

Phil 3:13-14 *Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

**Blank paper on pew:** Any of the three points can change your life, but you are going to have to do work after you leave today for your life to change. I've given you a Blank page. Write down the points. Write what God says to you.

God will work in you. God will work through you. You will have to do the work. You can't drift and get where God wants you to go. You can't stay where you are and get where God wants you to go [unless you are totally and perfectly in God's will].

***I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.***

**1. Everything in life that is worthwhile is uphill. Everything.**

Today we will see this NT passage illustrated in an OT character.

Judges 6:11-13 ... *Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press in order to save it from the Midianites. 12 The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, "The Lord is with you, O valiant warrior." 13 Then Gideon said to him, "O my lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?' But now the Lord has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian."*

Gideon was threshing wheat in a wine press. Normally wheat was threshed on a hill or raised place where the wind could blow away the chaff. Gideon is down in a pit hiding from the Midianites. Every year the Midianites came at harvest time and took all the Israelites food.

Gideon is in survival mode. He is afraid, and he is not very effective. If he is going to change his life he is going to have to get out of the pit. What direction do you have to go to get out of the pit? Uphill. **Everything in life that is worthwhile is uphill. Everything.**

Gideon thinks the Midianites are the problem or he thinks God is the problem. It is natural for us to blame someone else for our problems. Midian was not the problem. Israel was the problem. **They were the problem and they didn't know it.** Maybe it is you!

**Judges 6:10 ... you have not obeyed Me.**

God had not abandoned the Israelites. The Israelites had abandoned God. Disobedience leads to distress. Disobedience is downhill.

Obedience is uphill. **We have uphill hopes and downhill habits.**

Going uphill is hard. Where have you not put in the effort because going uphill is hard? If you need to turn your life around you are going to have to go uphill.

Marriage, grades, walk with God ... **Everything in life that is worthwhile is uphill. Everything.**

Malcolm Gladwell's book *Outliers* examines the lives of successful people. He finds obscure background stories that point to their success, but the common thread in every story I have read so far is hard work. Asians do well in math, not because their IQ is higher, but because they work harder. Gifted musicians have practiced 10,000 hours. Gifted athletes have trained harder and longer.

**Everything in life that is worthwhile is uphill. Everything.**

It is easy to coast downhill, but you will never get where God wants you to go by coasting.

**v. 13b *forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead***

I want to be careful here. I want to talk about the exact place you have been wounded. I don't want to hurt you – I want to stimulate healing.

**2. You must allow what Jesus has done for you on the cross become more important than what someone has done to you in the past.**

It is time to stop looking back and start looking forward. How? Allow what Jesus has done for you on the cross to change your life by changing your view of yourself.

Judges 6:14-15 *The Lord looked at him and said, "Go in this your strength and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you?" 15 He said to Him, "O Lord, how shall I deliver Israel? Behold, my family is the least in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father's house."*

All his life Gideon has been told he is nothing. Picture him as a little boy playing Bible heroes. He says to his father, "I want to be like Joshua!" His father says, "Oh, Gideon don't you know you are the least of the least?"

He is at school. Look there's Gideon. He is the least of the least. What a wimp!

And in his head, "I am the least of the least. I am a wimp. I can't do anything." He plays this tape over and over in his head.

**What event(s) in your past has set your life on a negative, downhill course?**

It is time to leave that behind you. Jesus has died on the cross to redeem your life and change your destiny. You are not defined by your past failure. You are not defined by what someone else did to you. It was wrong. It hurt. You can't forget it. But you can stop letting it control your life. Forgive the person who hurt you. Stop playing the old tape and start playing the tape God has provided for you.

2 Corinthians 5:17 NLT *This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!*

v. 12 *"The Lord is with you, O valiant warrior."*

v. 14 *"Go in this your strength and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian."*

You are a mighty warrior. You have strength. Gideon is hiding out in fear and frustration **because he does not know who he is and whose he is.** If you are a Christian you are a child of the King!

Wilfredo de Jesus – pastor of a church in Chicago – was in Africa. He had a chance to meet with the king of a tribe in Burkina Faso. The translator said, “When we go into his chambers there will be a chair for you. Sit in the chair and look at me and speak to me, but do not look at the king. Wilfredo de Jesus did that but when he sat down he said to the translator, “Tell him I am a representative of the King of kings and Lord of lords.” The translator looked at him like he was crazy and he said, “Tell him.” The translator turned to the king and repeated de Jesus’ words in his language. The king jumped up walked over to him and said, “Will you pray for me in the name of Jesus?”

Stop living like you are who others say you are. Stop playing a self-defeating tape in your mind. Start living like you are a child of the King of kings and Lord of lords. What Jesus has done for you, what Jesus says about you is more important than anything anyone has done to you or says about you. **Quit looking back and start looking forward to the future God has for you!**

### ***v. 14a I press on toward the goal***

**3. God wants to give you a goal worth living for --** God wants to rewrite the story of your life

*24 Then Gideon built an altar there to the Lord and named it The Lord is Peace.*

Peace – shalom. Shalom means there is peace because justice has come. Shalom means there is peace because things have been set right. The Bible does not say blessed are the peace seekers. The Bible says blessed are the peace makers and sometimes we have fight to set things right. Things were not right. **Gideon had no peace. He was never going to have peace as long as he was hiding out from the enemy.**

Gideon decided to do something.

Gideon went uphill. He got out of the pit.

He stopped looking back at who he had been told he was all his life and started acting like who he really was – who God told him he was. Mighty Warrior.

He went to work to make things right in the name of the Lord.

*Judges 6:25 Now on the same night the Lord said to him, “Take your father’s bull and a second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal which belongs to your father, and cut down the Asherah that is beside it;*

Gideon decided to go to work for the Lord and set things right. He started at home. He tore down his father’s idol. We need to start setting things right by getting right personally with God.

What is God calling you to do? **Maybe the first thing you need to do is tear down whatever idol is keeping you from fully worshipping the living God. When you tear down the altar to a false God you can see and hear from the living God.**

I heard about a man this week who was a business owner and he got saved. It was a radical transformation and he decided he should be a pastor. He was praying about what to do next and God said, “You can be a pastor if you will be the pastor to all the people who work for you.” He focused on bringing spiritual transformation to his workplace.

## **Conclusion: What are you going to do?**

Not saved? You need to get saved. Today is the day of salvation.

Not following God? Repent. Today. Stop going downhill. Turn your life around.

Controlled by an idol? Tear it down.

Playing a negative, self-defeating tape in your head? Turn it off. Throw it away.

*Romans 12:2 Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.*

Create a new tape based on the Word of God.

Start uphill. Change the trajectory of your life.

Give your life to God as a blank page. Allow Him to write your story.

### **Start a new habit.**

Understand who you are and live like it.

### **Find your purpose.**

Get involved with some people who are walking with God.

### **Serve God.**