

Jehovah Shalom – The LORD is Peace

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[0 : 00] Well, good evening and welcome to our service this evening. We welcome you, as always, in the name of our precious Saviour, Jesus Christ.

It's always good to gather in the Lord's house. It is a privilege to be here, and we ought to always count it as the greatest privilege. So we'll begin this evening by singing to God's praise in Psalm 122.

Psalm 122 is in the Scottish Psalter, and we'll sing the whole psalm. The psalmist had joy in his heart because he realised the privilege that he had to go to the house of God.

Psalm 122, I joyed when to the house of God go up, they said to me. Jerusalem within thy gates, our feet shall standing be. Jerusalem as a city is, compactly built together.

And to that place the tribes go up, the tribes of God go thither. The whole psalm, to God's praise. I joyed when to the house of God go up, they said to me.

[1 : 33] Jerusalem as a city is, compactly built together. Jerusalem as a city is, compactly built together. Jerusalem as a city is, compactly built together. Jerusalem within thy gates, our feet shall stand in me.

Jerusalem as a city is, compactly built together.

Column in thy one's right to the highest ■■. Jerusalem as a city is, palace of God. Jerusalem as a city is, accidental in our own right to the highest■. Jerusalem as a city is,essed by the highest firm, Jerusalem as a city is, headline by the highest firm of God.

To Israel's testimony there, to God's name thanks to faith.

For thrones of judgment in the thrones of the Threats of the day.

[2 : 55] Pre-Lot Jerusalem, Neha, peace and felicity.

Let them love thee on thy feet of still prosperity.

Therefore I wish that peace may still within thy holy name.

Under her haver■ that all set help me soils.

Lo, for my friends and brethren's sake, keep me in here I'll say.

[4 : 19] And for the house of Lord, I seek thy good always.

Shall stand to call the Lord in prayer. Gracious God and loving Heavenly Father, enable us as we stand in thy presence this evening to be still and to know that thou art God.

That there is none like and unto thee among the gods. For all the other gods are but idols done, which blinded nations fear. But our God is the Lord by whom the heavens created were.

And enable us, we pray thee, to come before thee. All with that joy that the psalmist had as he went to the house of God. That his longing was to be in the presence of the Lord's people.

And to meet with God himself. And O Lord, we do ask that that would be our desire this night. As we gather one with another. That our desire would be to see none other save Jesus only.

[5 : 40] Lord, O Lord, that thou wouldst enable us to lift our eyes. Lift our eyes to Jesus. And see that he is the author. And he still remains the finisher of our faith.

We bless thee, O Lord, for him. We thank thee that this is his house. And that we are those who are bidden to come to it. To taste and see that thou art good.

And to trust in thee and be blessed. That we, O Lord, might be like the tribes of old. Who gathered from all over the nation of Israel. To go and joy in the house of God.

To feast over the things of God's word. To joy in the truths that belong to the God most high. And O Lord, that we might, like them, go up to the house of God.

That even the psalmist could say that the tribes go up. The tribes of God go thither. That we would truly continue to march on in this wilderness journey. Continue to look to Jesus.

[6 : 39] Keep our eyes fixed upon him. For even the psalmist could say that so they from strength unwearied go. Still forward unto strength. Until in Zion they appear before the Lord at length.

That, O Lord, that we might have the prayer that the psalmist had. Where he said, pray that Jerusalem may have peace and felicity. Let them that love thee and thy peace have still prosperity. That we, O Lord, would pray for our congregation here. That there may be peace amongst us. The peace of God that passeth all understanding. The peace of God that is able to be brought through only through Jesus Christ.

That, O Lord, we would see what Jesus has done. We would understand what he has done for sinners such as we are. O bless us, Lord, as a congregation. Bind us together.

That we might be able to say, as the psalmist did. Let them that love thee and thy peace have still prosperity. That, O Lord, that this place may prosper with the gospel.

[7 : 41] Not because of man. Not because of the efforts of anyone. But because of the Lord and his desire to increase our number. And cause more and more to come to the Savior.

O Lord, we plead with thee. For we know that everything that we do in the name of the Lord. That it is not by might nor by power. But by thy spirit, saith the Lord.

And, O Lord, we do plead that thou wouldst work. Work a great work in our midst. That, O Lord, that thou wouldst draw souls to thyself. Those, O Lord, who are still in darkness.

Families and homes that are still without Christ. Lord, we plead with thee. That thou wouldst send thy light forth and thy truth. Let them be guides to them.

To bring them to that holy hill. Where the Lord dwells. That they would see thee in all thy glory. And in all thy beauty. That they might bow down before Jesus.

[8 : 39] And acknowledge him as Lord. To the glory of God the Father. O Lord, remember us, we pray thee. Bless us as a part of this community. Help us, Lord, as thy people to be witnesses for thee.

To witness in our lives. To be the light of the world. To be the salt of the earth. O Lord, help us, we pray thee. Not to hide our light under the bushel. But to realize that the light that we have.

Is the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. In the face of Jesus Christ. That we might shine forth to those in darkness. And tell it to the generation following.

That this God is our God. And that he will be our guide. Even unto death. Lord, bless and pity us, we pray thee. Shine upon us with thy face. That the earth, thy way and nations all.

May know thy saving grace. O Lord, do us good, then we pray. Bless us and keep us. Bless homes and families that are connected to our congregation.

[9 : 40] Especially, Lord, those who have no interest in the gospel. No concern for their soul. No thought of eternity. Where eternity is presented to us week by week.

As we hear of more and more being called from the scene of time into eternity. O Lord, that we might be ready. That even Jesus said, therefore, be ye ready. For at an hour when you think not, the Son of Man comes.

Help us, Lord, to be ready and waiting. With oil in our lamps. Waiting for the Son of Man to come. Help us, O Lord, we pray thee. Ought to be found on the side of Christ.

When the trumpet sounds. And all the dead in Christ shall rise first. To go to meet the Lord in the air. O Lord, we plead with thee.

That thou wouldst make us awake to those things. That we might hear the words of the prophet of old. Who said, awake, awake. O thou that sleepest. That we, O Lord, would truly hear thy voice.

[10 : 42] And hear, O Lord, and live. That we would see thy word that is a word of eternal life. Lord, bless us, we plead with thee. Bless every home and family.

In our own community. Throughout our island. Throughout our nation. O Lord, look upon us in mercy. Not because we deserve it. But because thou art one who is gracious.

A God who is gracious and merciful. Long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth.

Remember us then, we pray. Remember our nation. Remember all those who are part of it.

Lord, we are so wayward. We are so distancing ourselves from thee. But, O Lord, we bless thee. That thine arm is not shortened that it cannot save.

Neither is thine ear heavy that it cannot hear. Thou art the God who is able to save to the uttermost. O how we marvel. That thou art one who is able to pluck us as brands from the burning.

[11 : 41] Bless our nation, we ask thee. Remember those in government over us. Those who rule in these laws of our land. Lord, that thou wouldst give them wisdom. Remember David Cameron.

We ask, Lord, that thou wouldst protect him. That thou wouldst keep him. Remember his home and his family. Remember, O Lord, Nicola Sturgeon as well. Lord, we pray for them.

We ask that thou wouldst give to them the fear of the Lord. Which is the beginning of wisdom.

Remember all our MPs and our MSPs. Even our counsellors, Lord.

And remember even our local counsellor here. We ask for him. That thine hand would be upon him.

O Lord, we plead for thee. That thou wouldst move in our midst. Leave us not to ourselves.

But O Lord, we ask that thou wouldst draw near to us. We bless thee that thou art sovereign. The God who rules and who overrules in all things. Lord, look upon us then, we pray.

[12 : 40] Bless the troubled parts of our world. O Lord, where there is so much chaos and unrest. Remember the conflict in Syria. And all that's going on and the uncertainty of it.

Lord, we pray for our enemies. Those who are causing chaos. Lord, we pray that thou in thy grace and mercy. O that thou wouldst bring them to an end.

That thou wouldst stop them. Lord, we ask for the troubled parts of our world. Where there is wars and rumours of war. Where there is nation rising against nation. Kingdom against kingdom.

And yet Jesus is one who said that these things shall come. But the end is not yet. O Lord, help us then, we pray. To pray to the king who rules.

To the prince of peace. To the king of kings. To the lord of lords. To the one who is sovereign. And Lord, remember especially thy people. Those who are persecuted.

[13 : 36] Those who are hated. In these lands. Those, O Lord, who are converts from Islam. And even from Buddhism. Lord, we ask that thou wouldst protect them. That thou wouldst keep them.

For their religion deems that they are those who should be put to death. But O Lord, we ask that thou wouldst keep them. For that is thy promise. That as I was with Moses.

So I will be with thee. I will not fail thee. Nor forsake thee. O Lord, bless us then, we pray thee.

Bless the world that we're part of. A world that, in a sense, at this time of year.

Focuses upon the birth of Jesus. Focuses upon the baby in the manger. But O Lord, that they might look to Calvary. And realise that he was wounded for our transgressions.

Bruised for our iniquities. That the chastisement of our peace was upon him. And with his stripes we are healed. That he is one who was cut out of the land of the living.

[14 : 36] That he was forsaken. Despised and rejected of men. A man of sorrows acquainted with grief. And yet, Lord, we bless thee for him.

O that he died. That he rose again. That he was sown in corruption. Raised in incorruption. Sown an earthly body but raised an extraterrestrial body.

O Lord, we plead. That we would see Jesus. That more and more would look to him. And realise that he is not only the one in the manger. But the one who sits upon his throne.

And who will call all to stand before him. And give an account. O Lord, help us then, we pray thee.

To be ready. To be witnessing. And O Lord, to be going on in strength of God the Lord.

Bless us then, we pray thee. Bless thy word as we read it this evening. That we, O Lord, would hear thy voice in it. That we might hear a word of peace to our souls. Knowing that thy word is one that is full of peace.

[15 : 40] That we are justified by faith. And we have peace with God. Through our Lord Jesus Christ. Lord, cleanse us then, we pray. Take away all our iniquity.

Take away anything that may hinder our worship. That may cause us, O Lord, to not receive the blessing from thee. But, O Lord, we do ask. That thou wouldst look upon us.

Cleanse us then and do us good. For Jesus' sake. Amen. We can sing again this time in Psalm 119.

Psalm 119, that's page 414. In the Scottish Psalter. Singing from verse 164.

Down to the verse marked 168. Psalm 119. From verse 164.

[16 : 51] The theme, I should have mentioned. The theme of all the Psalms this evening is the theme of peace. Because that's the name that we're looking at this evening. Jehovah Shalom. The Lord is peace.

Psalm 119. From verse 164. Seven times a day it is my care. To give due praise to thee. Because of all thy judgments, Lord. Which righteous ever be.

Great peace have they who love thy law. Offence they shall have none. I hoped for thy salvation, Lord. And thy commands have done. Down to the verse marked 168.

Of Psalm 119. Psalm 119. To God's praise. Amen. Amen. Amen. Sometimes a day it is my care to give good praise to Thee.

Because of all Thy judgments, Lord, which I shall never be, Great peace have they heard us, Thy long offense they shall have done.

[18:15] I hope for Thy salvation, Lord, Unlike all mountains I've done.

My soul I have stilled on each cure, Observedest carefully.

On them my heart is set, On them I love and see thee.

Thy testimonies and Thy laws I can't with special care.

For all thy work can wait It one before the open hour.

[19:33] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. We shall now read the word of God, As we find in the book of Judges, In chapter 6.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. The book of Judges, In chapter 6. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

That's page 2-4-6, If you're using the pew Bible. Amen. Judges, chapter 6. Reading from the beginning. Let us hear the Word of God.

The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. And the LORD gave them into the hand of Midian for seven years. The hand of Midian overpowered Israel and because of Midian, the people of Israel made for themselves the dens that are in the mountains and the caves and the strongholds. For whenever the Israelites planted crops, the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the east would come up against them. They would encamp against them and devour the produce of the land as far as Gaza and leave no sustenance in Israel and no sheep or ox or donkey.

[20:55] For they would come up with their livestock and their tents. They would come like locusts in number. Both they and their camels could not be counted so that they laid waste the land as they came in.

And Israel was brought very low because of Midian and the people of Israel carried out, cried out for help to the Lord. When the people of Israel cried out to the Lord on account of the Midianites, the Lord sent a prophet to the people of Israel and he said to them, thus says the Lord the God of Israel, I led you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of bondage. And I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all who oppress you and drove them out before you and gave you their land. And I said to you, I am the Lord your God. You shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell, but you have not obeyed my voice. Now the angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash, the Abizrite, while his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites. And the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, the Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor. And Gideon said to him, please, sir, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our fathers recounted to us, saying, did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? But now the Lord has forsaken us and given us into the hand of Midian. And the Lord turned to him and said, go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian. Do not I send you? And he said to him, please, Lord, how can I save Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house.

And the Lord said to him, but I will be with you and you shall strike the Midianites as one man. And he said to him, if now I have found favor in your eyes, then show me a sign that it is you who speak with me. Please do not depart from here until I come to you and bring out my present and set it before you. And he said, I will stay till you return. So Gideon went into his house and prepared a young goat and unleavened cakes from an ephah of flour. The meat he put in a basket and the broth he put in a pot, and he brought them to him under the terebinth and presented them. And the angel of God said to him, take the meat and the unleavened cakes and put them on this rock and pour the broth over them. And he did so. And the angel of the Lord reached out, out the tip of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened cakes and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened cakes. And the angel of the Lord vanished from his sight.

Then Gideon perceived that he was the angel of the Lord. And Gideon said, alas, O Lord God, for now I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face. But the Lord said to him, peace be to you. Do not fear. You shall not die. Then Gideon built an altar there to the Lord and called it Jehovah Shalom. The Lord is peace. To this day it still stands at Ophrah, which belongs to the Abisrites.

[24 : 25] And so on. May the Lord bless that reading of his own holy word. We can sing again this time in Psalm 34.

Psalm 34 in the Scottish Psalter, page 247. Psalm 34 from verse 14.

Depart from ill, do good, seek peace, pursue it earnestly. God's eyes are on the just, his ears are open to their cry. The face of God is set against those that do wickedly, that he may quite out from the earth, cut off their memory.

The righteous cry unto the Lord, he unto them gives ear. And they out of their troubles all, by him delivered art. These verses of Psalm 34, to God's praise.

Amen. Depart from ill, do good, seek peace, pursue it earnestly.

[25 : 45] God's eyes are on the earth, but he must be near. God's eyes are on the earth and dear. How old and dear can't die.

The face of God is set against those that do wickedly, God's eyes are on the earth and of their memory.

The face of God is set against those that do wickedly, God's eyes are on the earth and of their memory.

God's eyes are on the earth and are on the earth and of their memory.

And lay upon the ground of the soul By any deliverer of us.

[27 : 14] Well if I could with the Lord's help this evening turn back to that portion of scripture that we read. The book of the Judges in chapter 6 and we'll take as our text the words of verse 24.

Gideon built an altar there unto the Lord and called it Jehovah Shalom and to this day it is yet an offer of the Abizrites.

Gideon built an altar there and called the name of it Jehovah Shalom The Lord is Peace Jehovah Shalom The Lord is Peace I'm sure it's safe to say that many of us in here are interested in history whether it's national history or international history or local history or even church history I'm sure we have an interest in history and we have a desire to investigate what took place in the past and this desire it often leads many people to research their family history or look into their family tree in which they try and trace all their ancestors and consider what it was like for those of a previous generation and sometimes it's fascinating to consider the lives of those from a bygone era and consider what they had to face in their day and in their generation but when I was in college we were always taught that the purpose of studying history especially church history the purpose of it was so that we would learn from the past and then build upon it in the present and then prepare for a better future so we learn from the past build in the present prepare for a better future and such an approach it seems simple in theory but it's not so simple in reality because despite reflecting upon history and trying to learn from our past more often than not we are reminded of the old saying history repeats itself and history repeats itself because when we strip everything back we see that the mistakes of the past are always repeated we always fall into the same traps as previous generations we make the same mistakes as those of the past we commit the same sins as those who have gone before us and it doesn't matter what generation or century or period of history we live in history is always repeating itself and I say this because if we were to describe the book of Judges in a phrase it would be the phrase history repeats itself because the book of Judges is a historical account of a repeated cycle of rebellion and then restoration rebellion and then restoration this repeated cycle where the children of Israel repeatedly fell into the sin of idolatry but every time they did the Lord graciously provided a judge to redeem them and lead them back to worshipping the Lord but what comes across so beautifully in this book is that despite history continually repeating itself and despite the repeated chaos of Israel's idolatry and idol worship the Lord reveals his name as Jehovah Shalom the Lord is peace

Jehovah Shalom the Lord is peace and as we said before in our study of the names of God when God reveals his name he is revealing his character he's telling us about who he is and what he is like and as we have progressed through the Bible the Lord has progressively revealed his character to us and as we said before that's what we call progressive revelation where the Lord progressively reveals himself throughout the Old Testament until he is finally revealed in the passion of Jesus Christ and over the past few weeks while we've been looking at the names of God the Lord has progressively revealed his character to us because we saw back in the book of Genesis that the Lord revealed himself as Jehovah Jireh the Lord will provide where the Lord provides salvation for his people and then in the book of Exodus the Lord revealed himself as Jehovah Nisi the Lord is my banner because the Lord is one who wins the victory for us and then we looked at

Jehovah Rapha the Lord the Lord who heals you he is the Lord who will teach us and shape us throughout our wilderness journey and then last time in the book of Leviticus we considered the name Jehovah Mekadish the Lord who sanctifies you because the Lord is one who calls us and commands us and commits us to a life of holiness but now this evening we are progressing and we come to the book of Judges and we're looking at the name Jehovah Shalom the Lord is peace Jehovah Shalom the Lord is peace but in order to grasp the full meaning of this name I'd like us to consider the passage under three headings three headings the problem the proclamation and the promise the problem the proclamation and the promise so we look firstly at the problem the problem is given to us straight away in verse 1 it says in chapter 6 verse 1 and the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and so we can see from the very outset of this chapter we are confronted with the problem and it's an age old problem of sin and as you know the problem of sin is a problem which is relevant to every generation in history it's a genetic problem which we all possess it's this hereditary defect in us all where we are all sinners and because we're all sinners we will make the same mistakes as our forefathers made and that was certainly the case for the children of Israel because by the time we come to the book of Judges the children of Israel they have now progressed greatly you could say the children of Israel they had completed their 40 year journey in the wilderness they had crossed the Jordan they'd come into the promised land and when they entered the promised land the Lord had issued the children of Israel all these warnings that they weren't to intermarry with any of the women from other religions and other gods and they weren't to bow down to idols or worship all these foreign gods they were to remain faithful to the Lord and his covenant but of course the children of Israel failed and as it says in verse 1 the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord but by the time we come to Judges chapter 6 this isn't the first time that the children of Israel have fallen into sin and idolatry it's actually the fourth time this is the fourth time that the children of Israel have turned away from the Lord and turned back to idols this is the fourth time that history has repeated itself and in such a short space of time we have to ask well why is history repeating itself why are the children of Israel repeatedly falling into sin and doing evil in the sight of the Lord and to answer those questions all we have to do is go to the last verse in this book and it tells exactly what kind of days the judges were in because it says in those days there was no king in Israel every man did that which was right in his own eyes and they are the words that define the generations of the judges they are the words which describe generations of disobedience and rebellion against the Lord and needless to say

[36 : 31] the period of the judges tells the story of the children of Israel at one of the lowest and the darkest points in their history because could there be a worse statement to describe a generation could there be a worse statement to describe any generation there was no king in Israel every man did that which was right in his own eyes but the reality was there was a king in Israel the Lord was still king over his people Israel but the people of that generation they wouldn't have the Lord to rule over them and because every man did that which was right in his own eyes the result was failure the result was the children of Israel doing evil in the sight of the Lord and rebelling against God's law which ended in judgment and that's what always has and always will happen when someone does what is right in their own eyes when someone ignores God's word and God himself it will end in judgment but what we see here is that because of the grace and mercy of God the repeated problem of sin was repeatedly met with the provision of salvation where the generation of the judges they can be defined as this continuous cycle of rebellion restoration rebellion restoration rebellion restoration and it's this continuous cycle for generations where the children of Israel they would do evil in the sight of the Lord either by idolatry or apostasy or adultery and just like we have it here in verse 1 and because of their sin

God would deliver them into the hands of their enemies and in this case it was the enemy of the Midianites a tribe which Israel was meant to have completely destroyed but they didn't and they came back even stronger but this repeated cycle of history for the children of Israel is that when they were delivered into the hand of their enemies they would realize then that they had done wrong and they would cry to the Lord and the Lord would graciously and mercifully raise up a judge to deliver them out of their oppression and while the judge lived there would be this period of faithfulness to the Lord but as soon as the judge died the cycle would start all over again because before long the people they would fall back into their old ways of sin and this is the repeated cycle throughout the book of Judges where history is always repeating itself history is repeating itself it's

this cycle of rebellion restoration rebellion restoration but you know when I read through the book of Judges and I see this repeated problem this repeated problem this cycle of rebellion and sin and then

God's gracious restoration I'm always tempted to think well surely the children of Israel surely they would learn from the past surely they would learn from their mistakes and seek to be more faithful the next time surely they would change their ways and live more holy lives and follow the Lord more closely surely all this teaching and this judgment and this rebellion and restoration surely it would change them in some way and then I look at myself and all I see is the same problem the same problem all I see is the same cycle every single day where history is repeating itself and I repeatedly make a mess of things and I make the same mistakes and I fall into the same sins where I rebel against the Lord and his word and when I do I'm always asking the Lord to forgive me and to restore me and to change me and to make me more like

Jesus but like the children of Israel every time we make a mess of things and we do what is right in our own eyes and we go our own way and we do our own thing every time we fall and sin or do things that displease the Lord we deserve his judgment we deserve to be cast away from him and yet and yet the Lord graciously forgives and he restores every time every time my friend that's what the Lord is like it doesn't matter how many times we muck up and make a mess of things no matter how big or how small it may be in our eyes when we cry to the Lord the Lord hears and the Lord forgives and the Lord promises to restore and although grace abounds it doesn't give us the license to sin but what it does give us is the peace and the assurance that if we confess our sin he is faithful and he is just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness why as we were saying with the children this morning the blood of Jesus

Christ his son cleanses us from all sin my friend the blood of Jesus is able to deal without problem it is able to deal with any problem any sin but you have to bring it to the Lord so has he dealt with your problem has he dealt with your sin do you stand washed and cleansed in the blood is your problem dealt with and so we've considered the problem but secondly we see the proclamation the proclamation because it says in verse 7 it came to pass when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord because of the Midianites that the Lord sent a prophet unto the children of Israel which said unto them thus saith the Lord God of Israel I brought you up from Egypt and brought you forth out of the house of bondage and I delivered you out of the hand of the

[43 : 24] Egyptians and out of the hand of all that oppress you and drove them out from before you and gave you their land and so after committing evil in the sight of the Lord the children of Israel were delivered into the hand of the Midianites and whilst they were under the oppression of the Midianites for seven years the Midianites they would annually invade Israel and claim a percentage of the produce of the land and a percentage of their livestock you could say that the Midianite oppression was this form of taxation upon the people of Israel but in order that the Israelites wouldn't lose everything they would try and hide everything they would try and hide a lot of their produce in caves and in dens and away in the hills but after seven years of running and trying to protect what little they had the Israelites were hungry poor and tired they were left with nothing and it was only when they hit rock bottom and they were impoverished from all their resources and completely and utterly helpless it was only then that they turned to the

Lord because it says in verse 6 Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites and the children of Israel cried unto the Lord and what ought to strike us here reading those words is how slow the Israelites were to turn to the Lord how slow they were we ought to notice how long it took for them to seek the Lord and how they had to reach such a low ebb and endure all this hardship before they would cry out to the Lord and the reason it took so long is simply because the Israelites thought that they could manage by their own efforts they thought that they would cope because of their own abilities and their own strength but the longer the oppression went on and the more it went on in their experience they realized that they needed the Lord to help them they needed the Lord to save them they needed the Lord to deliver them and you know my unconverted friend I sometimes wonder what it will take for you to turn to the Lord I sometimes wonder what experience in your life will make you cry to the Lord I sometimes wonder how far the Lord will have to go to bring you to that point in order to see your need of him and for you to cry out to him because my friend if you think you can manage on your own abilities and you can cope on your own efforts and you can go on your own strength then the Lord will show you that you need him he'll show you that you need to cry out to him it might not be at this time in your life but he will show you

that without him you can do nothing and he'll show you that the confession of the Christian is I can do all things through

Christ who strengthens me and the Christian can do it because only because the promise of the Lord is my grace is sufficient for you my strength is made perfect in weakness so who better for you to turn to and cry out to and lean upon and look to than the Lord who hears and the Lord who answers because that's what the Israelites did they cried to the Lord because of the Midianites and the Lord sent a prophet he sent a prophet now what the Lord does in this instance is sending a prophet it's quite unusual because the normal cycle of events that would take place is that the Israelites they would reach rock bottom and they would cry out to the Lord and the Lord would send a judge to deliver them from their enemies and redeem them from oppression but in this instance the children of Israel cry to the Lord and the

Lord sends a prophet and at this point in his commentary the American professor of Old Testament theology Dale Ralph Davis he's a great read if you have any of his books it's always really interesting in the way he opens up the Old Testament but what he says at this point he says the Lord does the strangest thing here and he says in fact it appears ludicrous it's like a stranded motorist he says calling a garage for assistance and the garage sends a philosopher instead of a mechanic Israel needs deliverance and he sends them a prophet Israel asks for an act of God's power and he sends them a proclaimer of God's word the Lord sent a prophet and he sent a prophet because in order for the children of Israel to understand how amazing God's forgiveness and grace is they needed first of all to understand how awful their problem is forgiveness they needed to understand why they were being delivered they needed to understand that their deliverance isn't because of the physical oppression that they were under their deliverance they needed was because of a spiritual issue of disobedience and idolatry and it would be pointless for the Lord just to deliver the children of Israel that he like he had done three times before it would be it would be pointless without giving them a word of explanation and counsel as to why they are being oppressed by the Midianites and so Israel needed deliverance but the Lord sent a prophet to teach them and although this prophet he remains nameless his message is important because as you know a prophet was someone who would speak on behalf of

[49 : 58] God they are God's spokesman and as we said on Wednesday evening when we were looking at it in the prayer meeting we were looking at false prophets we said that the role of a prophet was twofold because the role of a prophet was not only to foretell what would happen in the future the role of a prophet was also to foretell to address the present generation that they found themselves in and they were to proclaim God's truth and herald God's covenant and challenge anyone who worshipped false gods and bowed down to idols and so a prophet was to call all the Lord's people to realise the error of their ways and to repent and turn to the Lord and through this prophet the Lord reminds the children of Israel about their privilege and their responsibility because he says to them in verse 8 the Lord sent a prophet unto the children of Israel which said unto them thus saith the

Lord God of Israel I brought you up from Egypt and brought you forth out of the house of bondage and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of all that oppressed you and drove them out from before you and gave you their land and so when the Lord speaks through his prophet he reminds them of their privileged history their privileged history as his covenant people and that by his grace and his mercy he redeemed the children of Israel and brought them out of bondage and slavery in Egypt and he brought them out from the oppression of the Egyptians and in this the Lord reminded his people that they are a privileged people they are his covenant people but when the Lord spoke he also reminded them of their covenant responsibilities and as his people because he says in verse 10 I said unto you I am the Lord your God fear not the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell but you have not obeyed my voice the covenant responsibility of the children of Israel was to remain faithful to the Lord and only worship and only serve the Lord but the Lord is clear when he speaks to his people you have not obeyed my voice you have not obeyed my voice and so when the Lord sends his word through his prophet to teach the children of Israel he presents to them their privilege and their responsibility their privileges and their responsibility and looking at the response to the cry of the children of Israel we have to see that the Lord his ways haven't changed because there are times in our life when we cry out to the Lord for help and deliverance from our circumstances and all we want is the Lord to help us and to sort out our problems and to make it right again and there's nothing wrong with that nothing wrong with it at all

but what the Lord is showing us in the way he dealt with the children of Israel is that our greatest need although we may not be able to see it at the time our greatest need is to understand what the Lord is doing and why he is doing it because deliverance from the hardest of circumstances isn't always the Lord's way his way is for us to understand everything that we go through in our lives whether good or bad his way is to understand it's for a purpose and the Lord's purpose in it isn't to drive us away from him but it's to drive us to him so that we come to an understanding of who the Lord is and what the Lord is like and that he knows what he's doing in our lives and in all our circumstances and even in the darkest of our providences and my friend that understanding of what the Lord is doing and what the Lord is like it'll only come from the voice of God's prophet Jesus

Christ because he is the prophet who speaks to us in his word because it's the word of God that the Lord speaks to us through and the Lord teaches us and the Lord reminds us of all our privileges it's in the word of God that the Lord reveals to us all the blessings that are ours in Christ every spiritual blessing says Paul in heavenly places all in Christ all the blessings of his sustaining grace all the blessings of his endless forgiveness and mercy all the blessings of his continual truth and faithfulness all the blessings of his infinite power and strength and all the blessings of his his steadfast faithful love towards us my friend they're all there for us they're all there to be had in his word they're all they are all able to flow to us from the word of

[55 : 18] God like a river but in the midst of all our circumstances the Lord is teaching us that our responsibility with all these privileges is to lay hold upon them by faith the Lord God teaches us to respond in faith to all that he puts in our path and I'm not saying that that's easy I'm not saying that what you're going through today and maybe what you feel today especially at this time of year where you may feel pain or sorrow or heartache or worry or loneliness I'm not saying that what you're going through is insignificant or what you're going to that you're going to be delivered from it soon but what I am saying is that the Lord is reminding us here in his word that in the midst of all you're going through the Lord's purpose in it all is to draw you closer and closer to himself the Lord's desire peace which passes all understanding peace which passes all understanding that's why I want us to look lastly at the promise we've considered the problem the proclamation but lastly the promise the promise we look at verse 11 there came an angel of the Lord and sat under an oak which was in

Orpha that pertained unto Joash the Abizrite and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress to hide it from the Midianites and the angel of the Lord appeared unto him and said unto him the Lord is with you you mighty man of valor so having issued his proclamation of privilege and responsibility through his unnamed prophet we're now introduced to this scene and we are shown the Lord's provision to Israel's problem and the Lord's provision came in the form of another judge called Gideon and when this scene opens Gideon the Abizrite when he appears on the stage of history we find him threshing wheat in a winepress and while Gideon was threshing wheat the angel of the Lord appeared to him and sat under the oak or the terebinth tree and that's what we're presented with but when the passage says the angel of the

Lord the angel of the Lord and not an angel of the Lord what we're to notice is that this was a physical appearance a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament and this appearance is often referred to as a Christophany which simply means an appearance of Jesus Christ an appearance of Christ and that's what it is Jesus Christ appeared and sat under an oak tree in Orpha and when Jesus appeared he appeared before Gideon and his opening words when Jesus spoke to Gideon this wonderful picture we've been given here when Jesus spoke to Gideon he issues him a promise the Lord is with you you mighty man of valour what a promise what a promise the Lord is with you the Lord is with you and this promise was given to to call Gideon to serve the Lord it was a promise given to equip Gideon a promise that was given to strengthen Gideon in his faith it was a promise that was given to encourage Gideon but this promise did none of the above because Gideon he questioned the Lord's promise straight away because he says in verse 13 and Gideon said to him oh my Lord if the Lord be with us why then has all this befallen us and where are all the miracles which our fathers told us of saying did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt but now the Lord has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites this meeting with Jesus for Gideon it was meant to be this glorious moment when the Lord calls his servant to help and deliver his people from their great problem of slavery and oppression of the Midianites but Gideon he immediately throws doubt on the whole thing because

he begins to question the

Lord's promise by saying well if the Lord is with us where are all his miracles that he performed in Egypt why isn't he performing these miracles now if the Lord is with us and if the Lord is faithful to his covenant and his covenant people then why is this happening to us if the Lord is with us then why has he delivered us into the hand of the Midianites if the Lord is with us why am I threshing wheat in a wine press where is the Lord in this where is the Lord in all of this and you can understand Gideon's frustration because Gideon is he's trying desperately to separate grains of wheat from the useless outer shell of the chaff and he's working hard and this man comes to him and says the Lord is with you but this process that Gideon is undertaking it didn't take place in a wine press it never took place in a wine press separating the wheat from the chaff usually took place on the top of a hill where the wind would blow away the chaff and leave the grain the precious grain that could be used for flour but the reason

[61 : 35] Gideon was threshing wheat in a wine press was so that the Midianites wouldn't see him and steal what little crop he had but in response to Gideon's frustration Gideon's response to the Lord the Lord issues another promise of assurance he assured Gideon that he had been called and chosen to deliver the children of Israel from the oppression of the Midianites because he says in verse 14 the Lord looked upon him and said go in this thy might thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites have I not sent you and yet Gideon continues to protest against the Lord's call defying it doesn't want to go he doesn't want to be called and he doesn't want to be commissioned and Gideon he says I'm completely inadequate to be a servant of the Lord and he says that he's unprepared and he's ill equipped to save the people of Israel but not only that

Gideon claims that his clan they're the weakest clan out of all the smallest tribes in Israel and that he is the youngest child in his family I'm so young he's saying he's the youngest and he claims that he's so young and so naive to serve the Lord I can't go I can't do it I'm not able and there's no denying that Gideon was young and inexperienced but what does the Lord do the Lord reaffirms his promise to Gideon because the Lord says in verse 16 exactly what he said in verse 12 I will be with you I will be with you my friend that promise is the greatest promise that the Lord could affirm to anyone because this one promise is the promise which has been repeated throughout the history of God's people because history has repeated itself on this one promise and it seems to have been repeated to every single one of the Lord's servants and even the Lord's people when the Lord called them and they were called them to serve him and all these servants were either unwilling or hesitant to serve the Lord the Lord issued his promise it's not the case with Moses when he was called Moses said that he had a stutter and he couldn't speak to Pharaoh I can't ask them can't ask Pharaoh to release the children of Israel but the Lord assured him with his promise I will be with you I will be with you and then when Moses died just before they crossed the Jordan the Lord assured his successor Joshua he assured him with the same promise as I was with Moses so I will be with you and this promise it's been repeated throughout history to all of the Lord's people the promise it was given even to Jacob in Genesis I am with you and will keep you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land that I will not leave you he says until I have done what I have promised to you and that was the promise the same promise to the Lord's people who were suffering in exile in Babylon fear not I am with you be not dismayed for I am your God I will strengthen you yes I will help you I will uphold you with my righteous right hand when you pass through the water it's in Isaiah 43 I will be with you he says through the rivers they shall not overflow you when you walk through the fire you will not be burned neither shall the flame scorch you that was the promise to the disciples when Jesus was going to ascend the great commission go therefore says

Jesus make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you and lo I am with you always even to the end of the world and even to the apostle Paul the convert the great just after his great conversion on the road to Damascus the Lord said to him yea though

[66 : 51] I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for you are with me your rod and your staff they comfort me my friend what greater promise is offered to us on the pages of scripture than this promise I will be with you I will be with you because in those words the Lord is promising us nothing more than himself nothing more than himself he has nothing else or nothing more to offer us than himself and that should be enough I am with you I am with you and what's amazing about this promise is that it's not a promise which answers all the details of life it's not a

promise which explains the whys or the whens or the hows or the wheres but my friend this promise just gives to us the who who

I will be with you I will be with you is it not just an all encompassing promise I will be with you I will be with you I will be with you but for Gideon it still wasn't enough it still wasn't enough because he wanted the Lord to assure him by showing him a sign show me a sign but Gideon's assurance it never came because of the sign his assurance came when he realized who was speaking to him what brought Gideon peace was when he discovered who his visitor was because it says in verse 22 when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the Lord Gideon said alas O Lord God for I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face Gideon met with Jesus face to face and

Gideon thought that he would die because he had looked upon the face of the Lord because no one was able to look upon the Lord and live but Jesus reassured Gideon by saying to him peace be with you do not fear you shall not die and in that moment of realization the promise I will be with you the promise it became even more precious to him because this meeting with Jesus it brought Gideon peace and assurance peace and assurance that the Lord was with him and that the Lord would redeem his people and is it any wonder to us then that when Gideon was given that assuring promise I will be with you is it any wonder that Gideon went and built an altar to the Lord and called it Jehovah Shalom the Lord is peace Jehovah

Shalom the Lord is peace my friend there's nothing more assuring than God's promise I will be with you nothing is more overwhelming than the fact that the Lord says it to us and the Lord who says it to us he is the one who brings greater peace than anything that this world can give and there is nothing that will bring greater peace than an encounter with Jesus nothing will bring greater peace in our experience than an encounter with Jesus because a meeting with Jesus it will always bring peace we can only have peace with God says Paul through our Lord Jesus Christ and at this time of year when everyone is focusing upon the birth of the Savior this is the promise which is being issued to us the promise

I will be with you because that promise is affirmed to us in the person of Jesus he is our Emmanuel God with us Emmanuel God with us that's the promise I will be with you I will be with you my friend what this passage is revealing to us tonight is that we must have peace with God to experience the peace of God because peace with God is given through the provision of Jesus dying for our sin but the peace of God is given by laying hold of the promise I will be with you I will be with you so let's see to it that we're all able to confess with Gideon about this

[72 : 01] Jesus Jehovah Shalom the Lord is peace the Lord is peace may the Lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray O Lord our gracious God we give thanks to thee that thou art the one who is the prince of peace we bless and praise thee that we have the promise that I will be with thee and Lord we marvel that thou art the God who issues it to us each and every day because thou art the prophet who speaks through thy word help us then to be attentive to thy promise help us to lay hold upon it help us to see that it is a promise that is yea and amen in Christ O Lord look upon us then we pray thee bless us in the week that lies ahead a week that is unknown to us but a week that is known to thee that thou would keep us keep us in the hollow of thine own hand for we know that we cannot keep ourselves bless us and go before us take away all our iniquity receive us graciously for

Jesus sake Amen shall conclude by singing in Psalm 37 Psalm 37 page 255 singing from verse 37 down to the end of the psalm Psalm 37 from verse 37 Mark thou the perfect and behold the man of uprightness because that surely of this man the latter end is peace but those men that transgressors are shall be destroyed together the latter end of wicked men shall be cut off forever down to the end of the psalm of psalm 37 to God's birth mark thou the perfect and behold the man of all brightness because the truly of this man the latter end is peace but those men that transgressors are shall be destroyed together the latter the latter end of wicked men shall be cut off forever but the ambition of the just is is from the

Lord above he in the time of their distress their stay and strength of proof the Lord shall help on them deliver he shall them free and save from wicked men because they live their confidence they are the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forever more

Amen