

Judges Chapter 7 v 9 - 25

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[0 : 0 0] have so many visitors with us and we thank you for bringing along the sunshine for the weekend. We haven't had a lot of that of late the last week but thank you for coming and sharing with us and we trust together as we seek God's face we might know his help and his presence and his blessing. Just want to open our worship by thinking on the words of the Lord Jesus as he met with John on the Isle of Patmos all those years ago. This is what Jesus said concerning himself in Revelation chapter 1. I am the living one. I was dead and now look I am alive forever and ever and I hold the keys of death and Hades. The person that we come to worship this morning is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is unique in every single way but he is especially unique in the truth that he is the one who is risen from the dead and we know that he is the one we can put our trust and faith in. He is Lord. He is King. He is God. He is over all things and we can trust him. He's alive today when we come to worship on a Sunday morning we're not coming to sing to a dead God. We're not coming to sing into the ether or into the air. We're coming to sing to the one and worship the one who was dead but is alive forevermore and his presence is with us this morning. We're going to sing our first hymn. It's kind of come up on the overhead behind me. Jesus is Lord. The cry that echoes. What have we got there? Come people. I thought we had come people and then I, then I, let me just assure you. Marvelous God. Oh we come to you this morning with so many reasons to rejoice.

So many reasons to be thankful, grateful. So many reasons to worship and praise you and give you the honor, the glory, the praise that is rightfully yours. Lord we can list them but we just haven't got the time. Well let's just pick on the important ones, the big ones, the big one of all, the biggest of all of course is we have reason to rejoice in your love. Your love for us oh Lord. Love for wayward, foolish, sinful men and women and boys and girls. Love which is undeserved and unmerited. Love oh Lord which we've done nothing to earn, nothing to deserve. Love Lord which is expressed in that wonderful word grace. God's riches at Christ's expense. Love to us before the world was made. Love to us throughout history and time in the planning and purposing of sending your son to be our savior. The coming of him, the son of God. Born as a baby in that Bethlehem stable. Born though from everlastingly God, yet born into our world. Born into our humanity. Born into our suffering, our sadness, our grief and yet born not into our sin but into that life of perfect faithfulness and obedience.

That life which culminated in that goal, that purpose of his coming, the cross. Where Jesus in love you took our sin and died in our place. Where in love for us, even as we were represented by those who spat on you and mocked you and ridiculed you and nailed you there. You said, Father forgive them.

They know not what they do. What love is this? Like no other love the world has ever experienced or known. Like no love that we have never ever known. But that love that came to our hearts and our lives by your Holy Spirit.

[3 : 4 7] When once, Lord, we saw our sin. When once you took away the blindfold from our eyes and saw just how desperate we were in need of you. And you opened our eyes to see your beauty, your majesty, your grace, your power to save. And especially your love. How could our hearts do anything else but melt before you in sweet surrender? How could we do anything else but say, Jesus be my Lord, be my God, be my Savior, be my friend. And oh what joy it was on that day when you opened our hearts to you.

And what joy it's been day by day. Yes there's been trials and sorrows and griefs and sadnesses. But the joy of our salvation you've never taken away from us. The joy and the assurance of life that is stronger than death. That assurance that one day we shall be with you when all of this world will melt away and there shall be a new heavens and a new earth where there's only good and there's no tears and there's no fears and there's no sorrows and there's no griefs.

We thank you that that promise is ours in Jesus. All we need to do is believe it, receive it and rejoice in it. Help us this morning as we come to you again. We come to bring you our worship and our thanks.

May our hearts be lifted high. May they be centered upon you. And may we be able to give you the thanks and the praise for all that you've done for us. And may we go from this place continuing to rejoice in our God, in our Savior Jesus who was dead but lives forevermore. We ask these things in that name, that name of Jesus which is so sweet and dear to us. Amen.

Amen. Amen. There's some special people that I haven't welcomed here this morning and they're here for the first time and that's Mara and Timmay who are Manuel's wife and daughter from Romania and we really welcome it. It's lovely to have you with us and it was lovely to see you on Friday as well and meet you.

[5 : 59] Welcome indeed. Well let's turn together in the word of God in our Bibles and we're back in the book of Judges and chapter 7. And if you've got one of the church Bibles, one of the pew Bibles, then that's page 249. Page 249, Judges chapter 7. And over the past few weeks we've been looking, doing a little mini biography of the life of this man Gideon and seen how the Lord met with him and revealed himself to him and called him to this incredible challenge. And we look at how the journey he's taken and we're going to pick up from verse 9. Okay, so verse 9 of chapter 7. I know it's the middle of a paragraph but last week we looked at how the troops, the army of Gideon were reduced and then it's the night before this incredible battle. So verse 9 of chapter 7 of Judges, page 249. During that night the Lord said to Gideon, get up, go down against the camp because

I am going to give it into your hands. If you are afraid to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Porah and listen to what they are saying. Afterwards you will be encouraged to attack them. The Midianites, the Amalekites and all the other eastern peoples had settled in the valley thick as locusts. Their camels could no more be counted than the sand on the seashore. Gideon arrived just as a man was telling a friend his dream. I had a dream, he was saying. A round loaf of barley bread came tumbling into the Midianite camp. It struck the tent with such force that the tent overturned and collapsed. His friend responded, this can be nothing other than the sword of Gideon son of Joash the Israelite. God has given the Midianites and the whole camp into his hands. When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation he bowed down and worshipped. He returned to the camp of Israel and called out, get up. The Lord has given the Midianite camp into our hands. Dividing the 300 men into three companies he placed trumpets and empty jars in the hands of all of them with torches inside. Watch me he told them. Follow my lead. When I get to the edge of the camp do exactly as I do. When I and all who are with me blow our trumpets then from all around the camp blow yours and shout for the Lord and for Gideon.

Gideon and the hundred men with him reached the edge of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch. Just after they had changed the guard they blew their trumpets and broke the jars that were in their hands. The three companies blew the trumpets and smashed the jars. Grasping the torches in their left hands and holding in their right hands the trumpets they were to blow they shouted, a sword for the Lord and for Gideon. While each man held his position around the camp all the Midianites ran crying out as they fled. When the 300 trumpets sounded the Lord caused the men throughout the camp to turn on each other with their swords. The army fled to Beth-Shittah towards Zerorah as far as the border of Abel-Mehalola near Tabath. Israelites from Naphtali, Asher and all Manasseh were called out and they pursued the Midianites. Gideon sent messengers throughout the hill country of Ephraim saying, come down against the Midianites and seize the waters of the Jordan ahead of them as far as

Beth-Bara. So all the men of Ephraim were called out. They seized the waters of the Jordan as far as Beth-Bara. They also captured two of the Midianite leaders, Oreb and Zeb. They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb and Zeb at the winepress of Zeb. They pursued the Midianites and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeb to Gideon who was by the Jordan. May thank God for his word and we trust he'll help us to understand it for ourselves. As we look into Judges 7, that's where we're going to be thinking that passage that we read just a few moments ago, particularly concerning the battle that Gideon and his men was involved in. Whenever there's an important event in our lives, something special, something big perhaps, like a wedding, there's a lot of preparation, isn't there? There's a lot of getting things ready, building up for that event. It can be the same with moving to a new part of the country, finding a house and somewhere to live, or finding a church and somewhere to worship.

[11 : 00] It can be, of course, when we start university or look to go to a university or a new school or a college. There's a mixture of emotions, isn't there, that goes on in our hearts and in our minds as we prepare, as we get ready, as we build up to this event. There can be excitement, looking forward to it, a thrill, something which is really good and encouraging. But there also can be nervousness and, of course, fear as well. How will things turn out? What will happen on the day? What will happen when I get there? Will it all crumble into my hands? Will it all be a disaster? Will all the preparations come together for good? Or will, at the last minute, a spanner be thrown into the works and it all fall flat?

I shared with you just a couple of weeks ago when we were talking about the fleece episode, about guidance, how Ange and myself and the family had prepared to go to Cyprus and spent a year in preparation, in prayer and in all sorts of things. And then at the last minute, it all fell flat. It all collapsed. It all came to nothing. And in God's goodness and providence, he brought us here to Whitby, which is so much nicer than Cyprus. All that sun and heat. Oh, horrible beaches and swimming in a warm sea. Oh, what a terrible thought. The Lord spared us all that. Gideon, as we've been witnessing these last few weeks, is in the build-up to the most momentous event in his life, this battle with the Midianites. Now, the Midianites, you remember, had been this band of traveling people who were basically like the Vikings of their day. They would just sort of travel, kill people, steal their food, slaughter their animals, and then move on, pillaging and massacring. And they'd been doing this to the people of Israel for seven long years. It had been an awful, terrible time. So much so that when we met Gideon at the start, he's hiding away in this sort of a small barrel type of thing, threshing the wheat to keep it from the Midianites. Fear gripped the land and it gripped the life of Gideon. And it really seems that only a matter of days, at the most a week, have passed since that first event in the life of Gideon when we met him in the threshing of the wheat in the wine press. And God spoke to him and he gave him a commandment there on that night. It's there in chapter 6 and verse 16. He says this, I will be with you. You will strike down all the Midianites, leave none alive. And earlier on God had said to him, go, verse 14, in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand.

Am I not sending you this incredible challenge that God gives to him, this incredible call to go and face this vast and terrible and ferocious people and to stop them from carrying out the atrocities that they'd carried out. On that same night when God met with Gideon, he gives him his very first challenge, the first step of faith along that road to obeying God's great commandment. He's told to go and destroy the pagan gods, the false gods and idols that sadly his village worshipped, the Asherah pole and the altar to Baal. He does it in the night with some men and succeeds and he started the journey in preparing for the battle. But he has a bit of a wobble. The Midianites begin to gather and camp and come again, it seems, for another attack and he gets a bit anxious. We see that in chapter 6 and we look there, verse 36, Gideon said to God, if you will save Israel by my hand as you promised. And he asked for a sign from God, two signs in fact, to give him the assurance that God will keep his promise.

And then he begins to march out with his army. His army, which starts out at 35,000 men, sorry, 32,000 men.

[15 : 08] And as they march towards the battlefield, God begins to cut down their forces. He first of all says, anybody who wants to, just go home. If you're afraid, if you're scared of the battle, go home. 22,000 leave.

And God says, you've still got too many men. So he cuts them down. There's only 300 men along with Gideon who are facing the battle with a group, we're told later on, of 135,000 vicious, bloodthirsty Midianites and Amalekites. So here we are. Verse 9, the night before this battle. Well, it wouldn't be a battle, let's just call it a massacre, because that's really what it would be, wouldn't it? A massacre, 135,000 against 300. But on that same night, God still is preparing Gideon. He gives him one more real encouragement, it's amazing encouragement, to strengthen him, that he might take the battle to the Midianites with faith in God. He sends him down to the enemy camp to listen in, to eavesdrop on a conversation between two men. One's had a dream, and the other tells him what the dream means.

It means that Gideon is going to slaughter the Midianites. He's got no idea how many Gideon has, but somehow he's been given this supernatural dream, this interpretation, this understanding.

They'd heard of Gideon, they didn't know much about him, but they'd heard enough to know, and they were afraid, and they believed that Gideon would kill them and be victor over them. And so

Gideon goes to the battle. He's armed with a trumpet, a jar, and a flaming torch. That's all they have, each of the 300 men. Yet, in God's amazing power and goodness, as they blow the trumpet, those Midianites, thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, run for their lives, turning on one another in the confusion and killing one another. Eventually, the forces are decimated, and we read right at the end there, some others, the men of Ephraim come capture the leaders, put them to death. The victory is secured. What on earth has this got to do with me?

You might be thinking this morning. That's a great story. It's a lovely story. If you wanted to, you'd make a Disney film about it, really, isn't it? Apart from perhaps carrying the heads to Gideon at the end. We'd Disney-fy that, and we wouldn't have their heads being chopped off. But the rest of it, it's a great story, isn't it? Of this overcoming the odds. It's an inspiring story.

[17:50] Maybe that's what it's all about, an inspiring story that if things are up against you, well, you know, it doesn't matter how few you are, you can make it. You can get through. Now, of course, the story's not about Gideon, is it? This is the whole thing with the Bible.

We have these men and women through the Bible, incredible people, all failing people, and we'll come to that next time with Gideon. He was a man who had a failing, as everybody does. But the whole of the Bible is not about the people. It's about the God of the people. It's about the faithfulness of the God of the people, the goodness, the grace, the power, the strength, the loving kindness, the salvation of the God of the people, the person who saves the Israelites from this flaming horde is not Gideon, but Gideon's God.

And the first thing that we need to recognize, dear friends, whenever we come to the Bible, whenever we read it, is this, that the God of Gideon is the God of God's people today. He's our God. He's my God. If you're a Christian, he's your God.

He's not changed. He's still the same. Yes, thousands of years have passed since Gideon took up those torches and those trumpets. But the God who gave Gideon the victory is the same God who rescues, delivers, and leads, and provides for his people today.

[19:12] What God does for Gideon, he does for us. In Romans, in chapter 8, the Apostle Paul, writing in the New Testament, speaks about this. He says, we are, Christians, are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

The Christian is more than a conqueror through him that loved us. The God who gave the victory to Gideon is the God who gives victory to us. And like Gideon, we are those who are conquerors. We don't feel like it, and we'll come to that in a moment or two, but we are those who face battles. And in those battles with Christ, we have the assurance and confidence that there can be victory. You see, you can't have a victory, can you, unless there's a battle or a war or a struggle. If you don't have a contest, there's no winner. I was watching, don't tell anybody this, I was watching the boxing the other night, and the boxing match was going on.

It was a good match. And ultimately, of course, there was the winner. But imagine that the guy comes up and he won a championship or something. He comes into the ring, and he runs around like this, and he does a bit like this, but there's no other contest.

[20:23] And at the end, he said, he's the winner. Well, he hasn't beaten anybody. There has to be an opponent to win. There has to be a contest to get a prize. And for those of us who are Christians, the reality is this, that we are victors because we face struggles.

In fact, everybody faces struggles. Whoever we are, whether we're Christians or not, we have real struggles in our lives, real battles, real conflicts in our lives, real difficulties. And they are extremely hard.

The sad thing is, for people without God, they face those battles, they face those struggles on their own. Without God, they go in their own strength.

They go in their own power. In one sense, they're like Gideon with 300 facing 135,000 Midianites. They go, overwhelmingly, the underdog.

And the reality is that without God, those who face those struggles more often than not lose, more often than not are defeated. In fact, the reality is that they never win in those battles.

[21:34] What happens is that there's a momentary lull in the fighting, where they may know a measure of peace, but then another struggle, another battle, another problem arises. A few moments peace between one battle and the next is the best that people can know without God, till they face another one, and in their own strength, they press on.

The Christian faces very similar battles. If you're a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, then life is not easy. In fact, if you're a Christian, it's more difficult, in one sense.

There's more opponents, there's more struggles, there's more battles than if you're not a Christian. That's why some people don't become Christians. They see the life of a Christian, they say, well, their life is hard and difficult.

There's loss and there's sorrow and there's grief. And they say things like, well, where's their God? What? They're supposed to be Christians. But that's because they've got a misconception of the Christian life. The Christian life is not a bed of roses, except a bed of roses with lots of thorns in it. Christians suffer very violent enemies. It's no walk in the park to live for Jesus Christ. It's not the soft option. It's not the easy way out to be a Christian. Jesus himself often warned his disciples that they would suffer.

[22 : 49] This is just one of the things he said. In this world you will have trouble or tribulation, suffering, difficulty. But take heart. I have overcome the world.

So what happens here in Gideon's life, dear friends, reflects in several ways the Christian walk, the Christian life. Not every day necessarily, in sometimes in every day in small ways, but other occasions through our lives when we meet with particular struggles, particular difficulties, particular challenges.

What is the Lord of Gideon like? What is Gideon's God like for us? What is it about him that makes him so worthy of our faith and trust?

What is it about this God that really we've got, we should trust him? We should, we should obey him. We should follow him. What makes him so great?

And there's just three simple things, very simple things here that we see. The first is this, God knows us completely. God knows us completely. Even at the 11th hour, just before the battle, God knew that Gideon was still afraid.

[24 : 03] He still needed encouragement to overcome his fear. That's why he sends him down. Look at verse 10 of chapter 7. If you are afraid to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Porah.

Listen to what they are saying. Afterwards, you will be encouraged to attack the camp. He knew Gideon's heart. And he knew that he was still afraid. After all this time, after all the way that God had been preparing and working, he knew he still struggled with fear.

Let me say this to you, dear friends. It's not a failing to be afraid. It's not a failing to be afraid. Even as a Christian, to have fear is not a failure.

Sometimes that's what we're told. Sometimes that's what we think of ourselves. Sometimes even that's maybe what's preached as well. Now we've seen God overcoming the fear of Gideon and overcoming it through these experiences that he's had and leading him and helping him.

But fear is not absent from his life completely. He's overcome the fear, but fear is still there. And this is so important for us to understand. We think of courage as being the absence of fear.

[25 : 14] Somebody who's courageous has no fear. No, that's not being courageous at all. The brave man and the brave woman is a person who has tremendous fear, but is able to overcome it.

Is able to act in spite of it. Is able to be set free, as it were, to be not kept back by it. Notice how many times the Lord Jesus had to speak to his disciples about their fear.

How many times the Bible tells us not to fear. Somebody, apparently, I've done it, somebody said in the Bible there are 365 times when God says to one or more people, be not afraid.

That's one for each day of the year if you didn't know that, which I'm sure you did. The bravest people are, in reality, the people who fear the most yet carry on doing the right thing.

And as a Christian, living in the world in which we live and living in the bodies in which we live, it is normal. It is part of the failing, if I can put it that way, it's part of the brokenness of this world that we are to fear.

[26 : 20] And I believe that Gideon is a great encouragement to us. The Bible is great because it never highlights these people as being people who are somehow superhuman, the superheroes of the day, the Captain Americas and the Iron Mans and all those.

They're not these sort of people. They are people who are normal like us. They're people who struggle like us. They're people who fail like us. They're people who get it wrong like us. But they have the Lord their God. And the Lord their God does not look down upon them and say, tut, tut, fancy being afraid, shame on you.

He sends them encouragement. Sends them encouragement. And notice he sends them encouragement in the most peculiar way, the most surprising way. Now, you'd have thought that if, you know, God would have, if somebody was going to have a dream about victory, it would be one of Gideon's men, you know, Gideon's men who were believers in the Lord.

One of them would have had a dream and said, Gideon, I've just had this great dream. And it was this barley loaf and it would roll down and it crushed the tent. And I believe that God is saying to us, that's us.

We're going to crush the Midianites. Now he sends him down to the enemy camp. And it's the enemy that has the dream. It's the enemy that sends him the encouragement. It's the people he was opposed to, the people who are opposed to him.

[27 : 36] God used them. Bring encouragement to Gideon just when he needed it most. This is the amazing God we have. The God who's able to use the wicked for good.

The God who's able to take and use even people who don't know him, even if people don't care about him, and work through them to bring about his purposes. We know about that when we read in the book of Ezra about Cyrus, the king of the Persians.

How God used him to set the people free from their exiles so they could return. But he was a man who didn't know God. How he used people like Nebuchadnezzar. Who didn't know God and turned away from him.

It was full of pride that the God humbled him and used him and worked through him to elevate Daniel and others. Again and again. God works and uses whoever he chooses to work through and use to bring about his purposes for the good of his church.

For the good of his people. For the encouragement of us. Because we need that encouragement. We need God's word.

[28 : 40] That's why he's given us the Bible. That's the best place to find encouragement. That's the best place to find God's word. That's the best place to calm our fears and to strengthen our faith.

Faith which overcomes fear. Faith which is stronger than fear. Doesn't remove fear altogether. It just has the power to overcome fear. Because we find that our God we see our God is bigger than the problem.

How important it is dear friends we read God's word. The same goes for having fellowship together like this on a Sunday. And in Bible study. How often we come and what do we do?

We hear God's word. We hear his encouragement. We are strengthened in our faith. If we neglect these things then we miss out don't we? If we neglect these things then it's no wonder that we find ourselves held back.

Or caused actually to be too fearful. To be overcome by fear. God has promised us great blessings when we meet together. He tells us that that's important for us to do that.

[29 : 41] In Hebrews in chapter 10 and verse 25 we have that wonderful challenge as it were to us from the Lord. Do not give up the habit of meeting together as some have done.

But encourage one another as we see the day approaching. Encourage one another. That's why we come to church. To encourage one another. To strengthen one another. So God knows you dear friends.

He knows your heart. He knows your fears. He knows your failings. He knows your weaknesses. But he is the God who is able to provide for them. Provide for them. And perhaps you're somebody this morning and you're saying I really find it hard to trust God.

In fact I find it almost impossible to believe in and to trust God. Then let me encourage you. Let me urge you to ask God to strengthen your faith. Disciples did that.

Lord increase our faith. Ask God. Lord I want to believe. I want to trust you. I want to lean upon you. I want to prove you faithful. But I'm really struggling.

[30 : 42] Please increase my faith. Strengthen my faith. Increase my faith. Give me faith. Faith is a supernatural. A wonderful gift of God the Holy Spirit. Secondly then in this episode and this is where we get to the battle.

We find that God not only knows us completely but God works for us perfectly. God works for us perfectly.

And that's what we see in this battle don't we? Gideon and his men after Gideon has received this encouragement first of all he worships God and all this he thanks God he praises him for

encouraging him and strengthening him in his faith.

He says Lord in one sense I'm trusting you and then he goes to the battle. But Gideon goes to the battle and he hasn't got a sword. Well he may have won but we're not told about it. He doesn't even have to draw his sword to destroy and to annihilate and to push back the enemy.

With just a trumpet a flaming torch he and his men of 300 send the Midianites into a panic whereby they turn on one another and are decimated.

[31 : 48] I want you to imagine how would you and I have gone about planning this battle? What would we have done if we had been military strategists with 300 men? First of all we said we've only got 300 men what are we going to do?

We'd probably have done something of a guerrilla warfare attack just small groups attacking on the fringes around the edge and taking our time and that sort of thing or would have come up with other plans or strategies how can we overcome this immense problem?

And again for us of course when we're faced with struggles in life when we're faced with these challenges when we're faced with the big things we often sit down and we have a plan don't we? We have a strategy we think about how we're going to pay those bills that are coming through the door we think about how we're going to meet those demands that are upon us how we're going to sort out the problem how we're going to get through this time of unemployment we think about we plan and we sit down and in one sense there's nothing wrong with that except the fact that in doing so we're ultimately saying God we don't need you we can work this out for ourselves we've got a plan and a strategy to sort ourselves out but how many times can we number when we've gone to a situation a circumstance with our plans and our schemes and thought that we had the answer to it and it's just gone completely pear shaped Gideon doesn't do that Gideon allows God to do his work he trusts God to provide he trusts God to work perfectly and so we find that ultimately as we said who is it who wins the battle who is it that turns this army against one another verse 22 when the 300 trumpets sounded the Lord caused the men throughout the camp to turn on one another God was in control of that situation God knew exactly what he was going to do to the Midianites long before he even called Gideon long before he set him on this road along to this commandment and the salvation of the people my dear friends for you and I because God is everlasting and he knows us from the beginning and he knows us completely he knows what he's doing he has a plan for this church and for each church he has a plan for this world this world is not going as it were through tumbling through the universe in a state of chaos to its own self destruction this world is under the very hand of almighty God and he is pursuing his purposes for it ultimately for the saving of his people the building of his church and preparing for the return of his son we can trust him can't we we can trust him that's why church history is a wonderful thing this year is a wonderful year for Christians 500 years since the beginning of the reformation time when the world was at its bleakest and darkest even worse than it is now and God sent the light of his gospel through men like Martin Luther and others as well and has transformed the world the church of Jesus Christ continues to grow and people continue to be saved who does this but God wasn't Gideon who did it all that Gideon did with his men was shout the Lord and for Gideon just to wake you up in case you haven't a bit of a doze and blow his trumpet

I haven't got one of them and he wouldn't like me to play it either and what happens that's all they do reminds me reminds me of Jericho remember what happened with Jericho that great fortified city of Jericho in the book of Joshua absolutely impenetrably thick walls what did the people do marched around a few times blew their trumpets and shouted and the walls fell down were they just really poor masonry were the builders of Jericho you know hadn't used the right cement mix of mortar and water and sand of course not God did it and God did it here and God does it for us God does it for us dear friends God had promised at the very beginning when he spoke to Gideon one thing and this is what he promised him I will be with you chapter 6 verse 16 that's what makes the difference for the Christian in the struggles and trials of life that's what makes the difference for the believer in this world that's what makes the difference to every single life that has been committed to Jesus I will be with you

[36 : 10] I am with you and never will I leave you nor forsake you and so when Gideon goes into battle when we face those challenges we go with the Lord and the Lord goes with us the promise that Jesus gave his disciples just before he returned to the Father in heaven as he was sending them out to preach the gospel to face this challenge there they were just a small handful of believers amongst tens of millions of unbelievers a world that was caught up in all sorts of false

wicked evil worship of gods how on earth could they face how on earth could they change the world how on earth could they take this message and be expected to be heard because Jesus says I am with you always even to the very end of the age so that when we read in Acts just a few decades later people are saying these men have turned the world upside down no it wasn't these men who turned the world upside down it was the God of these men who turned the world upside down we need the Lord and the Lord delights to work for our good that's why we quote that promise of Romans in chapter 8 verse 28 for we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him those he has called

God works so dear Christian for you whatever you're facing whatever circumstances are coming your way you have a God who works for you perfectly but finally as we close this morning dear friends I think it's just important for us to mention here God provides helpers along the way provides helpers along the way yes the men had turned on themselves the Midianites and then we read what happens they began to flee and what does Gideon do he doesn't he doesn't say right leave it to me I you know get back this is my battle I'm going to get the glory for myself I want everybody to see that I'm Gideon the great Gideon don't anybody come to my aid no he calls says come everybody come down and help us come down and support us come down and stop them from getting across the river where they can get into a place of safety because ultimately what will happen is they'll just regroup and they'll come back again we've got to finish this once and for all

God gives us help us support us it wasn't because God couldn't do it all himself it wasn't because God couldn't completely annihilate the Midianites of course he could do that he could do that very simply he could have done it in sending fire from heaven he could have done it in all sorts of number of ways it wasn't that but God wants and delights to use and to work through his people so not just Gideon and the 300 but many thousands of others are brought in and support and help and bring an end to this battle dear friends it's so important for us to recognize this we need one another God has given us one another in the local church he's given us one another because we need one another it's not God cannot supply all our needs God does supply all our needs but we have other needs as well which is friendship fellowship physical encouragement support love and of course we need to be able to give

God has put you and I into a local church so that we can be givers and receivers not just receivers and not just givers but that we can share with and support and help one another that's why when we turn to 1 Corinthians we looked at it in recent weeks where Paul talks about the body of Christ about the church being like a human body needing hands and feet and eyes and ears and noses and toes and all those sort of things we need one another and without one another then we would be all the poorer for it why do we come to church we come to worship God why do we come to church because we come to hear his word why do we come to church we come to encourage one another to help one another to support one another to strengthen one another to build one another up there is no point you coming to this church or any church if you feel as if you've got it all sorted out there's no point you becoming a

Christian or trusting in Jesus if you think that you can handle all of life in your own strength the reason that you come to church the reason that you are a Christian the reason that you carry on following Christ is because you know that you need him and you need his people if we feel inadequate that's good if we feel self confident that's bad self confidence is simply pride with a positive spin but it means not accepting God's help and not accepting the help of those that he's given us in life God gave Gideon supporters and help us dear friend let me ask you what part do you play in this local church or your local church what do you give what do you bring to the table who is encouraged by you strengthened by you supported by you built up by you and let me ask you as well if you're somebody who can say lots and lots of things and lots of people let me ask you what do you receive are you willing to let people serve you or has always got to be you who's doing the serving it's always got to be you who's who gives the appearance of having everything in control and organizing or are you willing to let others come alongside and support you are you willing to show that you are weak and vulnerable and need help in all these things we see that the God of Gideon is our God the God of Gideon is the God who provides gives supplies works just going to close with this psalm it's Psalm 121 just listen don't need to turn to it just listen to this psalm and realize again that the God of Gideon is our God and if he's not our God he desires to be our God and dear friends

[42 : 37] I hope that you want him for your God too I lift up my eyes to the mountains to the big big things the big problems maybe where does my help come from my help comes from the Lord the maker of heaven and earth he will not let your foot slip he who watches over you will not slumber indeed he who watches over his people will neither slumber nor sleep the Lord watches over you the Lord is your shade at the right hand so the sun will not harm you by day nor the moon by night the Lord will keep you from all harm he will watch over your life the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore let's pray together before we come to sing our final hymn father in heaven our gracious and loving God no one knows us better than you no one understands us better than you no one sees into our hearts our minds our fears our thoughts our anxieties our joys our failings and our sins you know us completely we thank you that oh Lord though you know us completely you love us eternally and we thank you that Lord in spite of all of our failings and sins pride and weakness your desire is to be that part of our lives that is that you would be with us day and night morning and evening seven days a week 24 hours a day

Lord we praise you and thank you that you are the God of Gideon and you are our God we pray that Lord you would help us to trust you to lean on you to look to you to rely upon you help us Lord we pray to be those who not only feel our weakness but find its strength completed in you and we pray Lord again for the church here and for other local churches represented Lord help us to play our part help us to be encouragers supporters help us Lord to be those who give and receive and oh Lord we pray that you would do your work here in Whitby and in this county and in this nation and in this world do your work and bring oh Lord men and women to yourself we pray for the glory of Jesus we ask Amen Let's sing