

Founder & Senior Pastor: Dr. David Anderson
Bridgeway Community Church
Series: BOLD
March 10, 2024

BOLD:
“Strength”

I. OPENING REMARKS

Last week we talked about being BOLD!

We said that instead of embracing F.E.A.R. which stands for **F**alse **E**vidence **A**ppearing **R**eal, that we were going to embrace another 4 letter word. **B.O.L.D.**

If we were going to be Courageous then we would need to be...

B - BRAVE

O - OBEDIENT

L - LOYAL

D - DETERMINED

We were able to preach through the first letter of the word B.O.L.D. which was BRAVE!

What a service! What a sermon!

If you missed last week's sermon, I want to enCOURAGE 😊 you to go back on YouTube or FaceBook to watch it.

Something shifted in our church last week. Something is going to shift again on the Sunday after Easter when I start a sermon series called DEBT-FREE! The GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE will be great! 7PM at OMR. The EASTER SUNDAY production will be phenomenal on Sunday, March 31st at 9 & 11AM in Columbia and at 10:30AM in Owings Mills Reisterstown.

But I am telling you that God is going to release something over our *lives* and over our *homes* and over our *families* and over our *finances* on the Sunday after Easter, April 7th.

DON'T MISS IT!

Let's pray before I start getting excited all over again from last week's anointing! *Hallelujah!*

- The overflow from last week is still upon me.
- The overflow from last week has been resting on my spirit all week.
- I am believing that the overflow of God's word will be your strength today

LET'S PRAY!

II. SERMON INTRODUCTION

Opening Story: *Gideon was a judge in Israel in the Old Testament book of Judges chapter 6.*

The story of Gideon is one of Pastor Jared Sorber's favorite bible stories. He preached on Gideon at Owings Mills Reisterstown campus in November of last year.

- This was a time when Israel was disobedient to the Lord and God was allowing His discipline to be upon his people for 7 years.
- It is a story about Gideon's obedience, even when he didn't feel strong enough to do what God was directing him to do.
- Maybe you find yourself in a situation where you want to obey God but you don't have the strength or faith to do so.
- The letter "O" in the word B.O.L.D stands for "obedience."
- Today's sermon is about STRENGTH.

Let's call today's message **"The Strength to Obey."**

I will pick up the story about Gideon the judge in Judges chapter 6, verse 2...

- 2 *"Because the power of Midian [DA NOTE: Midian is a place. Gideon is a person] was so OPPRESSIVE, the Israelites prepared shelters for themselves in the mountain clefts, caves and strongholds."* (**Judges 6:2 NIV84**)

- KEY WORD: *Oppressive*

The enemy seeks to oppress us!

He wants to push us down, keep us down, and dominate every area of our lives

I have taught us before about spiritual warfare and how the enemy cannot “possess” the believer, but he can “oppress” the believer.

Here we see the place of Midian being an oppressive place for the Israelites...

- *“Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples INVADED the country. They camped on the land and ruined the crops all the way to Gaza and did not spare a living thing for Israel, neither sheep nor cattle nor donkeys.” (Judges 6:3-4 NIV84)*
 - KEY WORD #1: *Invaded (v.3)*
 - KEY WORD #2: *Ruined (v.4)*

Here’s a word:

The enemy wants to take up residency and camp on the land of your life.

He wants to ruin whatever seeds you have planted. He wants to ruin any crops or increase that you would gain from your labor. Jesus said of the devil in John 10...

- *“The thief only comes to steal, kill, and destroy” (John 10:10 NIV84)*

Here, the writer of Judge’s describes the enemy of God’s people with similar words...

- *“They came up with their livestock and their tents like swarms of locusts. It was impossible to count the men and their camels; they INVADED the land to RAVAGE it.” (Judges 6:5 NIV84)*
 - KEY WORD: *Ravage*
- *“Midian so IMPOVERISHED the Israelites that they cried out to the Lord for help.” (Judges 6:6 NIV84)*
 - KEY WORD: *Impoverished*

The enemy enjoys when God's people are in poverty so they can be exploited. The exploits of poverty are never God's desire for his people. There's a difference between *poverty* and *simplicity*. If you are a believer in the King of kings you need to know that poverty is not your destiny!

Review:

God allowed the power of others to defeat the Israelites who were *oppressed, invaded, ruined, ravaged, and impoverished*.

Question:

Why?

Answer:

DISOBEDIENCE

- *“Again the Israelites **did evil in the eyes of the Lord**, and for seven years he gave them into the hands of the Midianites.” (Judges 6:1 NIV84)*
- *“I said to you, ‘I am the Lord your God, do not worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live. **But you have not listened to me.**” (Judges 6:10 NIV84)*

A Word:

God will allow other forces to overpower us when we persist in our disobedience.

- When this happens, *we lose all strength to win.*
- When this happens, *we lose all strength to contend.*
- We become slaves to that *which oppresses us.*
- We become servants to the very addictions *that have invaded us.*
- We become whipping posts for the very powers *that have ravaged and impoverished us.*

Friends, this is not pretty. In fact, it can be pretty ugly!

When we persist in our disobedience like the Israelites did, God may allow the places that we are in to overtake us.

There are times when God allows you to be in a place for a purpose...

Midian was a *place*...

Egypt was a *place*...

In these places the Israelites were *oppressed and dominated*.

But, like the Israelites, WE ARE NOT WITHOUT HOPE!

All we need is a Word from God...

Question:

How many of you know that a WORD from God can change your direction?

- *Your destiny?*
- *Your perspective?*
- *Your trajectory?*
- *Your future?*
- *Your attitude?*

We've got verse 1, 5, 6... but Lord, please give me at verse 7...

- *"When the Israelites cried to the Lord because of Midian, he sent them a prophet..."*
(Judges 6:7-8 NIV84)

Question:

HAVE YOU EVER CRIED OUT TO THE LORD BEFORE?

Is anybody glad that the Lord has heard your cry?

Some of you still haven't "CRIED OUT" to the Lord yet...

That's because some of you may still be too *prideful*.

Your oppression *doesn't hurt enough*.

Your disobedience isn't *painful enough*.

The ravaging and invasion of the devil isn't bad enough.

III. OVERTAKEN VS. OVERFLOW

Instead of experiencing the OVERFLOW of God's abundant life and love, joy, and peace, some of you are experiencing the overwhelm of being OVERTAKEN.

- You were *taking alcohol*, and now alcohol has *overtaken you*
- You were *taking drugs*, and now drugs have *overtaken you*
- You were *taking porn* and now porn has *overtaken you*
- You were *taking gambling*, and now *gambling has overtaken you*
- You were *taking food*, and now food has *overtaken you*
- You were *dishing out violence*, and now violence has *overtaken you*.

If you keep persisting with your free will to disobey God, God will give you over to the very thing that you persist in.

The Bible says in Romans 1 that due to humanity's sinful rebellion and disobedience, "*God gave them over*"!

- 24 "*Therefore, **God gave them over** in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.*" 25 *They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.*
- 26 "*Because of this, **God gave them over** to shameful lusts.*"
- 28 "*Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, **he gave them over** to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.* 29 *They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity.*"
(Romans 1:24-29 NIV84)

3 TIMES it mentions that God "*Gave them Over*"...

- GRACE: *Because of God's grace, he will hear your cry even after you have been ravaged, invaded, and impoverished by the enemy because of your persistence in obedience.*

In his GRACE, God will still allow you to “*Cry out to Him*”!

Main Point:

Somebody here today needs to cry out to God!

Another example of someone who cried out to the Lord in their distress is King David in Psalm 40. David was a murder and adulterer, but in his sin and distress, he writes...

- *“I waited patiently on the Lord and **he heard my cry!** He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God.” (Psalm 40:1-3 NIV84)*

Has God pulled any of you out of the slimy pit? Out of the muck and mire?

Has He set anybody's feet on a rock and given you a firm foundation? Has He put a new song in anybody's mouth?

IV. GOD'S GRACE & STRENGTH FOR OUR WEAKNESS

NOW, BACK TO GIDEON...

The answer to the Israelites prayers was a prophet with a word.

Gideon was a reluctant prophet with low self-esteem. Gideon questioned whether he could lead the Israelites out of their defeat and into victory...

- *“The Lord turned to him and said, ‘GO IN THE STRENGTH YOU HAVE and save Israel out of Midians's hand.’ He appealed to God and asked: ‘God, how can I save Israel? My clan is the **weakest** in Manasseh, and I am the **least** in my family.’ The Lord answered, ‘I WILL BE WITH YOU, and you will strike down all the Midianites together.’” (Judges 6:16 NIV84)*

Remember last week we saw Lord say: “*Fear not, because I am with you*” (see **Isaiah 41:10**)

IMMANUEL, one of the names of Jesus, means “*God is WITH us*”...

- *“Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for thou art WITH ME...” (Psalm 23:4 KJV)*

However, I understand Gideons reservations.

If he is from the weakest clan and is the least in his family, why would God want to use him to save Israel?

- No one is looking for *the weakest*, but the strongest.
- No one is looking for *the least*, but the greatest.

The Apostle Paul put it like this...

- *“Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me [a thorn “in the flesh,” NOT his spirit, but a bodily ailment]. But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for MY POWER IS MADE PERFECT IN WEAKNESS.’” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that CHRIST’S POWER may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, THEN I am strong.” (2 Corinthians 12:7-10 NIV84)*

Our bold strength doesn’t come from our own strength or power.

Our bold strength comes from our obedience to God and His strength *working WITHIN us...working THROUGH us...working IN SPITE of us!*

We should all be thankful like Paul was in 1 Timothy 1 when he said...

- *“I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has GIVEN ME STRENGTH, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his services. Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown MERCY because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The GRACE of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the FAITH and LOVE that are in Christ Jesus.” (1 Timothy 1:12-14 NIV84)*

Then he says in **verse 16**...

- *“But for that very reason I was shown MERCY so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his UNLIMITED PATIENCE as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.” (1 Timothy 1:16 NIV84)*

Look at that. Paul was a blasphemer, persecutor and a violent man; yet God gave him 6 Beautiful, Underserved Gifts...

- STRENGTH,
- MERCY,
- GRACE,
- FAITH,
- LOVE,
- UNLIMITED PATIENCE!

BOLD Strength comes trusting in the one who is strong. God is our strength!

The Bible says...

- *“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”* (Psalm 46:1 NIV84)
- *The joy of the Lord is our strength.”* (**Nehemiah 8:10 NIV84**)

Main Point:

J.O.Y. stands for Jesus Overflowing in YOU!

V. **CONCLUSION & PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS**

Ultimately, Gideon obeyed God and received the victory over the Midianites and his enemies.

Gideon’s life ended with this epitaph:

- *“Thus Midian was subdued before the Israelites and did not raise its head again. During Gideon’s lifetime, the land enjoyed peace forty years.”* (**Judges 8:28 NIV84**)

Praise the Lord. The Midianites and others did not raise their heads again against Israel!

The enemy was defeated because God sent a prophet with a word! Gideon and the people obeyed. Then there was PEACE for forty years. (In biblical times, that’s a generation!)

Oh God, give us a generation of PEACE!

Being obedient is not always easy, but it is *always right*.

Being obedient means that God has commanded you to do something or *not* do something and he is expecting you to adhere to his command.

God commands us to *give*, so we *give*.

God commands us to *flee immorality*, so we *flee*.

God commands us to *forgive others*, so we *forgive*.

God commands us to *love*, so we *love*.

STORY: I am reminded of a story that is told about a man who was living in sin with a woman he was not married to. He was talking to a Christian friend who questioned him about his living situation. The friend asked him if he believed that God was pleased with his immoral behavior. The man felt convicted by the Holy Spirit to move out from cohabitating (shacking) with his girlfriend. He went home to talk to his girlfriend, but was too afraid to bring the subject up to her about moving out. He finally mustered up the courage to be obedient.

After a few moments at home he said, "*Honey, I have something to tell you.*" She said, "*Great, I have something I want to talk with you about, too.*"

He said, "Ladies first." She said, "*I've been praying with some Christian ladies on the job and I am really being convicted about us living together. I was afraid to bring it up to you because I don't want you to be mad about it.*"

The man chuckled and said, "*Honey, I think that is a great idea. I was going to talk to you about the same thing.*"

Main Point:

God will always support our obedience

Yes, God will be *gracious and merciful* to us when we are disobedient. But *He desires our obedience to Him to demonstrate our TRUST in him.*

Now, let me close by giving you three practical applications...

FYI: *We will not handle the L & D (Loyalty & Determination) this week. However, I will write about both of these topics in the next Bridgeway Weekly Newsletter on Sunday, March 17th. Make sure you sign up for the campus email so you can get that free weekly newsletter. Just go to Bridgeway.cc and subscribe to our weekly email.*

Application #1: STOP DISOBEYING GOD

Application #2: START OBEYING GOD

Application #3: REPENT FOR NOT OBEYING GOD

Those are the three practical applications. But as far as your particular situation, I will allow the Holy Spirit to personally guide and apply them to you as needed...

As the old hymn goes: *“Trust & Obey, for there’s no other way, to be Happy in Jesus! But to Trust & Obey...”*

LET’S STAND & PRAY THIS PRAYER OF CONFESSION AND REPENTANCE TOGETHER ALOUD IN THE ASSEMBLY...

Psalm 51 - David, who sinned because of adultery and murder, cried out to God:

- **(MEN)** 1- *“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. 4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.”*
- **(WOMEN)** 10 - *“Created in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. 11 Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me.”*
- **(TOGETHER)** *“15 O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare you praise.”*

Amen and Amen!