIS FEAR

1. Everybody has fear – the important thing is how we handle it

- A. We can let it PARALYZE us - stop us in our tracks - lead us into disobedience
 - 1). That is exactly what the devil want to do with fear
Nehemiah says: Neh 6:9 (NIV) They were all trying to frighten us, thinking, "Their hands will get too weak for the work, and it will not be completed."
- B. We can USE it to PUSH us - drive us to God - His strength and His resources
 - 1). Gideon though still afraid – refused to let fear paralyze him – he used it to push him to God

Transition: Since we all have fear we all need to cope with fear

2. How to cope with fear

- A. Recognize it's there - don't deny it - be real - we all have FEAR
- B. Can be used for your advantage if you handle that fear properly
 - 1). Are you going to let it *master* you? Stop you from doing what God is calling us to do

- 2). Will use it to *move* you? - towards God - His promises - His strength - His resources
How Nehemiah handled it: Neh 6:9 (NIV) They were all trying to frighten us, thinking, "Their hands will get too weak for the work, and it will not be completed." ***But I prayed, "Now strengthen my hands."***
- a). This is not going to stop me from doing what I know I should do – I can't allow that
- 1a). I'm not going to allow me to say "No" to what I should say "Yes" too
- 2a). It's not going to stop me from working out what God has worked in
- b). So Lord I'm going to do the right thing – be with me – strengthen me
- Thought:** If we learn how to handle fear in this way – it actually becomes a benefit
- A. Because it drives us to God to depend upon his strength
- 1). Then you step out into his plan and you discover he steps out with you
- B. Next week we will see that this is exactly what will happen with Gideon?
- 1). He is afraid – trembling – but he still does what he's called to do
 As he simply says "Yes" one Yes at a time – with each "Yes" God becomes more real
 As he responds to God he moves from spiritual apathy to personal revival
- 2). He experiences what we are seeing in Eph 3 – God manifesting himself and his love to him
 Being filled with the fullness of God

CONCLUSION

1. We've seen the successful Christian life has three stages - Always

- A. God initiates a desire – in that inner man
- 1). We see who he is – we see what he is offering – the potential of Christianity
- 2). It begins to stir us – awaken us
- 3). It may be a faint desire but it is enough to take the next step
- B. Our faith – our desire turns into action – we respond properly
- 1). We do what it takes to experience God – we surrender – we consecrate ourselves
- a). We ask him to help us remove whatever is blocking this in our lives
- C. As we step out into that obedience – God enables it – gives us the strength
- Point:** This is the life of Gideon
- A. He is apathetic and indifferent but God initiates a desire
- 1). He responds one YES at a time – and God changes him radically – revives him – uses him

2. We saw that Gideon must come to a place that he trusts God in all things

- A. No matter how the odds are set against him – he must learn to rest in God's power
- 1). God works that into us by allowing us to try our best and fail
- B. Until we finally say – my plan is not working – what do you want me to do
- 1). Then stepping out – trusting him no matter what the odds look like

Transition: Then we looked at what can stop us from responding - fear

3. Gideon had to learn how to use fear for his advantage

- A. Not letting it stop him – but using it to push him towards God and his strength