

When We Are Few

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 02 July 2017

Preacher: Rev Andrew Coghill

- [0 : 00] I'd like us to think this evening for a while about these three verses that we have in verses 67 to 69 of St. John chapter 6. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?
- Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.
- If we might say that this morning's consideration in that sermon this morning might be said to consider the subject of when we are weak.
- And we looked at that in 2 Corinthians there in chapter 12, when we are weak. And Paul says, you know, he takes pleasure in infirmities and in persecutions and struggles, because when I am weak, then am I strong.
- So if that were the case, we might tonight look at the example we have in these verses, not so much when we are weak, but when we are few. And there is a correlation between these two, obviously.
- [1 : 08] If we were thinking again about this morning, we might say that as one commentator has put it, the Lord has more need of our weakness than of our strength.
- Our strength is often his rival. Our weakness, his servant, drawing on his resources and showing forth his glory.
- Man's extremity is God's opportunity. Man's security is Satan's opportunity. God's way is not to take his children out of trial, but to give them strength to bear up against it.
- That is true not simply in times of buffeting or struggle or persecution. It can also be true in a situation like we have here, where having had crowds flocking to him, Now when Jesus begins to spell out the implications of his teaching and of his truth, there are those for whom this is just too much of a challenge.
- This is a bit too near the bone. And they begin to melt away. Many therefore of his disciples, verse 60, when they heard this said, This is a hard saying.
- [2 : 23] Who can hear it? Now, in what sense would we say these are his disciples? Obviously, there were crowds that followed him, that hung on his word, on his teaching, that wanted to have healing or wanted to have the benefit of his presence amongst them.
- Jesus was a very popular man in Galilee, and people flocked to him. And some would have followed him, you know, for no doubt weeks and months at a time.
- But we read at the beginning of John's account of the Gospel, in chapter 2, towards the end of that chapter, we read that when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover and the feast day, many believed in his name when they saw the miracles which he did.
- But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men. And he did not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man. He knew those who, having put their hand to the plough, would look back.
- He knew those who would say, Lord, I'll follow you anywhere, but first let me go and bury my father. By which, of course, they meant, let me just stay and wait until all the human duties and relations are done and dealt with, and I can sort out my worldly business.

[3 : 36] Before then, I come and follow Jesus. There will never be a convenient time to lay things aside and focus on Christ. It is never going to be the case that we will have dotted all the I's, crossed all the T's, filed everything neatly away in our done tray, and put everything away in its proper cabinet, when everything is spick and span and ready, and we have a clean slate and an open mind and heart, ready to receive the truths of Christ.

It's never going to happen like that. And if it was likely to, the devil would fill that empty space with the junk of this world. If we are going to follow Christ, if he is going to be the priority of our lives, then all these things and all this clutter and all this noise and busyness which fills our lives from day to day must be understood that it is not going to go away.

There is never going to be a convenient time to do all these other things, get them all done, finish it all, take the boxes, and then give Christ what is left over.

And even if that were the case, what kind of priority is that, when all that Jesus gets is the leftovers of the world? Christ must become our first priority, our God, literally, before whom there is nothing more important.

What is it that these so-called disciples in verse 60 were finding so offensive? Well, if we turn back a few verses, we see that Jesus has been talking about himself as the bread of life.

[5 : 13] We see that he has been talking about the need to eat his flesh and drink his blood, which again is significant and reminiscent of his death, because you can't obviously take flesh and blood of any creature which is not dead by then.

So he's talking about his death, but he's also talking spiritually in terms of that which he is, and that which he has must enter into his followers.

He must become part of them spiritually. And in a sense, just as we take the elements of bread and wine, physically they enter into us, becoming part of our body, so Christ becomes part of our very being.

This is what he meant here. And that if we have Christ within us, we shall live forever. You see, those who could not believe, those who were offended by it, had become hung up on the mechanics of it.

But this is what they saw, this is what they heard. They said, well, how can this man give us his flesh to eat? Verse 52. All that they are hearing is about eating his flesh and drinking his blood.

[6 : 21] Whereas his own disciples, the twelve who remain with him, when Peter says, you know, Lord, to whom shall we go? That was the words of eternal life. It all depends on what you are hearing. They are conscious of their need for life, that they don't have life without Jesus.

But since they met him, life has opened up for them. New life has been breathed into the old scriptures. Instead of just being words and parchment and scrolls that only the rabbis would sort of pour over and unlock every little word and nuance of what this rabbi said and what that rabbi said, suddenly it's like opening a door with sunshine flooding into a previously dark room.

They have come alive. They have found what life is and this is what they have heard as Jesus spoke. Not simply about eating flesh and drinking blood, but rather, verse 47, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life.

Verse 50. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven that a man meet in awe and not die. Verse 51. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever.

Verse 54. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life. Verse 58. He that eateth this bread shall live forever. He's talking about life.

[7 : 42] He's talking about eternal life. He's talking about life in all its fullness. And instead of getting hung up about, wait a minute, Lord. What do you mean about eating bread and drinking blood, eating flesh?

We don't quite understand all that. Are we suggesting that Simon Peter understood all these things perfectly? He said, oh, yeah, I understand perfectly what you mean, Lord.

I think these guys, they just don't get it. We know you're talking in spiritual terms. We understand fully all the implications of the Passover and how it will in due course become the Lord's Supper and the crucifixion about which as yet they know nothing.

He does not know. He does not understand all the depths and all the details. All that he says is this profession, hee'n of faith, Lord, to whom shall we go?

Are we going to go back to the rabbis? Back to the synagogue and its dead understanding of ancient scripts and parchments where we've gone through the form of religion and the outward form of all that people did and we follow the ordinances and we follow the laws and, yes, we try to do it faithfully.

[8 : 45] But we know it's not bringing us alive. We know that it's only outward form and anybody can go through that outward form. Anybody can follow the rules.

Anybody can go through the outward sacraments, the circumcision, the Passover and turning up at the synagogue and so on. It doesn't give us life. You do, Lord. You have given us life.

You've given us the words of eternal life. We've gone from darkness to light. We've gone from deadness to coming alive in every fiber of our being. How can we go back?

Where shall we go instead of to Jesus? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God, the Messiah, the fulfillment of all the scriptures.

The reason the scriptures come alive is because we see them all fulfilled in you, Lord. We see meaning. We see purpose.

[9 : 45] We see understanding of how it all fits together. We recognize that although we don't know all the details and although we can't plumb the depths of all the deep theology of all that the Lord understands, we see Jesus and we trust and believe that if we have you, Lord, all else will follow.

That is what he's doing. He is putting Christ first and saying, this is what we hold on to all these other so-called disciples. They will already say, oh yeah, but wait a minute.

We want to understand this perfectly first. We want to get this right. We want to know that, you know, what I do and my response and how I have been up to now will be affirmed, Lord, by you, that all my efforts and all my human strivings, that that is all understood and recognized and counts to my credit.

Jesus doesn't say that. He says it is the Spirit, verse 63, that quickeneth. The flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit and they are life.

You cannot nail down the Spirit any more than you can nail down the wind. Jesus said to Nicodemus in chapter 3, as you remember, the wind bloweth where it musterh.

[10 : 57] Thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell once it cometh, nor will there go. So is every one that is born of the Spirit. You cannot nail down the Lord and his power.

You cannot put him in a box and say, ah, now I've got it all to myself. Now I can make God do what I want. No, you can't. The Lord will choose and equip and inspire who he will.

The Lord chooses one and bypasses another. And we don't like that as fallen human beings. We want to be able to say, if I do this, then that will follow.

If I do X, then Y will happen. I want to be able to say at the end of the day, that if I seek to do good and have a good life and try to be kind to other people, if I, in my own conscience, am a good person, then God should affirm that on my terms.

We want to be able to say to God, I'm good, and if there's a heaven, you have to let me in. That's what we want to be able to say. And God says, well, you can wish that all you like. That's not how it's going to be.

[11 : 59] It is the Spirit, my Spirit, the Holy Spirit, that brings alive the quickness, the flesh, profit of nothing. And by the flesh, he doesn't just mean our trying to be good and so on.

He also means, even those things which are of themselves holy ordinances, which are given to us to strengthen us. It's as if I went out a hill walk in sort of questionable conditions, and I was climbing steep mountains with dodgy weather and so on, and I had my tent, and I had my cagulls, and I had my billy cans and all my things to cook food with, and all my emergency rations, and all the right equipment, and I got caught in a downpour or drenched, and fog came down, and so on, and I just hugged myself against a rock, and I just sat there all night shivering.

Somebody might come across me, and they might say, well, come on, why are you doing this? You've got a tent in your rucksack. Yes, yes, I've got a tent in your rucksack. Well, why don't you put it up? Oh, no, no, I'm fine here. You've got food, you've got rations there.

Why aren't you cooking your rations? Why aren't you drying out your clothes over a stove? Oh, you've got a stove. Yes, yes, I've got a stove. You've got all this equipment, you've got all this stuff you need. Why aren't you using it?

If you will not use it, it will do you no good, and so likewise, all the ordinances that the Lord has given, all the worship of the synagogue, or now we might say the worship within the church, all the praises of God, the reading of his word, the outward forms of worship, we can go through all these things, and they are good as far as they go.

[13 : 34] If I'm on my hill walk there, it is good that I have all the equipment that I need, but it will do me no good unless I put it into practice, unless I apply it for the purpose for which I have taken it with me.

Matthew Henry, the commentator, says, the word and ordinances, if the spirit works with them, are as food to a living man.

If not, they are as food to a dead man. Now, if somebody is dead, you can prepare the most wonderful meal for them and try and sort of take the spoon to their lips and so on, but they're not going to eat it.

They're not going to be able to eat it or chew it or digest it. It cannot do them any good, not because there is anything wrong with the food, not because there is anything wrong with the ordinances or with the spirit, but because if the spirit works not with these things, they are as food to a dead man.

If the spirit works with and through them, they are as food to a living man. Now, which are we, alive or dead? Are we in Christ or out of him?

[14 : 43] Christ does not withhold himself from any, but there are many who turn back from him because they want to retain control of their life, their destiny, and their eternal salvation.

We cannot do that. It is not in our hands because if it was in our hands, we would all be dead eternally. If, for example, I might, well, let's say somebody, let's take somebody with younger children, might say, well, I love my children.

My children are, let's say, five, four, and three. Let's say I have three children. These are little youngsters there. Five, four, and three. And I'm taking them up the store and away in the car. But, you know, because I love my children so much, when one of them says, Daddy, can I drive the car?

I say, yes, of course you can. You come out of your kiddie's seat at the back. I'll strap you in here at the driver's seat. Maybe your wheel legs can't reach the pedals, but it doesn't matter. No. I'll sit here in the passenger seat.

You drive. That's okay. And I'll change the gear for you until you move off. What is going to happen, do you think, to that car, to that child, to me, to the rest of the family?

[15 : 56] What do you think is going to be the upshot while going up and down the Cresham if we even get that far? How do you think the safety of that vehicle is going to proceed? We will all be dead.

before we even get halfway to the store away. Not because that child is evil or wicked or bad. It's because it simply does not have the means, the ability, the knowledge, the experience, the tools to be able to drive that vehicle even if it wanted.

This is a little child. It doesn't have the know-how, the ability, the physical strength of each the pedals or work the controls, let alone the mental knowledge required.

By allowing that child to do whatever it says it wants, I am consigning it and everybody else to death. And if the Lord were to place into our hands the question of our eternal destination, he would be consigning us all to death.

What is the right answer in such a case? No son or no daughter, you can't drive just now. Well, you know, but maybe when you learn a bit more, then you sit your driving desk, then you get to work a car yourself, then you can drive that car up for now.

[17 : 12] No, no. Daddy has to drive this one, or Mommy has to drive this. Because we know what we're doing, and we'll get there safely, and we'll bring you back safely, you'll be protected. There will come a time when we are sinless.

There will come a time where we can praise the Lord without the admission of sin, but that will be in glory. Then we will be mature. Then we will be grown up in the faithful, not here, not in this world.

To put into our hands the journey and direction of our own eternal salvation will be to consign us all to eternal death.

Even the word and ordinances will not save us. I can be reading the highway code to my little toddler, even as he or she was struggling to work the car on the wheel and everything won't do any good.

The Lord in his mercy does not put the question of our eternal destiny into our own hands. It is the spirit that quickeneth. It is the Lord that brings alive.

[18 : 12] The flesh profiteth nothing. And so the Lord asks, will ye also go away? This is the opening verse that we were looking at.

Jesus said unto the twelve, will ye also go away? This actually reference to the twelve at verse 67. It's the first reference to them in John's account of the gospel. Prior to that, we just got sort of vague mentions of Jesus' disciples.

We don't know how many he's got at that stage. And the opening chapter is just called, you know, Peter and Andrew and Nathaniel and Philip. And that's all we know about for the first couple of chapters.

And now here's this mention of the twelve. So he has now gathered to himself the twelve, one of whom, of course, is Judas Iscariot. But still, Judas is holding fast with Peter and Andrew and all the others.

Will ye also go away? Now, we could say that Jesus has complete knowledge of everything from beginning to end. He was fine. They won't go away. But remember that he is holy human as well as holy divine.

[19 : 15] And you cannot help but be impacted by seeing crowds of those who swore blindly would follow you and have been wowed by what you've done and have hung on your every word suddenly just melting away because you've told it like it is.

Because you've spelled it out that it is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing, that the Son of God is going to die. And that if they are going to have life, they must enter into that death.

They must partake of his flesh, his blood. That must enter into them. They must be one with him. Then they have everlasting life. You see, those who wouldn't believe they got hung up on the mechanics.

Peter and the others, they heard about this life, eternal life, everlasting life, shall not die. That's what they heard. That's what they needed. Yes, there was all the other problems, too, about eating flesh and drinking blood that they probably didn't understand.

But that could be laid aside. As long as they have Jesus, he will spell it out. He will make it clear. Hold fast to him. Will you also go away?

[20 : 23] There is this sense of heartfelt sorrow that you can almost hear coming through these words. He is undoubtedly touched by the fact that so many have fallen away from their faith in him.

So many counted as his disciples who now would count as that no more. It's like Isaiah said in chapter 53.

Remember that chapter 53 of Isaiah. That's the one that spells out about the wounded servant. You know, the one who, with his stripes, we are healed. He was wounded for our transgressions.

You know, it's probably the clearest messianic chapter in the entire Old Testament. And how does that chapter begin? It begins with this. Who hath believed our report?

And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, as a root out of a dry ground. He hath no form, no comeliness.

[21 : 23] And when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men. A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

And we hid, as it were, our faces from him. He was despised and we esteemed him not. Who hath believed our report? Who has believed Jesus when he tells it like it is?

When he spells out our need? Not of our own strength, but of him and him alone. And as we see the crowds melting away, when following Jesus is no longer flavor of the month, when it's no longer trendy, when it's no longer correct in terms of the state or the establishment, when it can become a positive threat to our well-being in this united kingdom.

Christians have been fired from their jobs. They have had their businesses destroyed. They have been sued at taxpayers' expense simply for holding fast to the teaching of God's holy word.

For following Christ, they have been persecuted in this united kingdom. Street preachers in Scotland have been arrested for supposed offense.

[22 : 39] Other street preachers in England have been told that quoting verses from the Bible can be deemed an offense nowadays in this current political climate.

It is no longer a safe or trendy or fashionable thing to do to follow Jesus. Many, therefore, of his disciples, when they heard, they said, this is a hard city.

Who can heal it? And verse 66, from that time, many of his disciples went back and walked no more with them. Then said Jesus unto the 12, will ye also go away?

Many went back and walked no more with them. What should we understand about this? Should we say, well, they were disciples but then they weren't anymore.

They were true believers but then they fell away. We're almost drawn back to this, to me, terrifying couple of verses in Hebrews 6 in verse 4.

[23 : 41] For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come if they shall fall away to renew them again unto repentance seeing they crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame.

It is impossible for those once enlightened to renew these things again to repentance. Once having had the truth and fallen away from it there is no way back.

Once you jump out of the plane and you decide to cut the cords of your parachute so you haven't got it anymore it would be very nice if we could say hang on a minute let's just go back up again into the plane and I'll give it another go with a fresh parachute too late.

We can't. Now I would never write these words myself. I would never choose these words myself. I would always want to say well hang on a minute there's always a chance there's always life there's always hope.

True disciples will never ultimately fall away that much we can certainly say. But what about false disciples? What about those who have the outward appearance?

[25 : 04] but then the world, the flesh, they won't say the devil but who ultimately is working in their hearts there have got in and taken a priority.

When such ones fall away, again going back to what Matthew Henry says, he says, such revolts are not to be called the fall of real saints but rather the discovery of pretended ones.

And that to my mind is partly the most frightening of all. When we are few, we ought not to consider where is the multitude, what is the crowd doing, but rather where is Christ and where are we in our relation to him.

If what we are holding fast to is what Christ has revealed in his word, we can know we are on solid ground. We may not understand all the details, all the deep theology.

We may not, like Peter, understand every detail of what Jesus means by eating his flesh and drinking his blood and having everlasting life, but we are prepared to take it on trust.

[26 : 15] Many fell away, but not all. Throughout Jesus' earthly ministry, we have reports of others in the crowds who followed him and wanted to be his disciples.

We have reports of the women who ministered to them and his disciples faithfully. In the Acts of the Apostles, we are told in chapter 1, at verse 15, in those days, Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples.

The number of names together were about 120. That's after the crucifixion, when the disciples were at their lowest point, when those who had tried to be faithful to the end should have been in a hopeless condition, but those who had stayed faithful, he had shown himself to them.

And this wasn't them all, because we're told that he appeared to 500 brethren at once, no doubt in the mountain or in Galilee, when he appeared to them. But in Jerusalem's 120 names, together, in Acts chapter 1, verse 15, it tells us, that is 10 times the number of the 12 at the outset.

Already, the church is growing phenomenally. Not as great as it would do, it would keep on growing more and more, but it is already ten fold what it was at this point here.

[27 : 34] Jesus said unto the 12, will ye also go away? Lord, to whom shall we go? Where can we go? If we have not Jesus, there is nothing. If we have not Jesus, all the Old Testament scriptures, it's words, it's religious words, it's commands, yes, we try and form our lives in keeping with what God says, but it's a trudge and it's a struggle and it just seems so much deadness and if we have not Christ, if we are not born again of his spirit, then religion seems so tedious.

The church seems oppressive, worship seems a bit of a trudge, a bit of a chore. If we have Christ bringing it alive, then everything is changed.

If we think in terms of household chores and one of the things that few people enjoy is doing dishes. But let's say, as happened in our own family not too long ago, where you've got young people, boys and girls together and so on, it's youth meeting and then they're doing the dishes in the kitchen afterwards and if there's an attraction, if there's a desire between a boy and a girl or whatever, then what do you want to do with the person that you fancy well, you'll do the dishes for hours on end and you'll dry them up just as long as you get to stand next to the person in the sink that you're crazy about and that you want to talk to them and you just hope these dishes go on forever because you don't want to go back through in the other room with everybody else, you just want to be where they are.

It doesn't matter that you're up to your elbows in suds and the dishcloth's getting damp and the plates are stacking up, doesn't matter, you just want to be with them. That's what you want to do, that's where you'd rather be and it doesn't matter what chore you're doing, as if somebody sent you into the kitchen before and said, you do the dishes, but here's somebody that you're crazy about and they're doing it with you and suddenly there's nowhere you'd rather be and nothing you'd rather be doing and so it is when we have Christ in our hearts, the lover of our souls, the delight of our eyes and our heart, his word becomes that which feeds us, his worship is that whereby we honour him, his day becomes the most special day in a week, everything that is about Christ and if we're in him our whole life becomes about Christ, is life not only eternally but here and now, Lord to whom shall we go, thou hast the words of eternal life and it doesn't matter in that sense how few we may be, because if we are alive, if we may be the only living soul in a cemetery full of corpses, we ourselves know that we are alive when we are alive in

Christ, this gospel, this knowing of Christ, that is how it is described in the Acts of the Apostles, it is life, Acts chapter 5, when the disciples have been under arrest, they've been in prison and we read that the Sadducees and the high priest, they laid their hands and filled with indignation, put them in the common prison, but the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors and brought them forth and said, and here's the key verse, verse 20, Acts 5, go stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life, now what do they mean by this life, they mean the gospel, the good news, that Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of all the scriptures, that he is able to change their lives, he is able to cause them to become born again, go stand in the temple, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life, and when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning and taught, now we could also say from this that if

[31 : 33] Christ has changed our lives, before we can testify effectually to the rest of the world, we first have to say it in the temple, we first have to say it in the house of God, we have to testify to the people, that is the Lord's people, the people of Israel, the Israel of God, before we can testify to our experience of life to the rest of the world, we must do it first in the church of God, we must acknowledge to our brothers and sisters, this is what Christ has done for me, this is what he has done in my life, stand and testify in the temple, there will be time enough to testify out in the rest of the world, tell the Lord's people first, and then go out in the strength of the Lord's spirit and of their prayers to testify to the rest, will he also go away?

Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the son of the living God.

Peter speaks for them all, as he so often does, and sometimes that's what it takes to strengthen us, when the twelve must have been swayed, and you can see that thou art that Christ, the son of the living God.

Peter speaks for them all, as he so often does, and sometimes that's what it takes to strengthen us, when the twelve must have been swayed, and just imagine them sort of looking about and seeing everybody melting away, and others sort of standing up and going away from Jesus, and looking over their shoulders with a scornful look, and their own situation, their own loyalty perhaps, beginning to fall to things, do we go with the Christ?

Do we get up, and there's my cousin going away, and there's so-and-so, my next-door neighbour, should I go with them, or do I stay here, what do I do? And then Peter gets up and says, Lord, to whom shall we go?

[33 : 30] Thou hast the words of eternal life, we, build, and leave, and are sure that thou art that Christ, the son of the living God, and the other eleven at this stage are saying, that's it, Peter, you said it for us, we couldn't find the words, but you've hit the nail on the head, and they are glad of his speaking on their behalf, but of course, there's always the danger of overconfidence, is there not?

There is always the danger that we are thinking ourselves stronger in the Lord than we actually are. We remember in Mark chapter 14, where Jesus says to Peter, Peter says, although all shall be offended, yet will not I.

And Jesus said unto him, verily I said to thee, that this day, even in this night, before the cock crowed twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. But he spake the more vehemently, if I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise.

Likewise also said they all. Peter says it. They all said it. They would all stand with him.

They would all stay faithful. And then we jump to verse 15, and we all forsook him and fled. So there is a danger in us thinking ourselves too strong, patting ourselves on the back for our loyalty.

[34 : 54] What can we then do? We can recognize that our strength and our faithfulness is not due to any virtue on our behalf. It is holy of Christ.

When I am weak, then am I strong. Man's extremity is God's opportunity. Man's security is Satan's opportunity.

When I am strong, then I am at my weakest. Because then Satan gets in. Just like he did with Peter, just like he did with all the other disciples. But when I am weak, then I have no one else to turn but to the Lord.

Then am I strong. Our authority, our strength is not in us. It is Jesus who is the fulfillment of all the scriptures. That is what we have at the opening of Mark's account of the gospel.

We read chapter 1, verse 22. They were astonished at his doctrine. Not that he came up with new things they had never heard before. Not that they had never heard this bit read or that bit read.

[35 : 56] But rather, he taught them as one that had authority and not as the scribes. These words were no longer just dead repetition to them. They weren't just ancient Hebrew scriptures.

They were a living word. He brought them alive. He breathed life into them. He made them seem relevant to their lives. He anchored their lives in the word of God.

The word of God into their lives with authority. Not as the scribes. This is life. Life in all its fullness. We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the son of the living God.

Jesus in his humanity perhaps might say, are you also going to go away? You can almost hear the hurt in his voice of being forsaken by so many.

And these disciples who don't understand everything. And they're not deep theologians. And they're not yet anointed with the spirit. And they can't yet testify in the power and the strength that they will have after Pentecost.

[37 : 08] To them, Jesus says later on in John's account of the gospel, but the comforter, which is the Holy Ghost and the Father will send in my name. He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance.

Whatsoever I have said unto you, the comforter, the Holy Ghost, the spirit. It is the spirit that quickeneth. The flesh profiteth nothing.

Friends, we sometimes hold back from commitment to the Lord. Because we are conscious of our own weakness. Man's weakness is God's opportunity.

Sometimes we feel that we are unworthy. Whenever we felt we were worthy, we'd be like the Pharisee in the temple and say, oh God, I thank you I'm not as other man. I'm not this, I'm not that, I'm not the next thing.

I'm not like this guy over here. If we ever think we are worthy, then we will be as far from the kingdom as it is possible to be. Unworthiness is something we should be aware of.

[38 : 11] Weakness is something we should be aware of. Sin and our need for forgiveness is something we should be aware of. If all these things are true in your life, in your heart, this is a reason not for despondency but for hope.

Because Jesus says, come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. And some of his sayings are hard sayings.

And some of his truths are things we would not choose ourselves to say. This passage that we have in Hebrews said about falling away, it's impossible to renew them again. I wouldn't want to write that.

I wouldn't want to say it. I wouldn't dare. But it is the word of God and therefore it must be said and it must be acknowledged and it must be believed because God does not lie.

There is an infinite and eternal danger in falling away from Christ. Many therefore of his disciples, so called. When they heard this said, this is a hard saying, who can hear it?

[39 : 19] Verse 66, from that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with them. How will we ever know that we are true disciples? By going on to the end.

Because amongst those who remained, amongst the twelve who did not fall away, Jesus said, have I not chosen you? Twelve are one of you as a devil. And we know of whom he spoke, it says of whom he spoke, Judas Iscariot, who stayed right to the end almost.

Even when he went out into the night to betray Jesus, none of the disciples had a clue. Jesus knew, or Judas knew, but nobody else knew. How do we ensure that we are truly his disciples?

By holding on to the end. When is the end? How will we know how long we've got to go? Well, the short answer is you don't. So you hold on each day. You make each day a trusting place with Jesus.

You make each day a day that is anchored in prayer. A day where you meet with Jesus because you cannot afford not to. A day where you drink in the truth of Christ in his word.

[40 : 32] When you wait upon him in prayer. It doesn't have to be for hours on end. The Lord knows. We have our employments and duties and tasks day by day. But we need must breathe in the oxygen of Christ's presence.

We need must anchor our souls in his strength. We have none of our own. We don't know when the last day shall be. We don't know when we shall be called to and summoned before him.

We don't know when he shall return. We do not know that we have any promise of tomorrow. Therefore each day we must go on step by step with Christ.

When an apple ripens on the branch of a tree you can sit with a chair in front of it and watch it day after day and you won't see any discernible change. Any discernible ripening.

Or to take a lesser more banal example this is the time of year when we are constantly having to get out the trimmers and the lawnmowers and cut the grass and you've just done it and suddenly it's coming up again. And you just cut it and suddenly it grows again.

[41 : 38] How does it do it? When does it do it? If you sat and watched it with your binoculars so you could see each blade of grass you still wouldn't discern it growing. And yet it does it. It does it with considerable speed and alacrity.

And so likewise the growth of the things of the spirit in our lives. We cannot discern it each individual day. But it will be happening and it will be going on.

And the Lord will be growing his grace in our hearts. Jesus said to the twelve will you also go away? There was a day when the multitudes melted away.

There is a day when the devil will come to us maybe many days and say come on. No, don't stay with him. Just hold fast for today. And then when tomorrow comes hold fast for that day.

And then when the next day just hold fast for that day. One day at a time. Nobody lives tomorrow. The present is the only time when duty may be done and grace received.

[42 : 40] Hold fast for this day. This is the day that the Lord has made. We will be glad and rejoice in it. Lord, to whom shall we go?

Thou hast the words of eternal life and we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ the Son of the living God. When we are weak he is strong.

When we are few he is still the Lord of hosts. and we are firm with we are Cafe pública.

Thank you.