

JUDGES 8:4-21
PURSUING THE ENEMY!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Judges chapter 8 as we continue our study through the book of Judges.

We are currently studying the life of Gideon, the fifth Judge in Israel. And, as we have seen, God raised up this man who was frightened, who blamed God for all the things that were happening to his people and when God first called him, Gideon had all the excuses you can imagine why he couldn't do what God called him to do.

And let's face it, the Midianites, the ones who were oppressing Israel, were bigger and stronger and thus, this oppression went on for seven long years and there was nothing that the children of Israel could do about it!

Now seven years might not seem like a long time, but when you look at what the Midianites did, you can understand why seven years was a very long time. You see, they were taking the food off the table, you might say, from the children of Israel.

We are told in Judges 6:3-6, **“So it was, whenever Israel had sown, Midianites would come up; also Amalekites and the people of the East would come up against them. Then they would encamp against them and destroy the produce of the earth as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep nor ox nor donkey. For they would come up with their livestock and their tents, coming in as numerous as locusts; both they and their camels were without number; and they would enter the land to destroy it. So Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites, and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord.”**

When the enemy takes your food, it is very bad. They could not run down to the Piggly Wiggly to buy more food. Their food came from working the land, planting the seed, caring for it and then harvesting it. And when they would harvest their grain, here came the Midianites to steal it from them!

It was so bad that the children of Israel were hiding out in caves, in the mountains so they could protect their food and themselves from the Midianites!

And it is out of this that God raises up Gideon to deliver His people.

And God gave them a great victory. With only three-hundred soldiers against 135,000 soldiers that the Midianites had, Gideon won this battle! Obviously, it was not the strength of Gideon and his men, it was the hand of God upon them that brought them this victory as the enemy started killing each other as they were startled during the night.

And then Gideon called for reinforcements to go after the remaining enemy.

And here's the thing we need to be careful about. With the victory the Devil will try to destroy it for us. And we saw that last time with the tribe of Ephraim, who did come down when Gideon called them to help, but they were mad that they didn't get the call sooner.

And we saw how Gideon intervened and put a stop to the division and maybe a war with their brothers, the Ephraimites.

This morning we are going to see that Gideon and his three-hundred men are still in pursuit of the remaining 15,000 Midianites that escaped, out of the 135,000. Thus, I have called this study - ***PURSUING THE ENEMY!***

Now, in saying that, I don't think many Christians are even aware of the battle that we are in or they just don't care, they don't want to be bothered with it. But let me say this. If you are not engaged, then you are losing the battle.

I know that is a hard one to swallow but think about it. How can you have victory over the enemy if you are not engaged against the enemy.

Now let me be clear on this. We are not to go around looking for the enemy, but we are to draw close to God, stand up for the things of God, and when you do, the enemy will come looking for you!

And if he isn't, then you have to wonder if you are really standing up for God because if there are no attacks, then there is no threat that you are bringing to the enemy.

But when you are serving the Lord, you are a threat to the enemy, and he will try to bring you down!

Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

When you're in a battle, before you can march out against the enemy, you have to know who he is. It's called "gathering intelligence." You need to know how he operates, where his base of operations is, what his tactics are. You have to be able to identify him in all circumstances.

And while we certainly have a number of earthly enemies, they are not the enemy about whom we must be most concerned. No. "Your adversary," Peter clearly states, is "the devil." He is at the root of all evil. He is relentlessly engaged in a strategy to bring us down. With deceptive stealth, he's "like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

Last time I checked, hunters called the lion the "king of beasts." The last time I did an investigation of the devil, he was the highest of all the angelic creatures. Though he fell from that exalted position due to pride, he didn't lose any of his brilliance.

Make no mistake about it, when the highest of God's angelic creations fell, he instantly rolled up his sleeves and entered into conflict with the divine plan. Small wonder that we're told, "*Be of sober spirit*" (v. 8a). There's a war on! Once we identify the enemy and understand his wicked ways, we realize the world is a battleground, not a playground.

Let me pause here and set the record straight. *First*, we're living in a culture that is politically correct but is theologically, ethically, and morally corrupt. To the very center of its being, today's culture is corrupt. Humanity without Christ is totally depraved. The world will lead you directly *away from* the things of God, rather than *toward* them.

Second, we are now facing hardships, conflicts, and trials like none of us would have ever imagined, because we are encountering our adversary on his turf. Everything God's people love, he hates.

For instance, he hates your Christian marriage. Chances are good that more marriages are in conflict in these stressful days than in days past.

Chances are you've got troubles in your family - more than usual. Perhaps one of your children is in open rebellion. If they're not there yet, it's just because they're not old enough. It's only a matter of time. Why? Our adversary hates harmony in the family.

Chances are the conflicts occurring in your occupation have reached such an intense level, you're ready to say, "I don't even know if Christianity works anymore." It's all part of the enemy's strategy.

Chances are you're going through a struggle emotionally or physically - either yourself, your mate, someone in your family, or one of your close friends.

Chances are very good that a grandchild or a great-grandchild is very sick right now. The devil hates strong minds, secure wills, and stable bodies.

We shall encounter enemy attacks in any number of areas. While we ought not to live in fear of it, we're not to be ignorant of it either. The enemy loves for you to be kept ignorant about him, to think of him inaccurately or with a shrug. He hates messages like the one in this devotional. He is being identified for who he really is; he doesn't go for that.

Do you need some good news? It's found in this same section of Scripture. We can resist the enemy!

Look closely yourself at the opening line of 1 Peter 5:9. "***But resist him, firm in your faith***" The enemy's attacks may be directed toward the vulnerable part of your life, but the shield of faith will protect you from them. You **can resist** him!

Furthermore, realizing that God is our refuge, we can go to Him immediately. There's nothing like prayer to dislodge the darts of the enemy.

And you're not alone.

Verse nine states "***your brethren***" are experiencing the same sufferings you are. You're not unique. You are part of the groundswell of God's triumphant movement. . . .

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If we are living in the last days, and I believe we are, then the enemy knows that his time is short and thus, he is going to try and bring as much death and destruction to this world and in the lives of Christians.

Like I have said, I have called this study – *PURSUING THE ENEMY!* And I have broken down the verses we will be looking at this morning into five main points. They are,

PURSUING THE ENEMY – JUDGES 8:4

NO HELP FROM THE BRETHREN – JUDGES 8:5-9

NEVER SURRENDER, NEVER GIVE UP – JUDGES 8:10-12

REBELLION DEFEATED – JUDGES 8:13-17

DESTRUCTION OF THE ENEMY – JUDGES 8:18-21

So with that as our introduction, let's begin reading in Judges chapter 8, beginning in verse 4, and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

JUDGES 8

VERSE 4

Keep in mind that there were still some 15,000 Midianite soldiers who were on the run, and Gideon is in pursuit after them.

And two of their Kings, Zebah and Zalmunna they are going after because once their Kings are dead, the enemy will fall apart even further.

But in their battles against the enemy, crossing over the Jordan River, they were **“exhausted.”**

And I think that is very understandable. They fought hard and they fought this enemy over a long distance.

And I don't know how you have felt over the years, but I have been tired before. Not tired of the work, I am blessed what God has given me to do. But there are times I am tired in the work.

It is easy to get physically, emotionally exhausted. And I realize that some feel that if that is how I feel, then maybe the work is not for me.

I disagree. I see Paul, I see David and others who were tired in the work, physically speaking, emotionally speaking. You see, tired in the work, not of the work!

I think Spurgeon gives us a good perspective on this. He wrote, "If you, dear brethren and sisters, will give yourselves wholly to God's work, although you will never get tired of it, you will often get tired in it. If a man has never tired himself with working for God, I should think he never has done any work that was worth doing."

And listen again to what Spurgeon had to say regarding these men and how they felt and yet, what they went on to do. He wrote, "Let us also serve the Lord when every movement is painful, when even to think is wearisome. These men were faint. You know what it is for a soldier to be faint; it is no nonsense, no pretence, it is real fainting. Yet to go running on when you are ready to faint, to keep right on when you are ready to drop, this is very trying work; yet let us do it, brethren, by God's grace. Some people only pray when they feel like praying; but we need most to pray when we feel that we cannot pray. If we were only to preach, – some of us, – when we felt like preaching, we should not often preach."

I think we all understand how they felt, but are we ready to move forward even though we are exhausted, to complete the task that is before us?

And maybe we think that there is no way we can complete the work, it is too great, or whatever the reason. But again, perspective. God said He would give them the victory, so they pressed on.

Listen carefully to what Paul wrote in II Corinthians 4:7-12, **“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed - always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you.”**

Here is the amazing thing. God has placed in these bodies of flesh, these earthen vessels the Gospel of Jesus Christ! In fact, God indwells us, and thus, it is not about our power or strength, but the power of God working in us so that He can work through us.

And it is not easy, as Paul tells us. He was *hard-pressed* no matter which way he turned. I guess you can say that they were squeezing in upon him, but he was not *crushed*!

He was also *perplexed*, maybe not completely sure what was happening or why and yet, he was not in *despair* because he knew that all things worked together for good even though he might not see it, might not feel it, he *KNEW* that truth because it was a promise from God!
(Romans 8:28)

Make no mistake about it, Paul was *persecuted* for his faith and in the end, he would be put to death by Nero for his faith in Jesus. But this he also knew; he was not *forsaken* by God no matter what came his way and that kept him moving forward!

He was also *struck down*, beaten, stoned, left for dead but he was not *destroyed*! Think about it like this. None of us are going to be going home to be with the Lord until He is done with us! That is what Paul truly believed and once the work was done, it was time to go home!

And with all the beatings Paul suffered, he wore them as a badge of honor unto the Lord! And thus, Paul pressed on, he did not give up, even on death row in the Mamertine prison in Rome he was writing one last time to his son in the faith, Timothy, to encourage him to continue on in the work that God has called him to!

What an example for us. I am not saying that we are going to endure the same things that Paul went through, but we all will endure some kind of tribulations in this life and don't let that cause you to drop out, to stop serving the Lord!

Let me share this with you to encourage you not to grow weary in the work that God has called you to do, put to press on!

We are told,

One thought kept circulating in my mind; "This is so unfair! The only thing I ever wanted was to make it good for everyone and now I get treated like this!" It was a situation where it felt like my efforts weren't really appreciated, and negative thoughts pulled me down into discouragement. "Why do I even bother? Nobody even notices that I try so hard!" Then a verse came to me from Galatians 6:9: "***And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart.***"

There are some powerful exhortations in this simple verse that really caused me to examine my motivations.

First, it exhorts me to **“not grow weary while doing good.”** Everything in my mind and body wanted to be discouraged, because it seemed like my efforts to bless others and pray for them weren't paying off at all. So, what was the point?

But it is the second part of the verse that gives tremendous hope: **“for in due season we shall reap.”** I realized that I just had to be patient!

I was reminded of the time I tried to grow kitchen herbs. Diligently watering the little flower pot for days, while it seemed like nothing happened at all.

And then, after a week, I started seeing the little sprouts. The sprouts grew into tiny little plants and the plants grew and grew until they started to give off a wonderful aroma.

For something to grow, a lot has to happen in the hidden and it may seem like what we do doesn't pay off, but we have to be patient for those little sprouts to break through.

The third part of the verse gives us a condition for this process to continue: **“if we do not lose heart.”** If I give up, stop praying for someone, stop trying to bless them or stop watering the soil and later the sprouts, things can go very wrong. The growth of a seed into a plant is a very delicate process and simple things like lack of water and sunlight can cause the little sprouts to die. I must be diligent, get rid of the thoughts of discouragement and continue in the good work that God is asking of me.

In order not to grow weary or lose heart, I have to make sure that my motivations are in order. Why do I serve and bless people? Is it because I expect appreciation and love and thankfulness in return? Or is it because it is what I sense God is asking of me, no matter how it is received?

It says in John 5:44: **“How can you believe, who receive honor from one another and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?”**

If I am motivated by people appreciating me, then I will never be satisfied. After all, those around me have a human nature just like me and that means that we don't always express thanks, don't always notice the details of how far someone went to make it nice for us, or how much work it took "behind the scenes." That doesn't mean that people are unkind or unthankful, but they can only see part of the picture. If my happiness is dependent on them, then I am always going to be disappointed.

But there is another motivation that I can have, or pray for: that I only seek to please God. Because then, even if my hard work is criticized or not noticed, I can still be thankful that I got to serve God, and that can be enough.

Being content with receiving God's honor may not come naturally; everyone likes appreciation and recognition from people we can see and hear, but it's something I can fight for and pray for. God will mightily strengthen me in that, because He appreciates it more than anything, if I am willing to serve Him from the heart, without needing anyone else's recognition.

It was also discouraging when I didn't see any "results" for my efforts at all. Those sprouts just stayed hidden, deep in the earth and it seemed like it took forever for them to break through the soil. Then, another verse came to me, in 1 Corinthians 3:7: ***"So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase."***

I must trust that God sees the big picture. Importantly, I must acknowledge and make sure that I am willing to further His work, not my own. He knows what people need, better than I do. He can see right beneath the soil and see that little sprout that is hidden from my eyes. So, I pray with an upright heart and I serve those around me to my best knowledge and understanding. But I must fully put the whole situation in His hand and let Him give the increase. I must work hard with a mindset to give God all the honor, otherwise He can't use my work and then it yields no fruit.

The whole situation really woke a deeper longing in me, to stand before God's face and serve Him, without demands or questions. I've seen many examples around me of people who have chosen to do that, and it has made them happy and content. That happiness and contentment wouldn't be there if they still relied on people's recognition for their actions. So those are examples that I want to follow, because I want to be happy like that, independently of my situation, the people around me, or my feelings. Just always happy, without a "bad day." It is possible, as long as I have my priorities in order!

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I think that is what we see here with Gideon and his men. Yes, they were exhausted, but they were serving the Lord, and nothing was going to stop them.

May we continue on in the work that God has called us to do, or even take those steps of faith if we are not moving forward yet.

God wants to use us so that He can get the glory and thus, we need to press on and be ***PURSUING THE ENEMY!***

Now, that is going to lead us into our next point and that is – ***NO HELP FROM THE BRETHERN!***

And as we read on you will see what I am talking about.

VERSES 5-9

As we have seen, these 300 men of Gideon are in pursuit of 15,000 of the enemy, the Midianites who have escaped.

And Gideon and his men cross over the Jordan River and they come to Succoth, in Gad. And they ask for food, since Gideon's men are exhausted, they are hungry.

Now keep in mind that Gideon did not ask them to join the front lines in this battle, but to just help the men out, they were hungry.

But they refuse to give them food, but why?

Because they were not sure who was going to win this battle and thus, just in case the Midianites win, they don't want to side with a loser.

But Gideon pronounces judgment upon them. He knew that God had delivered the rest of the Midianites into their hands and thus, once they are victorious over them, he will come back and will deal with the leaders of Succoth.

And then Gideon and his men come to Penuel, and once again he asked for food for his men, and they responded the same way that the leaders in Succoth responded, they refused because they did not want to pick sides yet, not knowing who was going to win.

And let's face it, as discouraging as that must have been for Gideon, the same can be true as we are serving the Lord and the resistance we face from our friends as we do.

Instead of helping us they become a hindrance to what we are doing for the Lord.

What do I mean by that?

I mean that they can tell us things like . . .

“Don’t be so dogmatic about what you believe. You just need faith!”

“You really believe that the Bible is the Word of God? Come on, it does contain some of the things that God has spoken, but let’s not go crazy here!”

“What do you mean that Jesus is the only way, come on brother, God is a God of love and He would never send anyone to hell!”

“That is what you believe and that is great. But faith is personal, and you should not be sharing that with others!”

“Jesus is not God, He was just a man with good ideas, but God? Get real!”

“What do you mean Jesus is coming back and the world is going into judgment? Really, I think things are going to get better and better!”

“You can’t do that! You are not qualified to do that! We do that, we don’t need your help!”

And the list can go on and on, but I think you get the idea. And, remember we are not talking about unbelievers, but of those who call themselves Christians, although they may not be, but some of them are.

It is just like we see here with Gideon; this was family that would not help them. It was family that was discouraging them.

And I think many times we see Christians do the same with other Christians, as they discourage them in the work that God has called them to do.

As you are serving the Lord, as you are witnessing to others of Jesus, and a brother or sister in the Lord comes up to you and says, ***“What’s the use. The world is getting more and more corrupt. The One World Government is coming. The One World Religion is coming. The Mark of the Beast is almost here. So really, what is the use of doing anything. People don’t want to hear about Jesus any longer. So let’s just ride this out to the end!”***

Yes, much of what I just said is true, it is going to happen and there is nothing we can do to stop it. But let me be clear on this. We are never called to stop these things!

I know that is shocking to some of you. Some of you are even fearful of these things that are coming.

But you will never find in the Scripture that we are to save the world or save a nation. What we are called to do is to save people out of this world!

Yes, people don’t want to hear about Jesus, and the numbers are growing more and more. So, should we just stop sharing our faith?

Absolutely not. You see, even if they wanted to hear about Jesus, they are not getting saved because of you, you are just the instrument that God is using to save people.

And think of the first century church and all the persecution they faced. Think about the wickedness and immorality of places like Corinth and Rome, as well as many others, and yet, people were getting saved and it is out of their salvation that communities, cities, nations can be saved!

Thus, we need to encourage each other in the work. The battle is intense today and if someone comes to you and just needs the nourishment of encouragement, don’t be a Debbie Downer or a wet blanket that puts out their fire. Encourage them in the work, refresh them and help them not to give up.

We see that with Paul as he wrote to Timothy, he kept encouraging Timothy not to give up the gift that God had given him but to use it.

Discouragement can be deadly. Be careful that you are not a discourager because that is not a gift of the Spirit.

But we are to encourage each other in the work.

Let me show you how this plays out for us. We are told in II Corinthians 7:5-7, **“For indeed, when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, inside were fears. Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was comforted in you, when he told us of your earnest desire, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more.”**

As you read that you can clearly see that Paul was beaten, overwhelmed, even having some fear in the work that he was doing. But God comforted Paul and the way that God did this is interesting to me and it is what we have been talking about.

We are told that God comforted Paul **“... by the coming of Titus ...”** You see, God used a brother in the Lord to comfort Paul and not just Titus, we are told that when Paul heard how Titus was treated by the Corinthians it encouraged him. How? By seeing their love for Titus and thus, their love for Paul himself!

Let me share a few other Scriptures to show you what I mean.

In I Thessalonians 5:11 we are told, **“Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.”**

Listen to how The Amplified Bible puts this verse, “**Therefore encourage (admonish, exhort) one another and edify (strengthen and build up) one another, just as you are doing.**”

We are called to encourage each other in the work, to strengthen each other, build each other up, not put them down.

And in Hebrews 10:24-25 we are told, “**And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.**”

And I like this because Paul is saying that we can stir each up in doing good works. And, I don’t know about you, but it is so encouraging to hear someone share how God spoke to them as I shared the Word of God with them. It truly stirs me up and fires me up and what a blessing!

And the last one I will share with you, and there are many more, but one that is special to me and that is Proverbs 17:17, which says, “**A friend loves at all times, And a brother is born for adversity.**”

True friends are going to love you no matter what. Fair-weather friends will come and go. But true friends hang in there and even when things are tough, they are by your side to encourage you and move you forward.

The leaders in Succoth and Peniel were not true friends, they were fair-weather friends and they did not encourage or refresh their brethren.

May we not be like that, but may we refresh and encourage the brethren no matter what they are going through, no matter how difficult the situation may be. A true friend will love at all times!

What we have seen here is that there was – ***NO HELP FROM THE BRETHREN!***

Which leads us to the next point – ***NEVER SURRENDER, NEVER GIVE UP!***

VERSES 10-12

Here is an important lesson we see here in the life of Gideon. He didn't give up! And, like I have said, ***NEVER SURRENDER, NEVER GIVE UP!***

Look at Gideon here. God called him to a work, and it was not finished yet. So he forged on till the enemy was destroyed.

It also shows his faith that what God had promised Gideon, this victory against the Midianites, and He was going to bring it to pass as long as Gideon was willing to walk by faith!

It is as Paul admonishes us in Philippians 3:12-14, **“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”**

We need to press on!

Maybe it is just me, but I have felt overwhelmed at times. It is tough. And those crazy thoughts of just saying, ***“What’s the use. Nothing is changing. Things are no different. I may as well just stop!”***

And I know the enemy is messing with my mind and wants me to drop out.

And here's the thing. And I am just being honest with you. If I was not absolutely sure that God had called me to this ministry, I would have never continued on. All that I have put my wife through the last twenty-five years of ministry. All that I put my children through when they were growing up. All the pain I have endured from friends who turned against me. These were friends of mine. All the name calling, the put downs, all that garbage.

But I know my calling. I know what God has said. And thus, I know that He wants me to continue in this work or I guess I should say, ***NEVER SURRENDER, NEVER GIVE UP!***

Let me share this speech with you from Winston Churchill. We are told,

Prime Minister Winston Churchill's address to Harrow School on October 29, 1941:

Almost a year has passed since I came down here at your Head Master's kind invitation in order to cheer myself and cheer the hearts of a few of my friends by singing some of our own songs.

The ten months that have passed have seen very terrible catastrophic events in the world - ups and downs, misfortunes - but can anyone sitting here this afternoon, this October afternoon, not feel deeply thankful for what has happened in the time that has passed and for the very great improvement in the position of our country and of our home?

Why, when I was here last time we were quite alone, desperately alone, and we had been so for five or six months. We were poorly armed. We are not so poorly armed today; but then we were very poorly armed. We had the unmeasured menace of the enemy and their air attack still beating upon us, and you yourselves had had experience of this attack; and I expect you are beginning to feel impatient that there has been this long lull with nothing particular turning up!

But we must learn to be equally good at what is short and sharp and what is long and tough. It is generally said that the British are often better at the last. They do not expect to move from crisis to crisis; they do not always expect that each day will bring up some noble chance of war; but when they very slowly make up their minds that the thing has to be done and the job put through and finished, then, even if it takes months - if it takes years - they do it.

Another lesson I think we may take, just throwing our minds back to our meeting here ten months ago and now, is that appearances are often very deceptive, and as Kipling well says, we must “. . . meet with Triumph and Disaster. And treat those two impostors just the same.”

You cannot tell from appearances how things will go. Sometimes imagination makes things out far worse than they are; yet without imagination not much can be done. Those people who are imaginative see many more dangers than perhaps exist; certainly many more than will happen; but then they must also pray to be given that extra courage to carry this far-reaching imagination.

But for everyone, surely, what we have gone through in this period - I am addressing myself to the School - surely from this period of ten months, this is the lesson:

Never give in. Never give in. Never, never, never, never - in nothing, great or small, large or petty - never give in, except to convictions of honour and good sense. Never yield to force. Never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy.

We stood all alone a year ago, and to many countries it seemed that our account was closed, we were finished. All this tradition of ours, our songs, our School history, this part of the history of this country, were gone and finished and liquidated.

Very different is the mood today. Britain, other nations thought, had drawn a sponge across her slate. But instead our country stood in the gap. There was no flinching and no thought of giving in; and by what seemed almost a miracle to those outside these Islands, though we ourselves never doubted it, we now find ourselves in a position where I say that we can be sure that we have only to persevere to conquer.

You sang here a verse of a School Song: you sang that extra verse written in my honour, which I was very greatly complimented by and which you have repeated today. But there is one word in it I want to alter - I wanted to do so last year, but I did not venture to. It is the line: "Not less we praise in darker days."

I have obtained the Head Master's permission to alter darker to sterner. "Not less we praise in sterner days."

Do not let us speak of darker days: let us speak rather of sterner days. These are not dark days; these are great days - the greatest days our country has ever lived; and we must all thank God that we have been allowed, each of us according to our stations, to play a part in making these days memorable in the history of our race.

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That speech is called *NEVER GIVE IN* and it fits in what we are speaking of here.

We are living in dark days and many Christians want to run away and hide, they are just giving up!

But we are not called to give up, we are called to *NEVER SURRENDER, NEVER GIVE UP!*

We should be honored to be living in these days we are living in because we could be that generation that closes out church history. What are we doing about it? Are we forging ahead in the work that God has called us to do? We need to!

And I know that there are many out there who try to discourage you in the work, don't give in, and as we will see next, ***REBELLION DEFEATED!***

VERSES 13-17

Here we see that after Gideon finishes his defeat of the Midianites, he goes back to the cities that refused to help him and his men by giving them food to eat as they were hungry from the battle.

And Gideon told them that after he defeats the enemy, he would be back to punish the leaders in these cities.

The leaders of Succoth he whipped or scourged them with thorns and briers, and many feel that this was so severe that these leaders died.

And the leaders of Penuel, he goes after them and they are hiding in a tower for safety and Gideon brings down that tower killing these men. The place they ran to for safety ended up being the place of their destruction!

Now you are probably wondering what in the world does that have to do with us as Christians? We can't hurt our brothers and sisters in the Lord like that, even if what they did to us was not right. So what can we glean from this?

Remember that I said that we see this group of people not being a help to us, in fact, they are trying to thwart what we are doing, put a stop to it by discouraging us, coming against what we believe and the work we are doing.

So, when they come against us, what are we to do?

I want you to listen carefully because too often we use everything else except the weapon that God has given to us.

What is that weapon?

It is the sword of the Spirit or the Word of God!

I will give you an example to show you what I mean.

Over the years I have had people who wanted to know what school I went to, what my qualifications were that allowed me to be a pastor.

And I have no schooling, no degree in theology. So what are my qualifications? I love the Lord and I know what He has called me to do. I did not choose this ministry, God called me to it!

And for me, it hurts when I hear that they don't believe I am qualified for this ministry because I have no degree. But I understand where they are coming from and the only thing I can do is use the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God to show them my qualifications!

What do I mean by that?

When I heard those words about the qualifications for ministry and when I told them I had no theology degree and saw their faces in shock, I was comforted by what we are told in Acts chapter 4.

Peter and John are arrested for sharing Jesus and healing the lame man. And after Peter shares Jesus with the Sanhedrin, the Jewish religious leaders, we are told of their response to these two men, Peter and John, in Acts 4:13, **“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.”**

These religious leaders went to school, they spent many hours learning and Peter and John, they were fishermen, they had no school. Thus, they saw them as “**uneducated and untrained men**” and yet they “**marveled**” at what they knew, how they spoke of the Scriptures.

And then the key, which was not schooling, it was not that they were so smart or so bright, but “**they had been with Jesus.**”

Years ago I would joke about people who went to seminaries and I called the cemeteries because it was there that many lost their faith because the schools have become so liberal. Now, in the twenty-first century, it is even worse.

I am not saying that no one should go to school and get a degree in theology, but for me, God called me and as much as I tried to go to school, He shut the door and He spoke to my heart and He did not want me showing off some degree, He wanted me to understand that He was going to teach me what I needed to know to be a pastor, and He has and He continues to teach me!

So it was the Sword of the Spirit that comforted me and hopefully showed those who came against me, that God has done this in the past and He continues to do this today, we just need to stay close to Jesus!

If you get a chance, check out in the New Testament that many times when Jesus is confronting the Jewish religious leaders, He tells them something like this, “**Have you not read . . .**”

In other words, they tried to catch Jesus by the questions that they asked, and Jesus turned it around and told them that they should know these things because the Scriptures, the Old Testament speaks of them. Then He goes on to expound on the Scriptures to show them.

And the verse that God gave to me for this church is really what our opening song for our radio program speaks of. It is from Acts 2:42, “**And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.**”

And that is what this fellowship has been all about. We have taught through the Word of God, verse by verse – the Apostles’ doctrine. We enjoy the fellowship of the brethren and when we were apart because of the Coronavirus, we missed that fellowship. We share in communion. And we have our corporate prayer meetings as well as praying individually.

What God called me to do, the verse He gave for this church, He has been faithful to see us through the thick and thin of things. And thus, it doesn’t matter what our discouragers are saying, we need to listen to God. How important that is to not only know but apply to our lives!

How do we defeat the enemy, how do we put to silence those who are coming against us? By the Word of God! Thus, ***REBELLION DEFEATED!***

And now we will move to our last point – ***DESTRUCTION OF THE ENEMY!***

VERSES 18-21

Here we see these two guys, Zebah and Zalmunna, Midianite leaders still around.

And Gideon is questioning them about his brothers that were killed, if they had anything to do with it.

It does not seem like this took place in war but was a random act of violence, they were oppressing the children of Israel and Gideon’s brothers got in the way and they killed them.

Thus, Gideon was going to do the same to them, as Deuteronomy tells us he was to do as the avenger of blood, **“But if anyone hates his neighbor, lies in wait for him, rises against him and strikes him mortally, so that he dies, and he flees to one of these cities, then the elders of his city shall send and bring him from there, and deliver him over to the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die. Your eye shall not pity him, but you shall put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with you.”** Deuteronomy 19:11-13.

Now this is interesting because Gideon tries to get his son to kill these men, but he refuses because he was afraid.

We don't know how young he was, but this did play a role in his actions or his refusal to kill these men.

Why did Gideon do this?

To be a leader and have a youth kill you was shameful, that may have been the reason.

But, in any case, since the lad wouldn't do it, these two men knew they were going to die, they deserved it and told Gideon to get on with it and Gideon did just that and killed them!

Again, what does this have to do with us?

What is the enemy in your life, and there may be many?

They all stem from the flesh, the world and the Devil. They all come from one of these or maybe all of them at the same time.

And thus, we can't have anyone deal with these issues in our lives, we must put to death those things that are trying to destroy our lives.

And let me say this. The only way we are going to defeat these enemies is by faith and what I mean is our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We must seek after heavenly wisdom and not the wisdom of the world, which is trying to conform us into its image.

Let me explain it like this. We are told,

“This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.” (James 3:15)

True wisdom is “from above” and is “pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy” (v. 17). False wisdom, on the other hand, may come from the world outside us (“earthly”), the flesh within us (“sensual”), or the powers of darkness tempting us (“devilish”). All such wisdom leads to “envying and strife . . . confusion and every evil work” (v. 16). Believers, therefore, should be able to recognize the influences of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

The good news is that each divine Person of the Triune Godhead is on our side. The Father is opposed to the world, the Spirit to the flesh, and the Son to the devil, and they are well able to give victory.

“If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. . . . And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof” (1 John 2:15, 17). Thus, to overcome the love of the world, we must cultivate the love of the Father in our hearts and lives.

Similarly, to overcome the desires of the flesh, we should follow the leadings and convictions of the Holy Spirit, “for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other” (Galatians 5:17). Therefore, “walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh” (v. 16).

The devil and his evil hosts use their own dark powers to tempt and destroy the people of God, but “for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). Christ assured Satan’s defeat when He paid for our redemption on the cross. “And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.” (Colossians 2:15).

- <https://bit.ly/35R2xE9>

Make no mistake about it, we must be *PURSUING THE ENEMY*, never give up, never stop!

And I realize that there are times that we get *NO HELP FROM THE BRETHREN*, but again, don’t let that stop you.

In other words, when we look at both these points, we must *NEVER SURRENDER, NEVER GIVE UP!*

Because, the *REBELLION* will be *DEFEATED!* And that rebellion is defeated with the Sword of the Spirit!

And in the end, we will see the *DESTRUCTION OF THE ENEMY!*

Let me share this story with you and you will see what I mean about these enemies we are facing every day. We are told,

We can’t ignore enemies. When I was a little kid, my dad and I went down to a bay cottage in southern Texas.

When we got there, we discovered that the cottage was filled with wasps. I’ve never seen anything like it in my life. There were absolutely millions of wasps.

When we opened the door they just flooded out on us. They were even in the roll in the shade. You pulled the window shade down and out would come the wasps. They were all over the place.

Well, we went to work and we cleaned out all the wasps. Then we laid down that evening to go to sleep and I heard something buzz, buzz, buzz underneath me. I lifted my pillow and wasps were still everywhere between the two mattresses on my bunk.

Again, we cleaned them out. Why? Well, with a family reunion beginning in a day or two, we wanted it clean for them. It was essential for the health and happiness of all the family that we deal with this problem.

- Charles Swindoll, *The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart*, p. 180

You see, there are some enemies that are just plain dangerous to us and they need to be dealt with, they need to have a deathblow to them.

May we walk by faith and see the salvation that the Lord will give to us in the situations that we face in this life! ***NEVER SURRENDER, NEVER GIVE UP!***