

The Chosen Few

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[0 : 0 0] Let's join together in a word of prayer. Let's pray. Lord, we come before your glory and your majesty once more this evening, aware that even in the greatest insights that you allow us to see of your glory, of your majesty, of your beauty, even those times of our walk with you where we are allowed, as it were, glimpses into who you are, those times we find ourselves so overwhelmed by your love and so overwhelmed by your mercy, so overwhelmed by the glory and beauty of who you are, that these times that we so rarely find ourselves engaging in, that these times are just glimpses as to the reality of who you are.

And we know that whilst we sojourn here on earth, we will only ever see glimpses of that glory, only ever see glimpses of that beauty. We thank you for those glimpses, those glimpses which reassure us that a day is coming for your people when we will see you, as it were, face to face.

We know that we will see our Saviour as he is. He will return again to take us home to be with himself. And on that day we will see him as he is.

He will return as he ascended on the clouds with the angels. He will return to take his people home. He will return also to judge the living and the dead.

He will return to make all things new. He will return so that he will be preeminent. That he will be seen and known to all creation, both human and spirit.

[1 : 5 7] That there is one King and one Lord. That he is the only true one. That he is the only living one. That all creatures, that all created creatures, that all beings, will bow down to him.

Until that day comes, we ask you to give us the energy and the strength, both physically and spiritually, to serve you well in this mission field where you have placed us.

In this mission field, where some here were born to serve you in this place. Others have moved here over the years. But native to this village, or have recently come, or come many years ago, we find ourselves here as your people of one purpose.

We're here to serve you. Here to give off our energy. To give off ourselves for the sake of the gospel. We ask that would be our goal this week.

That would be our only desire this week. We would receive the name of Jesus, glorified and magnified and known in this area. As we pray for that, we pray for encouragement from your word.

[3 : 0 9] Lord, as we heard even this morning, as we're reminded from your word, that you are building your kingdom. That kingdom may be small. That kingdom may be very much unseen.

It's especially unseen in some of the homes and some of the hearts of those that we bring to you week after week. But that unseen kingdom, that humanly small kingdom, that in your time and in your way, you will bring to a flourishing, hope-filled, glory-filled kingdom that will bring you honour, that will bring you praise.

We do pray that for this district. We know it's beyond our abilities, but we pray it knowing it's not beyond your eternal power. We do ask we would see days of refreshing and days of renewal and days of revival in this district.

But we ask that, we ask it first and foremost for ourselves as your people here this evening. For we know that we ourselves must be revived in our service towards you.

We ourselves must be revived in our love towards you. We who often let that first love grow so distant and become so cold. We ask, Lord, you'd revive us in our love.

[4 : 23] Revive us in our care towards those around us who are heading towards a lost eternity. Help us to care enough for them to be able to buildly and freely share the gospel to them.

Lord, we bring just now before you and we confess that there are so many occasions where we do not do so. There are so many occasions where we are given by you opportunities to share the gospel so freely and so openly.

And we do not make use of these opportunities. Lord, forgive us, Lord, for our failings. Forgive us, we ask, O merciful King, for our failings and our duties, our falterings and our words and our minds.

We ask you to keep giving us gospel opportunities. And every time you give us one, we ask you to give us the words to say that we would find ourselves as bold and brave witnesses to our risen Saviour.

help us not to be ashamed of the gospel that we have. Help us not to be ashamed of the good news that we worship one who was dead but who now lives and lives forevermore at your right hand.

[5 : 31] One who was tortured and beaten. One who was made unrecognisable in his misery and suffering, in his physical and spiritual and mental anguish.

Who became like us in all ways but sin. who took on himself the full wrath, not just of his enemies on earth, but who became sin.

Who was made sin for his people. For when you looked upon your eternal Son, you saw sin on that cross and you poured out on that cross, you poured out on your Son the willing sacrifice, the willing Saviour, that final Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ, who took on himself all the wrath, deserving to all your people throughout all of time.

Who endured, beyond our understanding, who endured an eternity worth of wrath in these few hours on the cross. who in his human body endured the reality of suffering.

Fully human and fully God, he endured eternity worth of suffering for his people. We can't understand it, but we give you praise for it. For we have a Saviour who knows what it is to be human.

[6 : 53] For we this evening have a Saviour who, as it were, walked in our footsteps. who suffered, who felt shame, who felt anguish and fear and suffering and pain, who felt thirst and hunger, who felt betrayed by friends, who felt hated and despised.

We have a Saviour who knows what it is to live the full breadth of human experience. And we bring that breadth of human experience to you this evening, to those here who are suffering, suffering in various, many ways.

You, Lord, and they alone know. I've been just now before you those who are grieving. Those who are grieving recent loss, but also those grieving loss of many months and many years, indeed decades ago.

We know, Lord, death speaks to us so clearly and often that time does not change the pain, but it just changes perhaps how we respond to it.

the pain of death and separation remains there regardless. We pray just now for those who are suffering, those who are going through times of complicated suffering, physical, mental, spiritual pain.

[8 : 09] You alone know, Lord our God. We pray just now for those who long to be here week after week, but who have been removed from our number through age, through illness, through other various reasons.

Lord, we ask you to be with them that they'd know that we care for them, they would know that we remember them, but more than that, they would know that you remember them. Do not forget a single one of your people.

All your people are precious to you and remembered by you and kept by you for all eternity. We pray just now as we have the liberty to preach and to pray and to gather and to worship so openly.

Remember as always our dear brothers and sisters, those who meet and seek it and those who meet in fear. We ask you to draw alongside them and you comfort them. Those who are ministering in situations we can't begin to understand.

We also pray for those who look after and who seek to bring assistance and bring comfort and to be a voice of help and reassurance to those who are suffering.

[9 : 15] We remember especially our own island-based charity, the island-braced mission of Steadfast Global. We pray for them as they do their work.

Often their quiet, private, secret work. We pray for them just now as they engage in countries in the East, in the Middle East, as they engage in countries in that area, as they seek to support believers, as they seek to support the wives of non-believers who are going through almost impossible trials for them being believers.

As they seek to support young believers and new believers. As they seek to support your gospel cause in these persecuted nations. Lord, we ask you to comfort them and keep them safe, we pray.

Help us not to forget our persecuted brothers and sisters but to remember them. We do thank you for the freedom we have in our nation. We thank you for a government which does not yet physically nor truly persecute us.

We know, Lord, with growing opposition but we give you praise as of yet for us no, as of where, solid, ongoing persecution. Help us to make the most of the freedom we have whilst you still give it to us.

[10 : 30] We do pray, Lord, for our government, for those who rule over us locally and nationally. Pray for members of the council. Pray, Lord, for the first minister. Pray for the prime minister.

Pray also, Lord, for the king. We pray, Lord, you'd lead them to lead well. You'd guide them to make decisions that glorify you, that advance our nation. But first and foremost, we do pray that you would give them all, all who lead us, especially those over us on national level, give them the reality of knowing you as saviour.

Pray that for our king, our prime minister, our first minister, Lord, that they would come to know and serve Jesus, not just because they know they have to, not just to keep a nation happy.

They would come to know him personally for themselves, to serve him truly as followers, but more than that, as servants of a greater king who will one day come and judge them along with us.

Until these days come, help us to serve you well, we ask. Give us peace this evening for those who require it, those of your people this evening who are going through mental anguish, physical anguish, sometimes perhaps spiritual anguish.

[11 : 50] Bring them peace that's only found in Jesus. Comfort those who require comfort, we ask. They're all alongside us. Help us to concentrate on your word that goes out this evening.

We ask all these things, clinging on to the Lord Jesus Christ as he holds eternally on to his people. In his name and for his sake.

Amen. Let's turn to reading God's word. We're carrying on the series we have in the book of Judges. The book of Judges. Judges.

And this evening we're on chapter 7. Judges chapter 7. That's on page 193 of the Church Bibles. Page 193 of the Church Bibles.

Judges chapter 7. Let's hear again the word of God.

[12 : 49] Then Jerubal, that is Gideon, and all the people who were with him rose early and encamped beside the spring of Harod.

And the camp of Midian was north of him by the hill of Moriah in the valley. 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. 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. And the Lord said to Gideon, The people are still too many. Take them down into 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.

[13 : 56] So he brought the people down to the water and the Lord said to Gideon, Everyone who laps the water of his tongue as a dog laps, you shall set by himself.

Likewise, everyone who kneels down to drink. And the number of those who lapped, putting their hands to their mouths, was 300 men. But all the rest of the people knelt down to drink water.

And the Lord said to Gideon, With the 300 men who lapped, I will save you and give the Midianites into your hand and let all the others go, every man to his home.

So people took provisions in their hands and their trumpets and he sent all the rest of Israel, every man to his tent, but retained the 300 men. And the camp of Midian was below him in the valley.

That same night the Lord said to him, Arise, go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hand. But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Pura, your servant, and you shall hear what they say.

[15 : 08] And afterwards your hands will be strengthened to go down against the camp. But he went down with Pura's servant to the outposts of the armed men who were in the camp.

And the Midianites and the Malachites and all the people of the east lay along the valley like locusts in abundance and their camels were without number as the sand that is on the seashore in abundance.

When Gideon came, behold, a man was telling a dream to his comrade and he said, behold, I dreamed a dream. And behold, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian and came to the tent and struck it so that it fell and turned upside down so the tent lay flat.

And his comrade answered, this is no other than the sword of Gideon, the son of Joash, a man of Israel. God has given into his hand Midian and all the camp.

As soon as Gideon heard the telling of the dream and his interpretation, he worshipped and he returned to the camp of Israel and said, Arise, for the Lord has given the host of Midian into your hand.

[16 : 19] And he divided the three hundred men into three companies and put trumpets into the hands of all of them and empty jars with torches inside the jars.

And he said to them, Look at me and do likewise. When I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do. When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then blow the trumpet also on every side of the camp and shout for the Lord and for Gideon.

So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch when they had just set the watch. And they blew the trumpets and smashed the jars that were in their hands.

Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the jars that they held in their left hands the torches and in their right hands they blew the trumpets to blow and they cried out a sword for the Lord and for Gideon.

Every man stood in his place around the camp and all the army ran. They cried out and fled. When they blew the three hundred trumpets, the Lord set every man's sword against his comrade and against all the army.

[17 : 32] And the army fled as far as Bethsita towards Zerah as far as the border of Abel-Miloah by Tabith. And the men of Israel were called out from Naphtali and from Asher and from all Manasseh and they pursued after Midian.

And Gideon sent messengers throughout all the hill country of Ephraim saying, Come down against the Midianites and capture the waters against them as far as Beth-Bara and also the Jordan.

So all the men of Ephraim were called out and they captured the waters as far as Beth-Bara and also the Jordan. And they captured the two princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeb.

They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb and Zeb they killed at the winepress of Zeb. Then they pursued Midian and they brought the heads of Oreb and Zeb to Gideon across the Jordan.

And then they gave praise to God for his holy and his living word. Let's again sing to God's praise this time from Sing Psalms and Psalm 44.

[18 : 44] Sing Psalms and Psalm 44. That's on page 54 of the Psalm book. Sing Psalms Psalm 44 on page 54.

We can sing verse 1 down to verse 8 of the Psalm. O God who with our ears have heard our fathers told us so what you accomplished in their days and days of long ago your hand drove nations out and placed our fathers there instead you crushed the peoples but you caused our tribes to grow and spread.

Psalm 44 verses 1 to 8 to God's praise. O God we with our ears shall hear their fathers told us so what you and how you still there is in love so ye h us Oh Oh

Oh Oh

Oh Oh

[23 : 23] Oh Oh ■■ Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh idol, escaping death by the hands of the villagers, by his father's words and of course by God's providence. And then we saw the attack, the attack as Gideon then begins to send out and to reach out his power. The Spirit of the Lord in verse 34, chapter 1, descends upon Gideon and Gideon becomes then a tool in God's hand. He becomes useful, truly useful and God begins to lead Gideon. And we ended last week then with the sign of the fleece.

Briefly we touched on the fact that we can say ourselves and Gideon himself is also well clearly knows that it's not a good idea. What he's doing was almost testing God but God allowed that. God accommodated Gideon and his weakness and we'll see that as a theme for ourselves in chapter 7 and actually next week, Lord willing, also in chapter 8. The theme of Gideon's life is one of strength, yes, but also one of God constantly accommodating and being merciful towards the many flaws we see in Gideon. And how he acts and what he says, what he allowed to take place. We join him this evening. He's had the success we've seen previously. But now he's got the foes following him of the tribes at the end of chapter 1. He's been given the promise of God that he has God with him. He's seen the evidence of the fleece dry and both damp. And now we see him beginning his conquest, as it were, to regain his people. It was said before the Midianites and others had been attacking, constantly attacking the area after year after year, stealing the food, trampling the crops, attacking with the camels. And we said last week, we think of camels in warfare. We assume camels in desert. It's nothing to us. We know that's part of what we assume took place then. But this is the first time, as we said last week, we see camels being mentioned in warfare. And what for us seems just like something they did. You think yourself, you've never seen these animals before used this way.

They weaponized these animals. And we see that in our account tonight, that there are hundreds of camels, numerous animals that have been prepared for warfare. It's not too far, and as noted in the commentators, these were the chariots of the day. These were the equivalent of the tanks of the day.

In other words, Israel is outnumbered. Israel has got the armory to fight these nations. These nations are armed to the teeth, got more people, got better technology. They have more strength, more power, more ability. And that's what Gideon is facing this evening. So we join him at the very start of chapter 7 here. He's had his confirmation from God. And how does he begin? Well, note quite simply, he gets up early. Gideon and all the people with him rose early and camped beside the spring of Harod.

There's no wasted words in Scripture. You've heard that said plenty of times in our short time together, but I'll keep saying it. There's no wasted words in Scripture. Every word God inspires is there to teach, to rebuke, and so on. It's there to encourage at times. It's there to draw our attention to something. And here this evening we see that Gideon and all the people with him, all these tribes have joined in. We saw in verse 34, 35 of the previous chapter, they're all up early.

[27 : 56] Those of us, all of us, I'm more than sure, more than certain. Some here, I'm sure, are better in the mornings. Some here, are better in the evenings and nighttime. But it's much easier to get up early in the morning if the thing you're getting up for is something you're looking forward to, or at least something you're assured of happening. If you're going away on a trip, it's much easier to get up in the morning for that early morning ferry than it is to get up for that time in the morning for any other reason. Gideon and those with him, they feel quite secure, don't they? They feel quite certain in their victory. As they're about to face off to this huge army, it seems that they are quite quietly confident. They rose up early. They've encamped quite close, really, to where this giant army are. We see it later on. They're encamped above them. So the enemy, the Midianites and their tribes attached to them, they're in a valley down below. Gideon and his men, knowing the place probably better than the Midianites did, they're encamped above them, looking down in the valley. They've got the tactical place. They can see what's going on, but they are severely outnumbered. Well, not yet they're not. And we see that. As we look at these verses, this section, just three very broad headings to help guide us. First of all, we can see that there's not enough men. And then we can see there's not enough trust. And finally, there's too many men. So not enough men, not enough trust, and too many men. Not enough men. So Gideon's there in his confidence, his associates, his tribes are around him. They're confident. There's 30,000 out of him ready to wage battle.

But then Yahweh speaks to Gideon. You can imagine poor Gideon. He's ready for battle. He's ready for war. God's assured him that he's with him. And Yahweh begins to speak to Gideon. It's early in the morning.

Gideon knows he has a victory. And as Yahweh begins to speak, you can imagine Gideon is waiting for God to give him the instructions for how to win this war, how to win this battle. And we see that Yahweh, the Lord, is saying something completely different to Gideon. Verse 2, 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. Dear friends, God knows these people. God at this point, of course, has rescued these people time after time, year after year. And God knows if he lets 30 odd thousand, 32 plus thousand Israelites fight against this army, they will say, we won.

Look at our strength. Look at our might. We won because we are Israelites. We won because we are the better fighters. We won because we have better tactics and so on. You can imagine them.

And God knows these people. God knows how quickly and how easily they praise themselves, how quickly and how easily they forget God who looks after them time and time again. So God begins, not by giving instructions on how to win the battle. He begins quite counterintuitively for us, and I'm sure for poor Gideon, he begins by decimating the fighting force. And note how God first does this. We know there's two stages to it. God first decimates. He first thins down the fighting force quite simply by getting and moving on as they get rid of it, but by gently moving on those who don't really want to be there. Verse 3.

[32 : 06] 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. There's 32,000 of them. That's more than the whole of the Western Isles has in people. It's a huge chunk of people camped on top of the hillside. And there's 32,000 of them. Once this message goes out, two-thirds, roughly, more than two-thirds are gone. They just up and leave.

Now there's level as to why, of course, the Lord is doing this. First and foremost, as we said, it's because God is filling them down, so he will get the praise and the glory and not themselves. But also we see here, do we not, some of the concern and care of God.

God allows those who don't want to be there. Keep in mind that this is a mixed mass of tribespeople.

This is not just the elite warriors of the tribes. This is all the tribes coming together who are willing to fight on the side of Gideon. There's men here, young and old, we are sure.

And there's some here who have never fought a day in their lives. There's some here who have no idea how to fight. There's some here who have no ability in fighting.

[33 : 40] And there's no training time for them. This is all happening at a great pace. So God allows those who are terrified to go. And note very clearly, there's no shame in them going.

God does not tear them down for leaving. Quite simply, the instruction is, if they are terrified, if they are fearful and trembling, let him, let them, the ones who are fearful and trembling, return home.

God cares enough for the people of Israel. He's not going to force them into this battle. But also note the wording again, let them do so in a hurry, literally.

Let him return home and hurry away. Let them return home, literally, in a hurry away from where they are. From the rest of the camp. Why? Because God also knows the people who are going to fight are left behind.

Every second these fearful men remain there, their morale will be sapped second by second, hour by hour. As they're watching their friends and family members, those who are terrified, as they watch them become more and more terrified, as they watch their shaking knees and their shaking hands, as they listen to them trying to stress and worry about what's ahead of them, that will sap the morale, that will sap the fighting strength of those left behind.

[35 : 10] So God cares for fearful people. He also cares for those left behind. And the first stage is complete. And two-thirds of the men are gone.

And you imagine Gideon thinking to himself, well, that's enough. I've lost most of my army now. Are we going now? Is it now time for battle? God again speaks to Gideon.

And you can imagine again as Yahweh, as the Lord, begins to speak to Gideon, and Gideon's thinking, right, now it's time I get my plans for battle. Now it's time Yahweh says, go and attack. But we know there's more thinning to take place at verse 4.

The Lord said to Gideon, the people are still too many. Take them down to the water, and so on. The second thinning, from verse 4, downwards, it is at times a confusing way that the Lord has done it.

4 down to verse 8. It seems to be, at least in the first reading, quite a strange way to thin the men down. The first way makes sense to us. Those who are scared can go home.

[36 : 23] That's simple. It makes sense. But now we see those left behind. And he's now judging them, seemingly, on how they're drinking the water in front of them.

Now part of this, and there is no end, quite literally almost, no end of insight and commentary and various many opinions on why God does it this way, and we'll get into a few in a second.

But before we get into some of the possible explanations, it has to be said we should not perhaps, or we cannot say with certainty, why this exact method.

There's reasons behind it, and there's some that make perfect sense. But we come to this, we do have to acknowledge that sometimes the ways of God, the commands of God, the leading of God, does not make sense to us.

It does not make sense to us. We can see, and we can speculate just now, these many thousands of years later, of why God did what he did.

[37 : 33] That's fine for us in Tolstah. But imagine Gideon and his generals, those around him who are helping. And God gives him instruction.

That's very clear, but also in terms of what has taken place, confusing instruction, as to separate the final men. We can speculate, we can try and make sense of it.

But at the time, this is happening live in front of him. But note what doesn't take place. At no point, outwardly, at least, does Gideon question what's taking place.

Gideon does not say, Lord, you've already taken 20 odd thousand of my men, 22,000. Now you're telling me there's still too many.

And now you're telling me to take them into water to drink, and what's going on? Gideon trusts the Lord. Even when the Lord's commands seem to make little sense.

[38 : 33] The brothers and sisters here, Christians, you'll know this yourselves in your life, in your story, in your walk with the Lord.

There are many times you find yourselves faced with situations which, if you're being very honest, make very little sense. And you find yourself in a genuine way, not accusing, not doubting even, just in a genuine way, saying to the Lord, I don't understand this.

I can't comprehend this. Why you want this to take place in this certain way? Why this seems to be playing out before me? I can't understand why this is happening, or how you're choosing to make this happen.

But yet, like Gideon, as Christians, yes, we doubt at times, yes, we worry at times, but how often, more than not, do we just find ourselves saying, Lord, I don't know, but you do.

I can't plan ahead what's taking place here. I'm not quite sure what you're doing here, but you know. You are sovereign, you are holy, you are God, and you know, and you tell us, and we know because you tell us that all things work out for the good of your people, for those who love you.

[39 : 54] Well, fine. I don't understand it, but I will go along with it because you are God and you are sovereign, and I know your care for your people.

Gideon does not question it. And God takes, or God leads Gideon to take the people down to the river to drink. And we see this separation. Those who bring the water up to their mouth and drink, who lap it up like a dog, as the scripture tells us, and those who kneel down and drink by the river.

Now, despite, again, there is reasons for this, as we've said before, same as the first thinning out, the top reason is, of course, God is thinning out the people. He is making sure that he gets the glory.

That's the top reason. That's a clear reason. But second to that, there is something to be said about the exact way God does this. There is a major difference between these two groups of men.

And again, this is debated. So there is, I'm not saying for a second you just go on my understanding here. But I would encourage you to read about this and to pray about this yourself.

[41 : 08] We can't argue the main reason. The main reason is God is thinning it out. There's no debate there. That's clear. But why this exact method? Well, the major argument, and it's one I personally would go with, whatever you think yourselves, is that these two groups of men show two types of readiness and two types of awareness.

Again, God is bringing these men into battle. These are men who, as we said, haven't had time to train, per se, but God needs men who will fight.

Now, God will guarantee a victory for them. We know that. But still, they must take swords in their hands and they must fight. They, of course, don't yet know what's going to take place. But as far as I know, there will be bloodshed in front of them, around them.

They must be ready for what's ahead of them. And the two groups here, one group kneels down, one group brings water up. You can think yourself what's taking place.

The group that kneel down to drink, what are they doing? Well, they're shoving their head down close to the water and having a drink, which is fine. There's no sin there. There's nothing wrong with that.

[42 : 19] But compare that to the other group who are bringing the water up to themselves where they are. What's a clear difference? Well, one group is looking down, kneeling down, not seeing their surroundings, not aware of their surroundings.

The other group is ready and waiting and looking as they drink. God wants people who are naturally going to do the job he's called them to do.

Quite simple as that. There's various other spiritual explanations and they may well be right. But God here wants self-aware warriors who actually fight this battle well.

But we can say that with hindsight. Our main point here is that we don't sometimes understand the methods God uses or the reasons why God uses certain methods.

We don't know even the end result of what God is doing in our lives or the lives of others. And we say that because it's not easy. It's quite easy preaching that.

[43 : 25] It's never a thing when it's in your own experience and you look to yourself and it's health and it's family perhaps financial whatever or spiritual whatever your situation is and you say Lord I trust you but I don't understand this.

Lord I will follow you but I don't quite get how this all works and all this pans out. These prayers are okay. There's no sin in these prayers. But still we must follow the leading of the Lord.

We must follow his guiding and follow indeed itself as providence flows before us. I have a way the people are now thinned out and it's gone from 32,000 men now of course down to what?

Down to 300 men. These are seemingly now completely impossible odds aren't they?

They are facing I mean Gideon began with quite impossible odds. The 32,000 he had at the start is a low number but still far fewer than the enemy has.

[44 : 39] Far fewer. But now that 32,000 is now down to 300 humanly speaking he has got no chance of winning this war. 300 men will be decimated in seconds.

300 untrained unqualified not battle ready not battle trained men they've got no chance. There's no time for training.

There's no time for preparation and we see that as we come to our second point here that not enough trust. verse 9 that same night that same night the Lord Yahweh said to him arise to Gideon arise go down against the camp for I have given it into your hand.

Yahweh speaks to Gideon the eternal I am unchanging full of power and glory eternal he speaks to Gideon and the unchanging I am Yahweh God and fully God says to Gideon you're going to win this fight this fight will go your way I have and note the grammar there dear friends I assure you I am no grammar expert but sometimes the grammar is so obvious in any language I have given it into your hand actually quite bad grammar in the Hebrew but it's used there to show the the finality of the situation there's no ifs no buts there's nothing that will go wrong God assures Gideon go and fight you will win the matter is decided victory Gideon is yours Yahweh I am but I am the eternal ever living

God tells you you'll win have no fear have no worry the next verse in verse 10 again we see God and his love accommodating Gideon very normal very human Gideon and he says to Gideon if you are afraid but if you are afraid go down go down to the camp with Pura your servant God knows Gideon even though God knows he's assured Gideon quite clearly that the Lord God himself the living God has said to him you will have this fight victory is yours poor Gideon poor Gideon still he believes the Lord he trusts the Lord to an extent but he's still human he still lets his natural fear just cripple him we can tell that by how quickly the

[47 : 36] Lord then adds this next bid in I have given it into your hand but if you are afraid of course God knows the heart of the Gideon God knows Gideon is now terrified it's all good planning for it but now reality has hit now Gideon actually must go fight with 300 untrained men and God again makes allowances for Gideon's humanity for Gideon's worry for Gideon's fear dear friends God even as he plans this very tactical battle against his enemies he's not cold he's not distant he is carefully and gently encouraging Gideon to do the work he has been called to do but more than that to do the work he knows is okay for him to do because God has given it to him we might shake our heads and think how dense Gideon must be how much of a coward

Gideon must be if God appeared to us and the very living Yahweh speaks to us and says I am God I am telling you this thing and that thing it's okay but I have won and because I have won you will win through me we think we wouldn't doubt for a second would we dear Krishna would you doubt ever when God says to trust in him would you ever doubt that surely you and I are not cowards like Gideon surely you and I are not as slow to think and as slow to trust as Gideon how many times does Christ say do not worry do not be anxious how many times does Christ reassure his disciples and us that he has conquered death and conquered the grave he has conquered the evil one he has indeed trampled the head of a serpent and yet dear brother dear sister we find ourselves time and time again doing it saying Lord I believe all these things

I believe you are God you are Yahweh I believe your promises but I am still terrified I am still absolutely shaking in my boots thinking what I have to do to serve you well we find ourselves just like Gideon dear brother dear sister God does not show any scorn does he to Gideon instead God shows and accommodates Gideon he says I know you are scared and because you are scared go with your servant take someone with you and go listen very very gentle very caring very simple take someone else and go and do what you can do on your own but go take your servant your friend and go listen we read the narrative together they go and they hear the prophecy the dream we could say of these Pyramidionites they are there guarding the outer guard they are guarding the extremities and the outer guard often the the better trained soldiers they are up all night and they are sharing their dream and his friend not knowing of course that Gideon is within earshot his friend probably not knowing what he is saying and these are probably not words he himself even began to understand fully he interprets the dream so accurately this in verse 14 there is no other than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash a man of Israel

God has given into his hand Midian and all the camp and of course God in his providence God in his love allowed that dream to take place that dream interpretation to take place in the ear of Gideon to encourage him God made allowances for fearful useless terrified Gideon but God still uses him then we see of course Gideon is now strengthened he worships God and he comes back to the camp and look what Gideon now says to the camp at the end of verse 15 he now relays what the Lord has said to him the Lord has given the host of Midian into your hand and now we see suddenly Gideon this fearful useless at times coward of a man is now a military general look at the tactics he's employing here he is now we can be guaranteed under the guiding of the

Lord but his own brain too his own effort too as God makes use of Gideon's natural skills he must have had he now does this great tactic of how to make full use of a handful of men jars with torches inside smash them think of the effect self we're going to surround time is going but just to summarize we're going to surround the valley Midian's down there they're up here we're going to surround the valley as it were and keep the torches lit in jars and then smash the jars blow the trumpets there's crashing there's trumpets there's flame appearing all around the camp what's all this for to show or at least to give the appearance to the Midianites that they are surrounded all these trumpets all the lights suddenly appearing all the noise and clamor and we see that whilst

[53 : 19] Gideon does humanly what he can to accomplish God's instruction to him note what's taking place here really verse 22 when they blew the 300 trumpets and they've done all the smashing and the lights are appearing they've carried out Gideon's plan but note it's the Lord the Lord set every man's sword against his comrade and against all the army Gideon works out his own tactics the Lord then uses that to accomplish his plans as we heard in the morning we must preach we must pray we must sow carry out the Lord's task as he's given it to us and do it faithfully and do it tirelessly and do it with full hope and full assurance as we do his work he worked through us to accomplish his purposes Gideon didn't sit back and do nothing and say well the Lord has given us the victory we'll do nothing no the

Lord has given us a victory therefore the Lord will use us let's go and do the warriors we've been called to be and then we see the chaos that ensues the army flees they're killing one another in the panic you can imagine in the middle of night there's panic there's chaos there's swords flying everywhere there's death and destruction and tears and panic everywhere and we then just very briefly go from having as it were too many men we then see from verse 19 to the end almost I say tongue in cheek there's again too many men but this time Gideon can't get enough men to chase down his enemies we see that he calls out verse 24 he sends messengers to all the area to Ephraim the hill country of Ephraim and he's calling all these tribes attached to

Israel to come down and support what's taking place your enemies are finally on the run come down you've hid away for so long against them but now they're on the run the Lord has conquered your enemies come now and take part in this warfare again scripture is honest it records what took place it records the beheading and the killing of these two Midian princes God does not keep from us what takes place in his word God destroys his enemies God destroys those who fight against him now we are not called we know ourselves but just to say the obvious we're not called to be warriors in a physical sense that's not our duty it's not our command we find that nowhere in scripture in fact quite the opposite we see the new testament church facing off against the might of

Rome do we see the early Christians putting up any armed offensive against the church of Rome we do not against the Roman empire to say they do not the early church living in under occupation of Roman empire we see them being dragged away and killed and facing death under his sword time and time again as the right ear of the high priest servant is lopped off we see Jesus condemning healing condemning put your sword away God calls us to be warriors for him yes God calls us to serve him yes not in violence those days are gone the promised land was conquered and taken back long ago long before us we know as Christians as Paul reminds us our war is not against flesh and blood but the truth is neither was Gideon's yes they fought army against army but they were fighting really for control of the land which God promises people they were fighting really against those under the influence of the idols they worshipped and these idols themselves of course representations of the demons and the devil themselves and we ourselves we fight not against flesh and blood but we fight against what principalities thrones darknesses our war is spiritual but is no less real as we look at the account of

Gideon as we find ourselves seeing ourselves in the account of Gideon as we see ourselves doubting the promises of God doubting his faithfulness to complete and fulfil his promises towards us let's be reminded from this account that God is not slow to fulfil his promises God is not slow to keep his promises God accomplishes what he will accomplish in his perfect time but as we heard in the morning this week and last week God does not need us no but God makes use of us he does so carefully and gently as he does Gideon he tenderly allows him to take a friend with him and go and see for himself that's gentle that's caring but yet Gideon must do the hard work we still have to go and face off this army and chase them down but brothers and sisters we must still do the hard work as it were we're still called to serve God in the same way and the truth is we have a hope and a confidence that

[59 : 13] Gideon himself could not even begin to imagine because who has gone before us preparing the way and we see this every week in the book of Judges Gideon is a shadow yes a failed faltering shadow but a shadow unless as he leads his people into victories subduing and attacking and destroying the enemy we do not follow a Gideon this evening we follow Christ who was not fearful in the face of his enemies quite the opposite who faced his enemy who faced the one who was there to distract and distress who destroyed evil who is aware has now placed evil on the run who has trampled on the head of the serpent that's the one we follow this evening not a failed leader like Gideon but a triumphant eternally perfect leader the Lord

Jesus Christ there's not one battle we face in this life that he does not go before us preparing the way but it's just we trust in him as he leads as he guides us as he makes allowances for us for our own sinful human nature for our own waywardness for our own smallness of mind and of trust and of spirit and of hope but Christ leads the way nonetheless we'll see next week as we come to an end of our study in Gideon Gideon's life was one of complication yes he was a faithful servant but also we'll see there's points where Gideon goes so far astray not so with Christ so we follow Jesus we follow one who was faithful to the very end who now leads us into our eternal victory that's our confidence and our hope this evening let's bow our heads now a word of prayer thank you Lord once more for the gift of your word that in it we have these assurances and promises that you lead and guide your people that through the finished work of Jesus we can have the full hope and the full confidence that he has gone before us that he has defeated the enemies all around as we follow on behind him we follow on victorious in his victory in his victory he has taken up captives in his victory he has led captive captivity and we who were once captives to sin and to the evil one he has freed us from that captivity and he has led us in his wake as we follow on behind him as we share in his victory after victory we pray Lord we would see more evidence of that victory in our own homes in our own district even this congregation as we many more come to know and come to love and come to serve the living saviour we pray once more for the brother who leads the worship we thank you

Lord week by week we have those who are willing to lead the worship to lead that essential element of your public worship the sung praise as we sing your words to you knowing we do so without error yes Lord we ourselves have many errors and faults in our own singing voices but as we sing your perfect word back to you we do so knowing that we sing a word that is pleasing to you we offer up worship that is pleasing to you Lord help us in our hearts to worship you well just now knowing that singing the right words means nothing if our hearts are not in the right place behind that we ask all these things in and through and for Christ his precious name is sake Amen let's sing to God's praise in Scottish Psalter Scottish Psalter Psalm 118 Scottish Psalter Psalm 118 Psalm 118 these verses we know so well about these verses of victory for us it reminds us of Christ's victory over all things

Psalm 118 that's on page 399 and we can sing verse 22 down to the end Psalm 118 verse 22 to the end that stone is made head cornerstone which builders did despise this is the doing of the Lord and wondrous in our eyes let's sing these words of praise to God Psalm 118 verse 22 29 to God's praise verse 23 in our amen life is mad as name it has good The giving of the Lord and the blessed of Christ.

This is the day of the kingdom, and this will for the kingdom I give.

[64 : 48] Sing thy life, will ye, Lord, I pray.

Set thy prosperity here. If blessed is it, give us in Him.

Thou come us to sin. With all the hands of you, the Lord.

Perfect is you, blessed are. O dear, sir, Lord, here unto us.

So we hear. And so we hear. O dear, do you nie cono? We willagle.

[66 : 09] We willte. We will have borne your sacrifice.

Thou art my God, I lead as God.

My God, I will be here. Give and do come, for he is good.

His mercy was always. In the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, with you now and forevermore, Amen.