

# Gospel First

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Study given by W.D. Frazee—1958

Jesus said many are called but few are chosen. Those who fight on the side of the Lamb, those who compose His last legion are called and chosen and faithful (Revelation 17:14).

Somehow there is growing in my soul a great yearning to have done with the type of education which is concerned with preparing people to live in this world, to settle down and feather their nest, to keep on that long cycle that has been going on in this world for so long for one generation after the other.

My soul is longing to see some people prepared. See a Gideon's band who will feel that the one thing in life is to do the job for which we have been born. See people do the work to which we have been called. On with the battle and get it over.

There will be eternity for a good many things, but eternity can never dawn until time is finished. Peace can never come until the war is over. The powers of earth shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for He is Lord of Lords. And they that are with Him are called and chosen and faithful.

That is why the Lamb is going to win. He is Lord of all, and has always been Lord of all. They that are with Him are called and chosen and faithful. You remember the beautiful picture of those who are with Him.

“And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads” Revelation 14:1.

To develop that group of 144,000, I am not concerned with the numbering. Some feel that is far too few. I am willing it to be as many as can be gotten in. I am not concerned about cutting anybody off or crowding anybody out. But every time I begin to study and meditate on what it takes to be in that number, I wonder in my soul how God is going to find 144,000 individuals like that. I marvel at it. We are told we are to strive with all our powers to be among the 144,000. I purpose we do it.

Why do you want to be among the 144,000? There might be various reasons. To my mind the great reason is that we may have the privilege of sharing with Jesus in the last great battle over the character of God, and help vindicate that character and bring joy to the heart of our Redeemer. As the shout of triumph rings through the universe and the banner of triumph is planted on the eternal heights, it is going to cost something.

Quite a number of you here are young people. I would like to speak especially to you dear young men and women who have no encumbrances. For decades now God has been looking with anxious heart as one generation after another has come to that point in their teens and twenties where life lies ahead and where they make the choice as to what they will do.

Do you know what most everybody does? They proceed to encumber themselves with all manner of problems and burdens and difficulties so they can do very little for Jesus. There isn't an army in this world that could fight a war and win it with the amount of time and service and undivided attention that most people who claim to be candidates for this last legion are giving to the cause of Jesus Christ today.

We have to have this and that. Why? It is expected. It is a part of life. We must do this and that. If we can do a little missionary work on the side that is fine. But the great thing is to live life. Do that which is the expected thing.

Someday a few but enough are going to get the vision of having done with many of these commonplace things, and give their lives to one thing—the finishing of the work of God. It could have been done years ago if God could have found some young people who would get that vision in their youth; who would refuse to be burdened and bound down with many of the encumbrances and responsibilities that people take upon themselves which keeps them from doing the one thing God has called for in the finishing of His work.

Somebody is going to get that vision. I trust somebody here tonight will get it. I want to assure you that it is amazing what even one young person can do who gets this vision.

You remember the instruction of the Lord to Moses telling him what to have the children of Israel do whenever there was a war to be fought. It was written down so you and I could have the benefit if it today.

The priests should tell the people they didn't need to faint, that God would be with them:

“For the Lord your God is He that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you” Deuteronomy 20:4.

Then the officers were to speak to the people and ask:

“What man is there that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it? let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man dedicate it” Deuteronomy 20:5.

He can go back. He is excused. And somehow as I see the trumpet put to the lips and hear the call sounded over the army, I see a man here and there with a smile that comes across his face. He says, “That's me. I am so glad I won't have to

go.” He gathers up his few belongings and hustles home. He comes in and breaks the news to his loved ones. He says, Isn't it wonderful? I don't have to go. I have got this new house to look after, so they let me go. Isn't that fine? Isn't it lucky you built that new house.

That wasn't all. They were to ask further:

“And what man is he that hath planted a vineyard, and hath not yet eaten of it? let him also return unto his house lest he die in the battle and another man eat of it”  
Deuteronomy 20:6.

Did you ever hear of any nation under heaven except Israel who had any such law as this? Isn't that a strange thing? Amazing. Gather everybody to battle, but before they go, stop everybody and ask if there is anybody who has planted a vineyard and hasn't eaten of it yet.

A man says, Yes. I have. I planted a vineyard two years ago. A crop is coming on this year, but I haven't eaten of it yet. That's all right. You are excused. You will really let me go on account of that? That's fine. I am sure glad I planted that vineyard.

“And what man is he that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her? let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man take her”  
Deuteronomy 20:7.

Why yes, they look out over that great sea of heads. Any of you fellows here who are getting ready to be married? That's all right. You are excused. You don't have to go.

I suppose there were some who envied those men who were excused. Those who had just built a new house or just planted a vineyard or were about to marry a wife. And when they got through with all that, they said there may be some others we ought to let go:

“What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart” Deuteronomy 20:8.

Most anybody could qualify on that, couldn't they? If you were going against an enemy that had spears and swords, and chariots of iron and great horses, and thick walls of stone, I suppose anybody could get out on that count without lying.

Say, Yes. I sure do feel afraid. My heart is beating a little fast this morning. The officer says, All right. You may be excused.

What a strange way to fight a war. That is God's way friends. And do you know what it sums up to? If you have anything else to do, go do it. If there is anything else you want to do, go do it. But if there is anybody here that is supremely

interested in the battle of the Lord, and nothing else in the whole earth matters except to win the victory for Jesus Christ, let him remain.

“And it shall be, when the officers have made an end of speaking unto the people, that they shall make captains of the army to lead the people” Deuteronomy 20:9.

I want to tell you, the captains are not all made yet for this sifting has not taken place. It is not yet apparent who shall fight in Christ's last legion. We have not yet gone through the shaking and sifting which shall test the hearts of men.

How will you stand? Will you have so many interests and so many matters to look after that as the opportunity to be excused is given you will find yourself excused? Or, will you be able to face this examination one test after the other and say, There is just one thing I am interested in, and that is to win this fight for God? Nothing shall come between me and that blessed goal. Shall we look upon the ordinary responsibilities that men are loading themselves down with as blessings, or as liabilities? Think it through.

Turning to the book of Judges, chapters 6 and 7, I find the wonderful story of Gideon, that young man that the Lord called to deliver Israel.

The angel came and said, Gideon, God has chosen you to deliver His people. Gideon said, I am just a poor young fellow. I can't do anything. The Lord said, Yes, you can. You are a mighty man of valor. The Lord is going to be with you. Blow the trumpet and gather the people. Tear down the altar of Baal and I will give you the victory.

You remember his questioning and getting signs, but finally he got the people together. He had thirty-two thousand men. The Lord said, “Too many Gideon.” Do you know what he hadn't done? He hadn't done what the 20th chapter of Deuteronomy said.

Gideon knew about this, but do you know why he didn't do it? He had so few he didn't dare sift them.

That was a mistake. I hope you will remember that as we go into the last battle. It doesn't make any difference how few we are, the Captain is going to sift us. Be careful that you do not think because there are so few that means for sure you get in. No. Even though there are very few, you still might be sifted out. You will be sifted out unless your first business, your great business, your only business is to win this fight for God, to give your life for God's program.

The Lord said to Gideon, Too many. Blow the trumpet and tell the people that anybody who is fearful and fainthearted go home. Well, you know what happened. Twenty-two thousand went home. They had other things to look after. They were a bit fearful that the enterprise would not succeed. Ten thousand stayed.

My dear friends, this movement is going to meet the same test. Those who go through this movement will have faith to go right ahead when every appearance to the human eye is discouraging. Their faith is in God.

With the movement thus sifted, with twenty-two thousand who went home because they were fearful and fainthearted, and with only ten thousand against tens and hundreds of thousands of the enemy, the Lord said to Gideon, Still too many. If I would let them fight now and let them have the victory they would be telling everybody what wonderful soldiers they were, and take the glory to themselves. We will have to sift them again. Bring them down to the water and take them through.

The ones who drank in a certain way were to be put over here, and the ones who drank in another way were to be put over there. When they got through there were nine-thousand seven hundred here and three hundred over there. The Lord said, Tell the nine thousand seven hundred to take what they have and go home. I am going to use those three hundred over there.

Do you know the difference? Those nine thousand seven hundred wanted to fight. They were not afraid. They had faith in God. But there was something in them that was greatly interested in making things as easy and pleasant as possible as they went along. That's right. It showed itself in the little thing of how they got a drink.

You know what those nine thousand seven hundred did? They got down and took their time. They got down where it was easy, and took that water and had a good time. These men were interested in themselves, their comfort. It wasn't whiskey they were drinking either. It wasn't beer. It was just water. Good water.

You know what the three hundred did? With their eye on the enemy, and their eye on their leader to get their orders from, they marched right through the water, took a little in their hands as they went, and lapped it up. There were three hundred that had already settled that they were there for just one thing, and that was to win the battle for God.

And they did. You remember the wonderful story. They won it. Oh, I want to be one of those. Don't you? But do you see the different tests they were put through?

For over twenty-five years I have watched people come up to the point that I am talking about tonight, and hardly any of them ever carry through with making a complete and unreserved devotion for the work. I am not talking about the people that go out to the world and give up the message. I am talking about the people who remain members of the church, and do a certain amount. But they are so busy with all the jobs they have set for themselves, and all the chores they have taken on, and all the responsibilities they have multiplied, that they have precious little time and strength left to fight Christ's last battle. This is an all out battle. It will take all they have. Let's remember Gideon's three hundred.

Here is a little statement in a testimony that Sister White gave in Oakland, California, August 1, 1891.

“All who venture to have their own way, who do not join the angels who were sent from heaven with the message to fill the earth with its glory, will be passed by. The work will go forward to victory without them, and they will have no part in its triumph.”

Who? All who venture to have their own way. It is amazing to me how many people bring into an attempt to work for God a spirit to have their own way. They are willing to work for God providing they can choose the program they wish, do it in the way they want, work under whom they wish, as long as they wish, stop when they wish, and do what they wish. And all who want to do it that way will be left out, and the work will go on to triumph without them. That is a solemn thought, isn't it?

Jesus was sitting at the dinner table. As He sat there giving a lesson, one man in a very pious way said, “Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God” Luke 14:15. Then to show how few people would ever get there, Jesus told about a man that made a great supper and invited many, but when the time came and he sent his servant to call them in, they all with one consent began to make excuses (Luke 14:18).

The first said, “I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused” Luke 14:18.

What could the servant say? He couldn't say anything. The man was going.

Another said, “I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them. Please have me excused” Luke 14:19.

There was nothing the servant could do. That man was excused.

The third said, “I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come” Luke 14:20.

They all had excuses. But notice that there was not a one who said, I am sorry. I am going to a night club tonight, so I won't be there. There wasn't a one who said, I am going down to play pool this evening. Please excuse me. There wasn't a one there who said, I am going down to the lodge. I like to be down there with the fellows.

No. They all had what ordinary living today would consider a fine excuse. There are even some members of the church of Jesus Christ who would say, “Why sure, that is all right. You have to look after your business. You have to look after your wife. Sure. That comes first.”

There is a devilish idea that you must look after everything your family wants first, and if you have some time and thought left, give that to the work of God. I read something the other day that didn't sound like that at all. Would you like to hear it?

“Never should the cause of God be left to suffer, in a single particular, because of our earthly friends or dearest relatives. . . .

“No earthly ties, no earthly consideration, should weigh one moment in the scale against duty to the cause and work of God. Jesus severed His connection from everything to save a lost world, and He requires of us a full and entire consecration. There are sacrifices to be made for the interests of God's cause. . . . Be careful how you appeal to your sympathies and let human feelings and personal considerations mingle with your efforts and labors for the cause of God. He demands unselfish and willing service. You can render this and yet do all your duties to your family; but hold this as a secondary matter” *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 3, page 500.

Duties to your family are a secondary matter. Do you believe that? There are a lot of people who don't believe that at all. Oh, no. With a sanctimonious, pious front they say, My family comes first.

It surely doesn't friends.

“And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee: but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” Luke 9:57-62.

Do you see why Jesus had so many hearers and so few followers? He was continually doing wonderful things that drew people to Him, and then spoiling it all by saying hard cutting things like this that chased people away. They said it would be dangerous to get too close to that man. He upsets all our human planning and all our human activities. And He would. So He had many hearers, but few followers. Many are called but few chosen.

“And there went great multitudes with Him: and He turned, and said unto them, If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. Whosoever doth not bear his

cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple.” Luke 14:25-27.

“So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsakes not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple” Luke 14:33.

Are you going to fight in Christ's last legion? It means everything. And may I urge you, in Jesus' name, do not look around you and see what some other good brother or sister is doing, and conclude that if they can do it you can too. In the first place, maybe they can and maybe they can't. In the second place, even if they can, maybe you can't. God is looking for somebody who is interested in just one thing—finish this battle and go home.

There are thousands of good people who want to settle down in this world and live their life in this world, and some of them hope Jesus doesn't come too soon. They would be glad to have Him come when they get gray hairs or white hairs, but they would hate to have Him come right now because it would spoil some very important plans they have. I want to tell you, whenever Jesus comes there will be some generation that will meet Him with unfinished plans and unfulfilled dreams, as far as human life is concerned.

The real spirit of this movement from the days of James and Ellen White and J. N. Andrews to the present is to give the light to this one thing—the finishing of the work.

You know, marriage keeps a lot of people from this work. Don't misunderstand me. I am not talking against marriage. I say marriage keeps a lot of people from this work. I will read that to you:

“Many of the marriages contracted in these last days prove to be a mistake. The parties make no advancement in spiritual things. Their growth and usefulness ended with their marriage. There are men and women throughout the country who would have been accepted as laborers together with God if Satan had not laid his snares to entangle their minds and hearts in courtship and marriage.

“Did the Lord urge them to obtain the advantages of our schools and missions that they might sink everything in courtship and marriage, binding themselves by a human band for a lifetime? By accepting the work of rearing children in these last days of uncertainty and peril, many place themselves in a position where they cannot labor either in the canvassing field or any other branch of the cause of God, and some lose all interest to do this.

“It is no use to spend time and money in the education of workers who will fall in love before they complete this education, and who cannot resist the first temptation in

the form of an invitation to marriage. In most cases the labor spent on such persons is wholly lost. When they enter the marriage relation their usefulness in the work of God is at an end. They increase their family. They are dwarfed and crippled in every way and cannot use the knowledge they have obtained" *Series B*, page 16-17.

I didn't write any of that. I have read it straight through without any comment. It doesn't need any comment. And if you will half open one of your eyes, with the other closed, and look around you, you will see hundreds of people going through the fulfillment of this year after year and decade after decade. Hardly anybody is all out to fight this battle and finish the work of God.

This doesn't mean there should be no marriages or no children. It doesn't mean any one of these things. But it does mean that God is looking for some people to whom the one thing important is the finishing of the work, and who, having made that choice and settled that thing, will take on no responsibilities, accept no burdens, except those the Captain gives as part of finishing the work.

"Those who are controlled by a sense of duty, who daily seek wisdom and help from God, will act intelligently, not from selfish motives, but from the love of Christ and the truth. Such will not hesitate to give themselves unreservedly, soul body and spirit to the work. They will study and pray for its advancement. I repeat, do not enter into a marriage engagement unless there are good and sufficient reasons for this step unless the work of God can be better advanced thereby" *Ibid*.

Sister White gives one reason for a soldier in Christ's last legion. Just one good reason. What will finish the work fastest? For Christ's sake lift the cross and do the work for which you are educating yourself.

As important as that is, if that were the only thing that were holding things back, we would be miles further up the road. But there are so many things. Do you know today there are many people who want to start out in life where their parents left off? They must have an automobile. They must have a radio, a television. They must have sterling silver and five hundred dollars worth of furniture in the living room, a two hundred dollar bedroom suite, and all the rest before they can do anything.

Why? I am afraid it is because we see more realistically the things we see with these eyes than the things we see through the eye of faith, through the lens of prophecy.

Oh, I trust I am talking to men and women and youth tonight who will believe God, and who will rejoice to put everything on the altar and say, Lord, we are not interested in settling down in this world and preparing to live out our days in this place. No. Our home is yonder in the New Jerusalem. God is building us a mansion. We are fighting for Him.

It is true that the Lord has told us that if we will make that choice, we will be taken care of sufficiently here. But it is wonderful what a lot of time we save when we let God take care of us instead of taking care of ourselves on many of these things. That is a fact. If we have to take care of ourselves it is going to take all our time, and we will not get it done.

But if we will plunge as Gideon's three hundred did, and have done with all these selfish wishes and preferences, we will win the battle, and it will be amazing what a wonderful time we will have while we are doing it. It won't be any mourning, lamenting, groaning band who plant the banner on the height of victory. No sir.

The truth of the matter is, this is real happiness. That is the paradox of the thing. But if you accept it just to be happy, you will probably be disappointed. You will only bite into it far enough to get the hard shell, and you will say, I am afraid this isn't for me.

Sit down and count the cost whether you have sufficient to finish it. I think again and again of that experience when Jesus was trying to teach the disciples this lesson. He drew from them the acknowledgment that He was Christ the Son of God. And then He told them they were going up to Jerusalem to a battle.

Our battle is like the battle that Jesus and His disciples went up to at Jerusalem. It is like a battle in which we use no carnal weapons, but in which, like Jesus, we suffer at the hands of wicked men. A battle in which unseen devils unite with visible devils in human flesh.

It is going to mean something to do as Jesus did. To become patient and loving and devoted. To be able to go through Gethsemane and on to Calvary. Jesus was trying to teach the disciples that lesson. He told them what was ahead. How He would be spit upon, scourged, and killed. Then Peter took Him and said, Oh no, Lord. That won't happen to you. Pity yourself. Be it far from Thee Lord.

What did Jesus say to Peter? "Get thee behind Me Satan."

Do you know what it was that Peter wanted in the work of God? Peter wanted to get this world and the next one too. He wanted to live a normal life and still have what was ahead with Jesus. But Jesus said:

"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever shall save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it" Matthew 16:24-25.

That is the paradox. Those who are with Jesus, called, chosen, and faithful, will lose their lives as far as this world is concerned. They won't be written in the whose who of America. But their names will be written large in the whose who of heaven.

Just a few weeks after this experience with His disciples Jesus went to Jerusalem and, just as He had told them, He met death upon the cross. He died at

the early age of thirty-three. Most men would have said He threw His life away. I want to tell you something. He had given everything. He didn't leave anything for men to quarrel over except those few articles of clothing they took from His back when they nailed Him to the cross. That is all.

Men would have said He made a poor living. They had to borrow a tomb to put Him in. Oh, my. It would hurt some people terribly to be dying and not know where they were going to be buried, wouldn't it? It would be terrible. But He had given everything. It was all in the work.

He had to look around for someone to take care of His mother. He should have had a life insurance policy to take care of that, shouldn't He? He did. He turned to John, His best friend, and said, John, you look after her. John said he would.

I say that judged by the standards of men the life and death of Jesus met a supreme failure. But He won the greatest battle of all times at Calvary. Satan was defeated. And this battle we are going into is that kind, my friends. That is the thing I want us to see. It isn't the kind of battle that is going to be fought with the sound of fife and drum and blare of trumpets, with the step of marching men under the inspiration of the band's music and the charge of legions.

No. This battle is going to be fought as the battle of Gethsemane was fought. And the men who fight on the winning side are going to be written off the records of this world as supreme failures. But in losing their lives they are going to win them. In giving their lives they are going to receive them. And all this Jesus has shown us in His life and death.

May I share with you some beautiful verses contrasting our blessed Lord and Alexander the Great. You know the story of Alexander, how in his youth the marshal atmosphere around him inspired the great ambition to become the ruler of the world. He marched his armies across Asia Minor, down into Egypt, over into Babylon. All around, everywhere gaining victory. And finally in a great celebration at Babylon, he fell down dead drunk and died in a fever shortly after.

“Jesus and Alexander died at thirty-three;  
One lived and died for self, one died for you and me.  
The Greek died on a throne, the Jew died on a cross;  
One's life a triumph seemed, the other but a loss.

One led vast armies forth, the other walked alone;  
One shed a whole world's blood, the other gave His own.  
One won the world in life, and lost it all in death;  
The other lost His life to win the whole world's fate.

Jesus and Alexander died at thirty-three;  
The Greek made all men slaves, the Jew made all men free.  
One built a throne on blood, the other built on love;  
The one was born of earth, the other from above.

The one won all this earth to lose all earth and heaven;  
The other gave up all, that all to Him be given.  
The Greek forever died, the Jew forever lives;  
He looses all who gets, he wins all things who gives.”

Two hundred years ago, in a little town in Germany, a nobleman was traveling through the country, and came to a place where there was a painting of Jesus on the cross. He went into the place where the painting was and lingered. He had heard about this picture and had come to see it. He stayed there hour after hour until the tears came down his face. The time finally came when the keeper touched him on the shoulder and told him it was time to lock up.

There were two little lines underneath that great painting. With the scene of Jesus giving His life on the cross, the message had gone to his heart, “All this I did for thee. What hast thou done for Me?”

From that experience Count Zinzendorf went forth to lead what has been called the Moravian movement, sending missionaries to all parts of the world. It was from those who had gotten their inspiration from that man that Wesley got his inspiration. Justification by faith. Oh, think of the millions whose lives have been touched by that.

Brothers and sisters, there is just one thing you and I need tonight, and that is a sense of what it means to be unreservedly given to Jesus to finish His work. Let us bow our heads and in silence ask Jesus what He wants us to do.

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