

# Gideon's Army

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[0:00] Judges 6 and 7 tell us about Gideon.

Gideon. I want you to meet Gideon today. Gideon, it means one who cuts down.! And he was a nobody.

Gideon was a nobody. And where was Gideon? In Judges 6 we see that here was this man, 35 years old, in his prime.

Really a young man I call him. From my age I call him a young man. And here he was, this Gideon, he was cowering in this winepress. Cowering in a winepress and threshing wheat.

He was hiding. Hiding there. He'd taken his own little harvest and he was threshing it there in this secret place. Now normally he wouldn't thresh wheat in a winepress. In an enclosed space he'd thresh it out in an open place.

[1:09] But he was threshing the wheat in secret. He was hiding. He was in hiding. And Judges 6 verse 12 it says, And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor.

Gideon was here, this hesitant, doubtful, doubting, insecure, fearful person. But God said, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor.

God could call him that because he could see what he would become in him. It goes on in verse 14 of Judges 6. And the Lord looked upon him and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites.

Have not I sent thee? And he said unto him, O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house.

And the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.

[2:24] I shall be with thee. Singular. That's interesting, isn't it? God says, I will be with thee, with you singular, and you singular shall smite the Midianites as one man.

He was this fearful Gideon, this caring excuse of a man, this young man with little power or prestige, as men would measure such things, from a family of no regard, really a man that didn't have much going for him, as far as his CV you could say.

One man, and God was enough to win through that one man with faith. Gideon saw himself as the least in his father's house, in the weakest tribe, the weakest clan of his particular tribe.

He was an unknown, he was a nobody. Gideon was a nobody, but God says, I will be with thee.

Gideon was commissioned to lead an army, an army of 32,000.

Now they were up against it. They were greatly outnumbered. Even with 32,000, Israel was greatly outnumbered by four to one.

[3:46] The army that Gideon would lead would actually be diminished much more to just an army of 300. 97% would be eliminated from this army of 32,000.

97% would be eliminated so that only 300 would be left to do battle with the Midianites.

Just 300! Yet 300 willing, available, obedient men. Gideon was commanded to destroy the altars of Baal set up by his father and to build an altar to the Lord there.

And offer one of his father's books as a sacrifice. We see that verses 25 and 26 of Judges 6. He obeyed God and he did just that.

Tore the altar of Baal down, the altar of the idols worship and built up the altar of the Lord and he gave sacrifice there. And in Judges 6 verse 34 it says, The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon.

[5:06] The Spirit of the Lord came upon him. God's Spirit came upon him. Someone has put it, God's Spirit clothed himself with Gideon.

That's an interesting way of putting it. That God clothed himself with Gideon. Gideon was clothed with God, with the Spirit. Gideon was empowered by the Holy Spirit. But something changed there at that moment, at that instant of time. Something changed there in Gideon. It was only after Gideon was obedient to God as he tore down the altar of Baal and the idol of Asherah that the power of God fell on him.

Like one preacher put it, first obedience, then anointing. First obedience, then anointing. Gideon could have stayed in that winepress all fearful, cowering and just hiding himself away.

But he obeyed God. He tore down the altars of Baal. He built up the altar of the Lord and he was empowered by the Spirit of God. Judges 7 verse 2, the story goes on as we travel with Gideon.

[6:16] And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel want themselves against me, saying, My own hand hath saved me.

Now this is where it gets interesting. Gideon with this 32,000 strong army, God says you've got too many. You've got too many here.

Now think of it here that they were up against 135,000 soldiers, the Midianites. 32,000 versus 135,000.

That wasn't very good odds. But it was going to get worse. It was going to get worse. And why did God do this? The lesson we could learn here is how easily tempted we can be to take credit for things when they're going well.

We might take credit for things and think that's our own abilities. And then we blame God when things don't work out, when things fail. We blame God. It's like, that seems a bit of a common trait for atheists, you know.

[7:27] They say, I don't believe in God. And then they say, Oh, look what God's done. All of the misery in the world. You know, they want the blessings but they can't take the reality that God does what he wants.

And we just have to live with what God chooses to do in the ultimate end of things. You can't have it both ways. So, we're so easily tempted to take credit for the things that go well.

And our pride can be deceptive. It can be our downfall. As it says that, you know, he that thinks he stands, take heed, lest he fall. You know, the haughts in a crowd before a fall.

And our pride can be so deceptive. And that's what you could consider here. God didn't want them to be getting the credit for things that would go well. God didn't want them to get proud and arrogant.

Pride and arrogance is something that needs to be crucified. I know what you mean. It needs to be crucified. The flesh needs to be crucified. And the people would not be able to take any credit for this victory.

[8:35] God was going to get all the glory. It was to be God's glory alone that was the centre here. Not man's pride. And so, we see that in the context of Judges 6, the people were in a miserable state.

It says that in Judges 6, verse 6, we see that they'd been in oppression and poverty through some seven years. Israel had been humbled and brought to its knees to the point that in Judges 6, verse 6, it says, they cried unto the Lord.

They'd been brought to that point but they had to be humbled even more. In Judges 7, verse 3, the Lord speaks still to Gideon through the angel of the Lord.

Now therefore go to proclaim in the ears of the people saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from Mount Gilead.

And they returned of the people 20 and 2,000 and they remained 10,000. 22,000 had their tail between their legs and went back home.

[9:49] Two out of every three in the army of Israel were cowards. Two out of every three in the army were cowards, effectively.

They were fearful. A preacher said if two thirds of the people in the church were out of it, it would be better for the church and better for the world as well. That's an interesting comment, isn't it?

It's a bit like you hear the story that the world has that 80% and 20% it's the 20% who do all the work and the 80% who are just along for the ride.

But if two thirds of the church walked out then it would be better for the church because the church would be purified. That might be a good thing. Amen. Another quote here at the preacher once

reported at a conference that at his appointment the church had been so blessed with a gracious and powerful revival.

And the bishop at this conference asked this preacher how many members had he received by the meeting and his reply was that he had lost 300. And it was the greatest revival that had ever visited his church.

[11:00] Now that's an interesting thought isn't it? That sometimes the church can be benefited in that regard. Sometimes less is more. Less is more. God was teaching Gideon to obey him even when he didn't understand the reason for God's command.

Really he was being exercised to have bold faith in trusting God even though the circumstances were totally against him. To trust in God no matter what.

No matter what. And with Gideon God had found a man who trusted him who trusted him enough to follow him enough to obey and do what didn't seem to make any sense at all.

And you know sometimes we need to throw the church growth books out the window and trust the church growth book here. Verse 4 it says And the Lord said unto Gideon that people yet are too many.

Bring them down unto the water and I will try them for thee there. And it shall be that of whom I shall say unto thee this shall go with thee the same shall go with thee. And I'll pray soever I say unto thee this shall not go with thee the same shall not go.

[12:14] The sifting process goes on. It goes on today. Some backslide. They backslide. Where are they?

They haven't been for weeks. Some fall away. Perhaps due to persecution to lack of faith. Some get sidetracked into some false doctrine or some petty disagreement as we talked this morning hobby horses.

Some will fall by the wayside. The sifting process goes on and it goes on today in the 21st century.

Verse 5 So he brought down the temple unto the water and the Lord said unto Gideon everyone that lappeth of the water with his tongue as a dog lappeth him shalt thou set by himself.

Likewise everyone that boweth down upon his knees to drink. So the people were divided again here. One who lapped the water with his tongue just sort of bowing his head and just drinking the water in that way and the other who would take a hand into the water and drink from his hand.

And God gave Gideon a second test here to weed out the soldiers. Now you could say that there wasn't particularly any reason for it. There's different camps on this question.

[13:39] Some think it was a test of alertness. A test of alertness, of focus. Those that laid down their weapons on the ground and just got busy drinking, getting down on their knees and using both their hands to drink, were put in a group by themselves.

These men were focused on one thing, just to have a drink, just to quench their thirst. That preoccupied them. They occupied all their energies. They were more concerned with their personal needs than about any threat or of watching for the enemy.

Whereas the others were more vigilant because they were looking, they had their weapons ready. They were looking still as they were drinking the water. They were vigilant.

There was a difference between them. For whatever reason, God sifted and God diminished the army. Verse 6, And the number of them that left, putting their hand to their mouth, was 300 men.

But all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. They bowed down, putting their weapons down, just drinking with both hands out of the water. The 300 were in a position of alertness.

[14:47] They were alert. They were ready to move and respond to God's call. And that's something that we ought to have, isn't it? Be sober, be vigilant, because your enemy, the adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking hurt him.

He made you bow. Be sober, be vigilant. 300 men. Think of the 300. The 300. The 300, they were selected men.

They had faith in a cause they were fighting for. They didn't go back with the fearful. They were alert when they were drinking. They were ready for action.

They were willing to suffer. They were willing to stake their lives on their calling, on the cause. And they made the fullest use of their resources and left the results for God.

They had to be the most courageous, vigilant men to do this crazy thing that they were about to do. This crazy thing, like going into battle against crazy odds, armed with strange weapons and a strange tactic.

[15:58] I know my brother last Sunday talked about Gideon. He sort of inspired me to take this message today because they didn't have any weapons. They didn't have any weapons with them that we could see here anyway.

They did not have weapons that they were called to take with them to the battle. It takes the most faithful, the most courageous and the most vigilant to obey God against all the odds.

It's clear that these 300 men did not stand any chance in the natural analysis of things against these many tens of thousands, short of some kind of miracle.

That was what they needed. They needed a miracle. 300 against 135,000. What would have been the odds down at the bookie place?

What would have been the odds of that if you were a vetting man as it were? But God can use the few against the many. Even going up against 135,000 soldiers.

[17:06] Verse 7 it goes on and the Lord said up to Gideon by the 300 men that left will I save you and deliver the Midianites into thine hand and let all the other people go, every man, unto his place.

Let the other people go home. We don't need them. 300 faithful, valiant, vigilant men. That's what we need. God's plan was 300 against thousands and they were to sound their trumpets, shout for the battle and break a little plate pitcher containing a torch.

God's plan saw Gideon's army reduced and his pride crushed. All the glory would go to God, not to any human pride or ability.

Gideon went out to survey the sea and he heard this enemy soldier telling of a dream that he had, of this barley cake coming down from a mountain and striking the tent and knocking things out.

And it was a sign that God was going to bring victory to Gideon. But what was Gideon described as in this dream?

[18:20] A barley cake. A barley cake. A piece of barley bread. You know, one preacher said of Gideon, he went from being considered a great leader of men to being called a dog biscuit.

A dog biscuit, that's the kind of value of a little bread of barley. Just like a dog biscuit in value.

Gideon was symbolised in this enemy soldier's dream as a cake of barley bread.

One commentator said, barley was the cheapest grain in Palestine. It was the cheapest, most humble, most common, most everyday, most, really, everyday kind of thing that you could get at that time, as it were.

And so, Gideon, here he was in all his pride as the general of 32,000 soldiers, was brought down to the level of a cake of barley bread.

But the rest of the dream showed that God would work wonders in spite of the odds, in spite of the challenge that faced Gideon and the 300.

[19:37] He would be used by God to flatten the forces of the Midianites and the Amalekites. Little is much when God is in it. God can do much through the few.

You know, it makes me think of Churchill, you know, the chosen for a few. Now, how does it go? The few. Never in the history of the man.

All right. Don't get where God started. But, you know, there's that sense of the few. There's the battle of the few, wasn't it, against the overwhelming odds. And we read in verse 12 that the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the sons of the east lay against them in this valley as prolific as locusts for multitude.

And their camels were without number. So, it was just a horrific sight to see. And Gideon would learn that this fight was not about Gideon, his army, or even the enemy.

He had to come to that place where he was willing to surrender to the will of God. God's plan is always the best plan. And that's true for us in our lives too. God's plan is always the best plan.

[20:48] It may seem that everything's against you, but God's plan is the best plan. In verse 15, and it was so when Gideon had the dream and the interpretation thereof that he worshipped.

And he returned into the host of Israel and said, Arise, for the Lord hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian. Arise, get up, because the Lord has given you the victory over this massive Midianite army.

It says he worshipped. The sense of it is he prostrated himself on the ground. That was the kind of worship that he gave. He was totally humbled before God and totally at the mercy of God.

Brought to his knees, brought on his face in worship. Verse 16, Gideon divided the 300 men into three companies and he put a trumpet in every man's hand or a shofar and empty pitchers or jars and lamps within the pitchers.

A trumpet, these jars and these torches. What a sight it was, the faithful 300. The faithful 300, they would not leave the field in fear.

[22:08] They stood true to God, resolute in the cause and with their leader in the face of everything, knowing that they were standing with God.

Verse 17, And he said unto them, Look on me and do likewise. And behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that as I do, so shall ye do.

Gideon would set the signal for their action. It must have been this great trial, this great occasion, as they marched through the night towards the enemy army.

As they mounted their post with nothing but a trumpet in one hand and a pitcher containing this burning lamb in the other.

But God had so commanded through Gideon and they obeyed. Verse 17 tells us that. Verse 18, he says, When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp and say, The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.

[23:19] So Gideon and the hundred men that were with him came onto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch, and they had but nearly set the watch, and they blew the trumpets and break the pictures that were in their hands.

Now imagine the occasion in this dark night suddenly, whatever the sound was, that's the best I can put it, could have been a lot louder than that, and a lot longer than that, and a lot more scary than that, at the darkest hour, and then they break these pictures, smash, bang, crash.

Here were these men in their tents, having a good snooze, and that was a shock, what's going on? But think of the 300, it took great faith for these ones, who took no weapons with them, it took great faith for them to blow their trumpets and break those pictures and shine those lights, but God answered their faith dramatically by giving them a resounding victory.

God always honours faith, because faith always honours him. In Hebrews 11 verse 6 it says, God God honours faith, faith honours God.

Verse 20 it goes on, and the three companies blew the trumpets, woo, and broke the picture, smashed, bang, crashed, and held the lamps in their hands, in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands, to blow with oil, and they cried, the sword of the Lord, and of Gideon.

[25:08] Will you join the 300? Will you join the 300? The 300, the band of the faithful souls, who will not be driven from truth and duty, nor slip into compromise and sin.

Join up, join up, join the 300. They acted in unity. It was in one accord, it was at one signal, in one act of unison, in unity.

At verse 21 it says, and they stood, every man in his place round about the camp. They stood, every man in his place. There is a post of duty for you, for each of you, for each of us.

There is a post of duty. It speaks of faithfulness, of obedience and of courage. They stood and they stood back and allowed God to bring a great victory as the enemy camp was thrown into confusion and disarray.

They stood and stood back and God acted. And all the host ran and cried and fled. Verse 22 in the 300 blew the trumpet.

[26:26] Woo! And the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow. Even throughout all the hosts. Every man was striking his fellow with his

sword.

You know, just grabbing their sword and rising out of their drowsy slumber. Grabbing their sword and just slashing and cutting and hitting. Turning their swords upon each other in this mad panic. And it goes on. And the host fled. God's salvation does not come to those who are strong but those who are weak.

God can do the impossible. It was an impossible feat. It was an impossible battle. God can do the impossible. He can do the impossible for you. He can do the impossible for you.

Do you not believe that? He can. God can do the impossible. God can do what man cannot do. God's salvation comes to man.

[27:31] Desperately helpless man. Man who are sinners. Man who are helpless to save themselves. This is what happened here. God's deliverance happened.

God's deliverance, God's salvation, God's victory is the same concept. God's salvation, God's deliverance happens when it seems impossible, when it seems our sins are so ugly and heavy and vile.

God's salvation happens. Not that we can claim any pride or place for it, but he can bring salvation to the sinful of the sinful, to the uttermost, the guttural most.

God can bring victory. He can bring victory into your life. Trust him. Trust him now. Trust him now. It was a spiritual victory for these ones.

They didn't have any carnal weapons. They didn't have any weapons. Certainly it's not recorded in the account that they had any other weapons other than the trumpet and the jars and the lambs.

[28:46] And chapter 8 verse 4 it says none were lost. Not one was lost of the 300. Not a single one. That would be just impossible to consider really wouldn't it?

What can we learn from the account of Gideon? What can we learn? Let me put it to you some things we can learn. God talks about a remnant.

Romans 11 5 it tells of a remnant. According to the election of grace. There's a remnant. There's a remnant. God has a remnant. He has a people and he always has had a people.

He always has had a people through the word of God through the pages of church history God has always had a people that were his people. God does not want men and women to be prideful.

He told that that was a clear message to Gideon wasn't it? That he was not to take pride. God desires us to depend upon him.

[29:45] That's what Gideon had to do. Not to be rebellious or independent but to depend upon him. We see that God wants to demonstrate his glory through the weakest of the weak.

Through the powerless. Through the helpless. Through those who need to utterly depend upon him. That's what the 300 had to do. they had to utterly depend upon him.

When they blew that horn and smashed those jars and waved the lights around they were at the mercy of the enemy. They could have been wiped out in a blink of an eye.

But God uses the least to be glorified. God loves to be glorified in people. That's a wonderful truth isn't it? Just like we have this treasure in earthen vessels.

Another picture you could consider from the taking into account those earthen vessels here. You could consider that maybe it's the light of our witness that could be through just earthen vessels such as we.

[30:49] Just clay pots. Some of us are crack pots but we're all clay pots hopefully that God can use. Sometimes those clay pots have to be broken so that his light can shine.

God loves to be glorified in people. He uses the smallest group. He uses the little bands of men and women through church history. The faithful ones.

The little companies of faithful ones who will weather the storms and brave the elements and stand fast through persecution and remain firm in a time of falling away and keep their hearts right.

Keep their hearts right. Back in the dark ages some reformers got it right, some got it half right, some didn't get it very right. Some were killing their own.

The Anabaptists were killed by some of the reformers. The people who believed that you don't baptise babies, you baptise someone who made a confession of faith in Christ. They were slaved

by their own, by Protestants.

[31:51] God has always had his remnant, his remnant people and God is glorified in them. And Gideon's incredible shrinking army was the perfect place for a miracle.

And we need to get to that place, brother. We need to get to that place, sister, where we come to the place where God can use us, to get to that place where God says to you, my strength is made perfect in your weakness.

strength. Maybe that's why we ought to feel weak sometimes. Maybe that's why we have afflictions sometimes. Maybe that's why we don't always have such a rosy story to tell.

Because his strength is available for us. God always has a remnant. And he can work miracles with 300 men, trumpets, jars and torches.

Out of Gideon's army of 32,000, God could only use 300. God always has a better plan than we do.

[32:51] You know, humanly speaking, why would you leave the mass often at home? 97% was it? That you'd leave at home. Why would you do that?

Doesn't make sense. 99%.

God is glorified as we trust him. And God always has the best plan. It's like Peter, as he fished all night, didn't catch a beam.

And Jesus says, go and launch out into the deep and let down your men. And they caught fish.

Peter's plan was to forget fishing that day. He'd have just about enough of it.

But when he obeyed the Lord, when he followed God's plan, God acted. Gideon planned to mark him to battle with 32,000. But God had a different plan.

Sometimes we make our own plans in life. We think we're going to do something. We get all excited about something we're planning to do. It seems like this is what we're really committed to do. But sometimes God's got a different plan for us.

[33:52] And we sometimes just have to accept that. Well, we should always accept that, shouldn't we? David was just a shepherd, but God had a different plan for him to be king.

Job was this just, wealthy man who just wanted to worship God and love his family and enjoy his life.

But God had a different plan for Job. There's many stories we could tell of such things. So God's plan is sometimes different from man's plan.

God always has a remnant. He's faithful people, faithful to love him, to follow him, to live for him.

And Gideon needed to whittle down the army to the army of true soldiers, more than a multitude of nominal ones. That was a sifting process and that's a good thing. It's a good thing for us to be sifted.

[34:49] In God we find our true strength. We need a new army of Gideon in this hour.

We need a new 300 as it were. We want to have an enlistment tonight. in the 300.

The new army as it were. A remnant people. If you're not in the army you can sign up tonight. Not by any glory of your own but because he has issued the call and the door hasn't closed on the ark as it were.

In Noah's time God shut the door. He said time's up. The Bible says today is the day of salvation. Now is the accepted time.

Friends if you're outside of Christ then you're eternally doomed today in your present state. And I urge you today to consider that very soberly today and consider where you stand with God.

[36:19] Will you join? Will you buckle your knees under his mighty hand and realise your absolute need of him today?

I pray. I urge you. This is not through any psyching up or emotionalism of man or putting you under some manipulative kind of talk today.

day. But it's a real truth that time is short. And it's not something to play around with.

The things of eternity are not things to trivialise or to think lightly of. It's very important. And I tremble every time I come here.

I tremble. Am I speaking the truth? I pray that I am. God helping me. I trust that I am. I believe that I am. I'm still a frail, faulty human being.

[37:23] God's looking for a people today. It says he's searching for people who will worship him. Who will come to know him and love him. To follow him.

And he's not some pathetic Jesus. Some would picture him knocking at a door and as if we're doing him a favour.

Opening the door to him. That's not really a picture of the Jesus that I know. He's got eyes flaming with fire in judgment.

And it says that it's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. God. And yet he still does extend mercy today. Those nail scarred hands still reach out to man today.

And we're not doing him a favour coming to him. We're doing what we must do. What we have to do. If we do not do, we're damned. And friends, I urge you today to come to him. Don't linger any longer.

[38:21] Don't be like Lot's wife looking back and lingering and playing both ways. Friends, you need to trust him. Trust him now. Be like the 300 who are willing to trust God no matter what the circumstances.

To trust God to take away your sin. Don't think in pride you can take it away yourself. Don't think that anything you can do can take it away. But realise that only the miracle of his saving power can take your sin away.

Only the miracle of Calvary, only the miracle of the cross of the bloodshed of his free gift extended can take your sin and guilt away today. God has a remnant in these last days.

Now that's not to say we're in some kind of holy huddle and we've all got to kind of hide and be fearful because the beast is coming and what not and we're all going to be having to face a lot of whatever disasters lie here.

We can be out and out for Christ now while we can. Let's speak out. Let's sound the alarm. Let's lift up our voice like a trumpet. Let's be out and out Christians now.

[39:35] This is not a time to be hiding behind some fortress mentality of the church but to be the church advancing and trusting God in victory. So know that God is with us.

There's a remnant as there was in Noah's time. It says in Genesis 7 verse 23. Every living thing destroyed. Noah only remained alive and they that were with him in the ark.

But Noah entered the ark and then God closed the door. Now conceivably the door was open until God decided to close it.

Now that's the essential truth of that isn't it? God said time's up and wonder he's going to say that off the planet earth as it was in the days of Noah. Now Noah was just.

He was righteous but he wasn't perfect. Noah made some dreadful mistakes. He was saved and his family was saved yet Noah got drunk and blew his testimony.

[40:34] And Noah's children went out and built the tower of Babel. So he may not have been much of an example either. So God has a remnant but we're still faulty people.

And even if we're as it were even if we're in the 300 even if we are rock solid a pure godly church God helping us to be we're still going to have faulty human beings because that's who we are until we glorify it.

Friends but thank God God's people can enjoy a great victory if they choose the best plan. God's plan. God's plan. That's what Gideon and the 300 chose. They chose God's plan.

The victory was won not through some great army not through some great general not through some great battle strategy some great tactics of men but because God got all the glory for the victory.

And we can thank God for the 300 of Gideon. We can thank God for the 7,000 who didn't bow the knee to Baal. We can thank God for the 120 in the upper room of Pentecost.

[41:39] We can thank God through the martyrs and the revivalists and reformers of old as much as many of them were very faulty in themselves that God has a remnant and he always has had a remnant and let us be among that number.

Let us be among that number. God helpings us to be not to claim any glory for it but because we want to be in that number. We want to be in that army that God will get all the glory and all the

honour as we face those Midianites in the future ahead that God will get all the glory for the victories that he will bring.  
Join up tonight. Join up tonight. Join up tonight.  
Join up tonight. Join up tonight.