



# **LITTLE FLOCK**

Bible verses for small churches

John Benton

# **LITTLE FLOCK**

Bible verses for small churches

Dr John Benton is Director of Pastoral Support  
with the Pastors' Academy  
at London Seminary

## **Introduction**

Reading the Bible with a particular question in mind is often very illuminating.

Suddenly you see familiar verses in a new light. God's word is inexhaustibly rich and has wisdom for us on every issue. And as we come with a particular question in mind fresh insight is given through the familiar words of Scripture.

### **Large and small**

It was with concern to help small churches in mind that a few years ago I took time to read through the whole Bible with the agenda of asking what God's word had to say on the general subject of 'large and small' – not least referring to large and small groups of God's people.

There are particular discouragements and temptations allied to each condition. The large and strong frequently tend to pride and forgetting of their need of God. The weak and small can easily become discouraged and even bitter about themselves and their circumstances. But God's word speaks with love and perceptiveness into both situations. Particularly there is a vein which runs throughout the Bible which shows us God's heart and power for the weak and poor as they look to him.

This booklet lists many of the texts which stood out to me as I worked through Scripture. To read through and meditate on these would make a very worthwhile exercise for a small church in need of encouragement or indeed the pastor of a little flock in need of vision and guidance.

While the Bible texts form the true substance of the booklet, I have also added a few quotations from the revered commentator Matthew Henry on a few of the texts. His thoughts might get help us to get into the mental zone as we come to think through how God's word might encourage us and bless us.

## Old Testament - Pentateuch

### Genesis - Exodus

#### **One man (Abram) will become a great nation**      Genesis 12.1,2

'This promise was

(1) a great relief to Abram's burden; for he now had no child. Note, God knows how to suit his favours to the wants and necessities of his children. He that has a plaster for every sore, will provide one for that first that is most painful.

(2) a great trial to Abram's faith, for his wife had been long barren, so that if he believe, it must be against hope (Romans 4.18), and his faith must build purely upon the power which can out of stones raise up children unto Abraham, and make him a great nation.'

Notes:

---

#### **Genesis**

- 1.2 Great wind / = wind of God (God = big)
- 3.11 a 'small' transgression affects the whole world
- 3.15 a 'seed' will save the world
- 4.23, 24 Lamech threatens large revenge
- 7. 15 One man / family saves humanity and the animals
- 12. 1,2 One man will become a great nation
- 13. 6 Blessed Abraham has increased so land cannot support
- 14. 14 Small force of 318 men defeats 5 kings
- 17.2, 5 Abram becomes Abraham 'father of a multitude'
- 19.20-22 the 'small' city saves Lot / Zoar = Small
- 23.17, 18 Promised land starts with a small cemetery
- 26.24, 28, 28 Blessed with increase
- 28. 3 Blessed is increase / becoming larger
- 34.30 Jacob feels vulnerable with 'few'

#### **Exodus**

- 1.7, 20 Israel increases / blessed by God even though oppressed
- 3. 10 Moses, one man, will under God save the vast nation
- 7.3 God will multiply his judgements – on Pharaoh
- 14.7, 13 Pharaoh's vast army destroyed by God
- 17.1 The large nation needs large resources
- 18.14,18 The large nation needs organization v21
- 32.21 A 'great' sin – the golden calf

## **Numbers - Deuteronomy**

### **The report of the ten spies** Numbers 13.31

'God had given Abraham all possible assurances, that he would put his seed into possession of the land, (Genesis 15.18)...And after all this for them to say, "We be not able to go up against them" was in effect to say "God himself is not able to make his words good"...and to tell him he had undertaken more than he could perform'.

## **Histories**

### **Joshua - Judges**

#### **Gideon's army reduced** Judges 7.2

'We often find God bringing great things to pass by a few hands...God would thereby show that when he employed instruments in his services...he did not need them...so that he was not indebted to them for their service but they to him for employing them.'

---

## **Numbers**

- 1.46 Israel counted 603,550 fighting men / God's promise fulfilled
- 13.18 Spies find out strong / weak, few / many
- 13.31 Lack of faith
- 16.1,2 Large number of opponents / more = more sinners
- 22.2 Large number creates fear /attracts opposition
- 26.52 Larger number means larger inheritance – fairness
- 31.4 Only 1000 from each tribe (Note failure to be thorough brings condemnation v14f)

## **Deuteronomy**

- 1.10 Large numbers
- 4.27 Great nation made few by disobedience
- 7.7 Israel not chosen because of size
- 10.22 Comparatively few (70) become numerous as stars in sky
- 26.5 Few people became a great nation, powerful and numerous.

## **Joshua**

- 7.3 Miscalculation of spies at Ai – only need a few
- 14.14 Caleb drives out giants (small vs large)

## **Judges**

- 6.15 God chooses Gideon from weakest clan
- 7.2 God says Israel's army is too many

## 1 Samuel - 1 Kings

### By few or by many 1 Samuel 14.6

‘(Jonathan is saying) “God is able to make us two victorious over their unnumbered regiments. There is no restraint to the Lord, no limitation to the Holy One of Israel, but it is all one to him, to save by few or by many.” This is a truth easily granted in general, that it is all alike to Omnipotence, what the instruments are by which he works; and yet it is not so easy to apply it to a particular case: when we are but few and feeble, then to believe that God can not only save us, but save by us, this is an instance of faith, which, wherever it is, shall obtain a good report. Let this strengthen the weak and hearten the heartless; let it be pleaded with God for enforcing your petitions, and with ourselves for the silencing of our fears.’

Notes:

---

### 1 Samuel

- 9.21 King Saul from smallest tribe – Benjamin & least clan
- 13.22 sparse / lack of good weapons
- 14.6 The LORD can save by few or many (Jonathan)
- 16.11 Youngest chosen as king
- 17. 42f Young, despised David destroys giant Goliath
- 18.18, 23 David sense of his own humble background – who am I?

### 2 Samuel

- 3.39 Though a king I am weak
- 21.16-22 Four giants killed
- 23.8-39 David’s mighty men often defeating large numbers single-handed
- 24.1-10 the sin of counting numbers rather than relying on God

### 1 Kings

- 4.20 Israel as numerous as sand by seashore
- 4.29 Solomon given breadth of wisdom to match people – like sand of seashore.
- 10.1-13 Queen of Sheba impressed with wealth, order, grandness
- 18.22 Elijah alone against 450 false prophets (encouragement to pastors facing heresy)
- 19.12 the gentle whisper of God / still small voice
- 19.18 the remnant of 7,000
- 22.6, 8, 12 True prophet greatly outnumbered

## 2 Kings - 2 Chronicles

### **Elisha seems outnumbered** 1 Kings 6.16

What a consternation (Elisha's servant was in)...Had he but studied David's Psalms which were then extant, he might have learned not to be afraid of ten thousands of people, Psalm 3.6, no, not an host encamped against him, Psalm 27.3. Had he considered, that he was embarked with a master, by whom God had done great things, and whom he would not leave now to fall into the hands of the uncircumcised, and having saved others, no doubt, would save himself, he had not been thus at a loss...(Elisha) quietened him by word: what he said to him, v16, is spoken to all the faithful servants of God when without are fightings and within are fears. Fear not, with that fear which has torment and amazement, for they that are with us, to protect us, are more than they that are against us... angels, unspeakably numerous, God infinitely powerful.'

---

### **2 Kings**

6.16 Elisha - visibly outnumbered, spiritually greater forces  
6.24 & 7.5,7, 15 Large Aramean army dispersed  
18.23 Sennacherib's boast of large numbers  
19.20, 35 Large Assyrian army destroyed through prayer

### **1 Chronicles**

5.20 Battle won against numerous enemy 5.21,22 through prayer and faith  
11.11-14 David's mighty men courage against overwhelming odds  
16.19 Israel was 'few' with no home, but God protected & blessed  
17.16, 17 Who am I? – lowly person God used  
20.4-8 Victory against giants  
21.3, 6 David's mistake in numbering Israel  
27.23 David does not use young men – trusting in God

### **2 Chronicles**

1.10 Numbers need wisdom  
2.6 Who am I? – to build God's temple – when he is so great  
10.10, 11 the 'big talk' of young men  
14.11 The LORD is great to help the powerless against the mighty – Asa's prayer  
16.18 Mighty army of Cushites defeated when relied on the LORD  
20.12 We have no power against this vast army – but look to you!  
22.11 Little child rescued – has big future  
24.24 Aramean army of few defeats Judah because they had forsaken the LORD  
26.16 Pride due to power brings Uzziah's downfall

## **Ezra - Psalm 34**

### **God's King is greater than all his gathered enemies**      Psalm 2.4-6

'If heaven and earth be combatants, it is easy to foretell which will be the conqueror. They that make this mighty struggle, are people of the earth, and the kings of the earth, who, being of the earth, are earthy, but He whom they contest with, is the one that sits in the heavens, v4. He is in heaven, a place of such vast prospect, that he can oversee them all, and all their projects; and such is his power that he can overcome them all, and all their attempts...Jesus Christ is a King, and is invested by him, who is the fountain of power, with the dignity and authority of a sovereign Prince...God is pleased to call him *his* King, because he is appointed by him, and entrusted for him with the sole administration of government and judgment. He is his King because he is dear to the Father...We are to sing these verses with a holy exultation, triumphing over all the enemies of Christ's kingdom, (not doubting that they will all quickly be made his footstool).'

---

### **Ezra**

9.8, 15 Remnant left by God

### **Nehemiah**

1.3 Survivors of exile trouble / wall of Jerusalem broken / they are weak

### **Esther**

2.21-23 One man used / key to future 6.2

4.1f One man intervenes

5.1f One woman saves the nation

### **Job**

8.7 Humble beginnings can lead to prosperity (under God)

42.12-15 Blessing – God doubles Job's prosperity

### **Psalms**

2.4-6 God's King greater than all the assembled kings of the earth

10.12 'Don't forget the helpless'

12.5 'Because of the oppression of the weak...I will now arise.'

17.13 Beleaguered David – 'Rise up, O LORD'

28.8 The LORD is the strength of his people

29.11 Strength of people

30.1 God saves those in the depths

33.20 We wait in hope

34.6 This poor man cried and the LORD saved him

## Psalm 35 - 126

### God restores the fortunes of his people Psalm 80.3

'They are conscious to themselves that they have gone astray from God and their duty, and turned aside into sinful ways and this was it that provoked God to hide his face from them...and therefore they desire to begin their work at the right end; "Lord, turn us to thee in a way of repentance and reformation, and then no doubt, thou wilt return to us in a way of mercy and deliverance."

Observe

(1) No salvation but from God's favour..."let us have thy love and light of thy countenance, and then we shall be saved".

(2) No obtaining favour with God unless we be reconverted to him. We must turn again to God from the world...and he will cause his face to shine.

(3) No conversion to God but by his own grace; we must frame our doings to turn to him and pray earnestly for his grace.

---

### Psalms

35.10 The LORD rescues the poor

40.17 "I am poor and needy..."

42.3, 10 Weakness – as others taunt 'Where is your God?'

44.9, 23 Humbled when God is not with us – Awake O Lord

47.9 Little Israel exalted in the earth

48.11 The villages rejoice

50.15 The one we can call on in trouble

53.6 The One who restores fortunes (little church diminished circumstances)

60.3, 5 God shows his people desperate times – to correct / bring to see need

68.27 Littlest tribe leads!

69.33 The LORD hears the needy

74.3, 10, 21 God's people mocked – may the poor praise you

79.4 We are objects of reproach

80.3, 4, 7, 19 Restore us!

81.6,7 Removes the burden

82.4 Rescue the weak and needy

100.5 Small church today – all generations loved, even when small

105.12 When we were few, few indeed

108.10-13 Hope in distress

113.7 Raises the poor from the dust

119.141 lowly and despised but faithful (small church)

121.2 My help comes from the LORD

123.3,4 God's people enduring contempt

126.1f God reverses our fortunes

## Psalm 130 - Proverbs

### Strategies for the small and weak Proverbs 30.24-28

'Agur, having specified four things that seem great and yet are really contemptible, here specifies four things that are little yet are very admirable... (We are taught) not to despise the weak things of the world and of small account:

(1) The ants; minute animals, and very weak, and yet are industrious in getting proper food, and have a strange sagacity to do it in the summer...we may learn from them to be wise for the future (Proverbs 6.6).

(2) The conies; weak creatures and very timorous, yet they have so much wisdom as to make their homes in the rocks where they are well guarded... weakness should drive us to him, that is the Rock that is higher than we are for shelter and support (Psalm 61.1).

(3) The locusts; they are little and have not a king...yet go forth all of them, in bands...sense of weakness should engage us to keep together, that we may strengthen the hands of one another.

(4) The spider (AV translation of v28)...(is) very ingenious in weaving webs... Providence wonderfully keeps up those kinds of creatures, not only which men provide not for, but which every man's hand is against and seeks destruction of.'

---

### Psalms

130.3,4 Hope in God despite sins

132.15 The poor blessed with abundance

136.23 God remembers us in 'our low estate'

145.14 God lifts up the downcast

147.5 God's power has no limit – we are not beyond help!

### Proverbs

3.34 God mocks proud mockers

6.6 Learn from the industry of the little ant!

13.23a A poor man's field may produce abundance – but injustice takes it away

14.20, 21 A poor man shunned

15.16 Better is a little with the fear of the LORD than great wealth (without him)

15.25 The LORD against the proud but for the widow

16.19 Better to be lowly among the oppressed than share with the proud

19.1, 4, 7 Poor man shunned

22.1 A good name better than riches

22.9, 16, 22 Large churches help small

30.24-28 Small but wise – 4 strategies for small churches

## **Ecclesiastes - Isaiah**

### **God strengthens those who hope in him**    Isaiah 40.31

‘The young men, who are strong...are apt to think themselves stronger than they are. And they shall faint and be weary... But they who wait on the Lord, who make conscience of their duty to him, and by faith rely on him...

(1) They shall have grace sufficient for them, they shall renew their strength as their work is renewed, as there is new occasion; they shall be anointed and their lamps supplied with fresh oil.

(2) They shall use this grace for the best purposes. They will soar upwards towards God; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, so strongly, so swiftly, so high and heavenward. In the strength of divine grace their souls shall ascend above the world, and even enter into the holiest...

They shall press forward...they shall walk, they shall run the way of God’s commandments with cheerfulness and alacrity...constantly and with perseverance...and therefore in due season they shall reap.

Let Jacob and Israel therefore, in their time of greatest distress, continue waiting upon God, and not despair of timely and effectual relief... ‘

---

### **Ecclesiastes**

11.4 Don’t take too much notice of circumstances – get on with the job

### **Isaiah**

1.9 remnant / survivors – so crucial to God’s promises

4.2 The branch / stump?

7.3 A remnant will return

10.2 Poor / widows oppressed

11.1 Stump of Jesse

11.11, 16 Remnant

14.32 Afflicted find refuge in Zion

26.3-6 God humbles the lofty

31.1 Woe to those who look to big Egypt / rather than the LORD /strategies

40.31 Renew strength in the LORD

41.17 The LORD answers the poor and needy

42.3 God’s care for bruised and faltering

53.1-3 Tender, unimportant, despised

54.1-3 The barren made fruitful

55.8,9 God’s thoughts not like ours (uses weak?)

57.14, 17 The LORD lives with the lowly – to revive spirit

60.22 The least become a 1000

62.4 No longer deserted / desolate

64.4 God acts on behalf of those who wait for him

## Jeremiah - Joel

### God will repair our losses Joel 2.25

“I will restore to you the years that the locusts have eaten” – “you will be comforted according to the time you have been afflicted, and shall have years of plenty to balance the years of famine.” Thus does it repent the Lord concerning his servants, when they repent, and to show how perfectly he is reconciled to them he makes good the damage they have sustained by his judgments, and like the jailor (Acts 16), washes their stripes. Though in justice he did them no wrong...yet in compassion, he makes restitution; as the father of the prodigal, upon his return made up all he had lost by his sin and folly..’

---

### Jeremiah

- 1.6 Only a child
- 20.13 Rescues the needy
- 33.3 Call and I will show you great things
- 42.2, 3 Remnant – only a few left
- 45.5 Should you seek great things for yourself?
- 47.4 Destroying the remnant of the Philistines

### Lamentations

- 5.19-22 Restore us, O LORD

### Ezekiel

- 17.24 I dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish
- 29.15 Egypt will be the lowliest of kingdoms – I will make it so weak
- 33.24f Abraham was only one man yet possessed the land – but we are many..
- 34.4, 20 Not strengthened the weak...fat sheep (bad shepherds)
- 37.1-10 Can these dry bones live?

### Daniel

- 2 Remnant (Daniel and friends) crucial to God’s plans
- 3.15f God delivers weak from strong/ cruel
- 6 Daniel against lions – the LORD reigns / saves v26etc
- 10.18 Weak Daniel strengthened

### Hosea

- 13.6 When I fed them they became satisfied...proud, then they forgot me

### Joel

- 2.25 Repay you for the years the locusts have stolen

## **Amos - Malachi**

### **God will carry on and complete his work** Zechariah 4.6

“Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts”. ‘He had begun their deliverance from Babylon, not by external force but by the secret operations and internal influences upon the minds of men...When instruments fail, let us therefore leave it to God to do his work himself by his own Spirit.’

---

#### **Amos**

3.12 Saves from lion’s mouth – but only a little

5.15 Perhaps the LORD will have mercy on the remnant

7.5 How can Jacob survive? He is so small!

#### **Jonah**

4.10 Concerned for comfort of vine but not for perishing of many people

#### **Micah**

4.6,7 I will gather the lame and make them a remnant

7.16 Nations deprived of power

#### **Nahum**

1.12 Numerous allies will be cut off

#### **Habakkuk**

3.17-19 Though the fig tree does not bud (poverty, lowliness) – yet rejoice in the LORD

#### **Zephaniah**

3.19-20 The Lord will rescue the lame and gather

#### **Haggai**

1.6,9,10 Much work for little return

2.3f, v9 Lesser smaller temple shall be greater

2.19 Day of reverse

#### **Zechariah**

1.18-20 Craftsmen destroy nations

2.8 Little nation – apple of God’s eye

4.6 Not by might...

4.10 Don’t despise day of small things

8.6, 11, 12 Will it seem marvelous to God? – remnant marvel

13.9 Remnant refined

#### **Malachi**

3.10 The comparatively small tithe (tenth) opens heaven – uncontainable blessing

## New Testament

### Matthew

#### God is with us      Matthew 1.18-21

‘The mystery of Christ’s incarnation is to be adored, not pryed into. If we know not the way of the Spirit in the formation of common persons, or how the bones are formed in the womb of anyone that is with child, much less do we know how the blessed Jesus was formed in the womb of the blessed virgin...Mary had conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost; not the power of nature. The Holy Spirit, who produced the world, now produced the Saviour of the world... Immanuel signifies God with us; a mysterious name but very precious; God incarnate among us, and so...at peace with us, and taking us into covenant and communion with himself. The people of the Jews had God with them, in types and shadows...but never so as when the Word was made flesh...What a happy step is hereby taken toward the settling of peace and correspondence between God and man, that the two natures are thus brought together in the person of the Mediator...By the light of nature we see God as a God *above* us; by the light of the law we see him as a God *against* us; but by the light of the gospel, we see him as *Immanuel*, God *with* us...’

Notes:

---

### Matthew

1.18 Mary, an ordinary young woman, blessed by the Holy Spirit

8.25 The disciples know their weakness

10.29 The Father’s concern for little sparrows

13.31-35 The mustard seed is the smallest

14.17 & 15.34 With Jesus small resources feed 5000 & 4000

17.20 Little faith moves mountains, cf. 21.21

18.1 Concern to be great brings trouble

18.10-13 One lost sheep matters

19.30 Wrong perceptions of greatness

20.27 First is the lowest slave

25.24 Beware becoming bitter over having little

27.25 Despised – everyone rejects Jesus

28.16 The great commission to 11 people

## Mark - Luke 9

### Christ teaches the small group of disciples to pray with faith Mark 11.22

“Why,” saith Christ, “a lively active faith would put a great power into your prayers, v23, 24...if he has but any word of God, general or particular, to build his faith upon, and if he shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that these things which he saith, according to the warrant he has from what God hath said, shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith.” Through the strength and power of God in Christ, the greatest difficulty shall be got over, and the thing shall be effected.’

Notes:

---

### Mark

- 1.16-20 First 4 disciples
- 3.7 Large crowds
- 4.31 Small seed
- 5.23, 41 Little daughter
- 6.38 Few loaves / 5000
- 9.2f Small group at transfiguration
- 9.20 Things get worse before they get better
- 10.27 The impossible is possible
- 10.48, 49 Despised man who keeps calling to Jesus
- 11.22-24 Faith (not numbers) moves mountains
- 12.41-44 Widows little offering, giving out of poverty
- 13.1,2 What is massive torn down
- 14.6-9 One woman is right, the rest wrong
- 15.1 Jesus alone
- 16.1 Three women at the empty tomb

### Luke

- 1.5-7 Small and old but used by God
- 1.34, 35 One girl (v37)
- 1.48, 52 Humble circumstances
- 2.3,7,8 Powerless people
- 4.44 Jesus in small town synagogue
- 6.20, 24 Blessed are the poor
- 9.1-6 Sends out just 12
- 9.12-17 Small resources, 5000
- 9.28, 29 Small group and transfiguration

## Luke 10 - 24

### Christ sends out his disciples just two by two Luke 10.1

'He sent them out two by two that they might strengthen and encourage one another. If one fall the other will raise him up...He sent them as his harbingers; and we must suppose, though it be not recorded, that Christ soon after did come to all those places...

(1) They must be duly affected with the necessities of the souls of men which they are called to help...

(2) They must set out with an expectation of trouble and persecution; "Behold I send you forth as lambs among wolves"...

(3) They must not incumber themselves with a load of provisions...but depend upon God and their friends to provide...

(4) They must show, not only their goodwill, but God's goodwill, to all to whom they came, and leave the issue... to him that knows the heart, v5,6'.

---

### Luke

10.1 Sent out 2 by 2 for evangelism

10.2 Few workers, more needed

10.21 Revealed to little children (naïve)

11.13 Ask for the Holy Spirit

12.6,7 Sparrows and hairs precious

12.18, 20, 21 When bigger is foolish

12.28 God clothes the grass

12.32 Little flock shall have kingdom

13.18, 19 Mustard seed

13.23 Only a few saved?

15.7, 10, 20 God's joy in one sinner saved

17.6 Faith like mustard seed

17.15-17 The thankfulness of one

18.3 The pleas of a lone widow

18.39, 40 An insignificant blind man

19.3 Zacchaeus was small / disadvantaged

20.17 The stone the builders rejected

21.1-4 Widow's gift great

22.24 Concern to be greatest

22.28 Standing by Christ in unpopularity

23.46 Jesus crucified in weakness

24.13 Jesus reveals himself to 2 people

24.49 Power from the Father for the few

## John

### Jesus prospers the work of his fishermen John 21.6

‘He ordered them to cast the net on the right side of the ship, the contrary side to what they had been casting it on...Their obedience to his orders (brought) good success...As yet they did not know it was Jesus; however, they were willing to be advised...and did not bid this supposed stranger to mind his own business... They were obedient to their Master unawares. And it sped wonderfully well; now they had a draught that paid them for all their pains. Note, those that are humble, diligent, and patient (though their labours may be crossed,) shall be crowned...There is nothing lost in observing Christ’s orders. Those are likely to speed well, that follow the rule of the word, the guidance of the Spirit, and the intimations of Providence; for that is casting the net on the right side of the ship.’

Notes:

---

## John

- 1.3 Everything he made – including small things
- 1.37, 41, 43, 45, Small beginnings of Jesus’ work
- 2.7 Lowly, obedient servants are used miraculously
- 3.34 Small church, Christ gives the Spirit without limit
- 4.24 Not size or place, but heart which makes true worship
- 5.23, 24 Small churches can honour the Son
- 6.11 Small resources in Jesus’ hands feed 5000
- 7.37-39 Smallness can lead to thirst for the Spirit
- 10.28, 29 Small church, your Father is stronger than all
- 11.14, 15, 25, 44 Jesus raises the dead – and can raise dying churches
- 12.24-26 Dying to self brings much fruit – one seed
- 13.34 Jesus taught the small group they must love one another
- 14.13, 14 The promise applies to a small group
- 15.5 Fruitfulness is not dependent on size but abiding in Christ
- 16.33 The Saviour of the small band of disciples overcomes the world
- 17.23 It is not numbers which speaks to the world but loving unity
- 19.38, 39 Two disciples play a large part
- 20.13-16 One woman’s despair turns to joy
- 20.19 Jesus comes to a fearful few
- 20.21 Small but sent
- 21.6 Jesus makes the little fishing trip effective

## Acts - Romans

### **The Holy Spirit sends just two to a large work** Acts 13.2

“Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them”. It is by the Spirit of Christ that they are both qualified in some measure for his service, inclined to it, and taken off from other cares inconsistent with it. There are some whom the Holy Ghost has separated for the service of Christ (and) has distinguished from others as men that are offered, and that willingly offer themselves...All that are separated to Christ as his ministers are separated to work; Christ keeps no servants to be idle.’

---

### **Acts**

- 1.5, 8, 14 Power for the church through prayer
- 2.14, 41 How God can use 11 men filled with the Spirit
- 6.1 Difficulties emerge with large church
- 7.17-19 Large numbers draw persecution
- 8.26 God uses 1 man to save 1 man (leaving the revival in Samaria)
- 12.5 Feeling helpless the church prays
- 13.22 It is the heart that matters not numbers or anything else
- 16.9 Vision given to a small group of workers
- 16.40 Church small enough to fit into Lydia’s house
- 17.34 A small church in Athens
- 18.5, 9 Guidance for a small group not to give up
- 27.10 God’s paths sometimes lead through storms
- 28.30, 31 Outreach from one house

### **Romans**

- 1.6 A small church is called just as much as a large church
- 2.11 God shows no partiality
- 3.22 God’s righteousness for all who believe – large or small
- 4.19 God can use the nearly dead
- 5.6 God loves the powerless
- 7.24, 25 There is deliverance for those who feel wretched
- 8.11 The Spirit is the spirit of resurrection
- 8.32 God is for us – even if we are small
- 9.6 Lack of success does not mean the word has failed
- 13.11 Small church, you know the truth – don’t be sleepy
- 4.1 A small church feeling ‘weak’ needs love
- 15.1 Strong Christian – bear with the weak / small
- 16.5 House church – small

## 1 Corinthians - 2 Corinthians 8

### **The labours of a small church are not in vain** 1 Corinthians 15.58

'As sure as Christ is risen, (we) shall rise...The apostles saw him after his death, testified this truth to the world in the face of a thousand deaths and dangers and confirmed it by miraculous powers received from him...Note the labour of Christians will not be lost labour...there is more implied than expressed in this phrase. It means that they shall be abundantly rewarded. He will never be found unjust to forget their labor of love, Hebrews 6.10...Neither the services they do for him, nor the sufferings they endure for him here, are worthy to be compared with the joy hereafter revealed in them, Romans 8.18...They cannot do too much, nor suffer too much, for so good a Master.

---

### **1 Corinthians**

- 1.8 Christ will sustain us to the end
- 1.10 Small church make it a priority to agree
- 1.27f God chose the weak to show his own glory
- 2.3-5 Even Paul felt weak and fearful
- 3.11f Work is tested for its quality not quantity
- 4.7 Who makes you different small church?
- 4.10 It is okay to be a 'fool' for Christ small church
- 5.6 Beware the power of a little yeast / accommodating sin
- 6.10 Small church you are Christ's church – not our own
- 8.3 If you love God you are known by him even if small
- 9.19-23 Small church keep flexible for the gospel
- 10.1-3 Small church 'soundness' is not enough – obedience
- 10.13 Small church – God is faithful
- 11.34 Don't meet together with attitudes which bring judgment
- 12.7, 12 Work for everyone's good in a small church
- 13.1-7 Without love we are nothing – with love we have all
- 15.58 Small church your labour is not in vain
- 16.13-14 These orders apply to all churches

### **2 Corinthians**

- 1.4 Comfort in any trouble large or small
- 1.19, 20 'Yes' to the small / weak too
- 3.5 Our competence comes (not from us) but God
- 4.1, 16 Don't lose heart (feeling weak)
- 5.20 Small church you are Christ's ambassadors
- 6.16 Small church is temple of God
- 7.6 Even one person can encourage
- 8.2 Giving out of poverty (smallness)

## 2 Corinthians 9 - Colossians

### **(Small church) God's grace is sufficient**      2 Corinthians 12.9

'(Notice) the use which the apostle makes of this dispensation; He gloried in his infirmities and took pleasure in them v10. He does not mean here his sinful infirmities (those we have reason to be ashamed of...) but he means his afflictions, necessities, persecutions and distresses for Christ's sake, v10. And the reason of this glory and joy on account of these things was this – They were fair opportunities for Christ to manifest the power and sufficiency of his grace resting on him...(so) that he could say "When I am weak, then I am strong". This is a Christian paradox...when we see ourselves weak in ourselves, then we go out of ourselves to Christ, and are qualified to receive strength from him...and experience...supplies of divine strength and grace.'

---

### **2 Corinthians**

- 9.6 'Whoever sows bountifully' small church
- 10.3-6 Weapons of spiritual warfare are not according to this world
- 11.30 Paul boasts in weakness (smallness)
- 12.9 God's grace is sufficient (for all conditions)
- 13.4 Christ was crucified in weakness

### **Galatians**

- 2.20 'Remember the poor' larger churches
- 3.2 The Holy Spirit given by faith (not size)
- 4.5 (Small church) you are all sons of God
- 6.9 (Small church) do not grow weary

### **Ephesians**

- 1.3f (Small church) blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ
- 1.20, 21 (Small church) Christ is your head – supreme over all opponents
- 3.14f Christ is able to do more than we ask or imagine
- 4.2, 3 Small church make every effort for unity
- 6.10f Small church be strong in the Lord (not yourself)

### **Philippians**

- 1.12 Difficulties can advance the gospel
- 1.27 (Small church) walk worthy
- 4.2,3 Small numbers disagreeing can disrupt the church

### **Colossians**

- 1.3,4 Paul gives thanks for faith, not size
- 1.15f The greatness of Christ your head small church
- 2.15 Satan is disarmed
- 4.5,6 How can small churches be wise towards outsiders?

## 1 Thessalonians - Philemon

### **(Small church) hold high the truth** 1 Timothy 3.15

'The church itself...is the pillar and ground of the truth. Not that the authority of the scriptures depends on that of the church, as the papists pretend, for truth is the pillar and ground of the church; but the church holds forth the scripture and the doctrine of Christ, as the pillar to which a proclamation is affixed holds forth the proclamation...Let us take care to publish and transmit (the truth) safe and uncorrupted unto posterity. When the church ceases to be the pillar and ground of the truth, we may and ought to forsake her; for our regard to the truth should be greater than our regard to the church.'

Notes:

---

### **1 Thessalonians**

- 1.4,5 Even a small church is chosen by God
- 2.2 God can make us bold in the face of opposition
- 4.1 Small churches can please God
- 5.19 -21 Don't put out the Spirit's fire, test everything

### **2 Thessalonians**

- 1.3 Thanks for growth in faith, not numbers first of all.
- 3.3 We all need protection from the evil one.

### **1 Timothy**

- 3.15 A small church is the pillar and ground of truth

### **2 Timothy**

- 1.7 Small church you need not have a spirit of timidity
- 2.1 Strength is in grace not numbers
- 2.21 Cleansed ready for use
- 4.16, 17 The Lord stood with Paul when he was isolated

### **Titus**

- 2.1 Even a small church can teach sound doctrine

### **Philemon**

- v2 Church meets in home
- v6 Small church can be active in sharing the faith

## Hebrews - 1 John

### Noah's 'small church' 1 Peter 3.20

'(The) bodies (of the disobedient) were drowned, and their spirits cast into hell, which is called a prison (v19)...but Noah and his family, who believed and were obedient, were saved in the ark...The way of the most is neither the best, the wisest, nor the safest way to follow: better to follow the eight in the ark than the eight millions drowned by the flood and damned to hell.'

### Noah's 'small church' was protected 2 Peter 2.5

'The number of offenders signifies no more to procure any favour than the quality. If the sin be universal, the punishment shall likewise extend to all. But if there be but few righteous, they shall be preserved.'

---

## Hebrews

- 2.6 'What is man?' – small, yet God takes notice
- 2.17, 18 Christ took on our frailty
- 7.4 Just one man, great in God's plans
- 10.21 Small church you can draw near
- 11.4ff So many individuals used by God
- 12.15 Small church beware the root of bitterness
- 12.22 Small church you have a part in the heavenly realm
- 13.9 Strengthened by grace

## James

- 1.2 Count trial (weakness?) as joy
- 2.1 Beware partiality in welcoming to your church
- 3.4,5 The tongue is small but can do great good or evil

## 1 Peter

- 3.20 Noah's family was a small church which thrived
- 5.5 God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble

## 2. Peter

- 1.3 Small churches have the same resources for godliness as others
- 2.5 Noah's small church was protected

## 1 John

- 2.1 Small church your sins can be dealt with
- 4.12 God is known in a loving church of whatever size

## 2 John- Revelation

### The great friend of the church Revelation 1.5,6

‘(The Lord Jesus Christ) is the great friend of his church and people; one who has done great things for them, and this out of pure disinterested affection; he has loved them, and in pursuance of that everlasting love, he has *First* washed them from their sin in his own blood. Sins leave a stain upon the soul, a stain of guilt and of pollution; nothing can fetch out this stain but the blood of Christ, and rather than it should not be washed out, Christ was willing to shed his own blood, to purchase, pardon and purify them. *Secondly*, he has made them kings and priests to God and his Father...As kings, they overcome the world, mortify sin, govern their own spirits, conquer Satan, have power and prevalency with God in prayer, and shall judge the world. He hath made them priests; given them access to God, enabled them to enter into the holiest, and to offer spiritual and acceptable sacrifices; he has given them an unction suitable to this character; and for these high honours they are bound to ascribe to him dominion and glory for ever.’

---

### 2 John

v1 Small church you are chosen

### 3 John

v5-8 Small churches can help missionaries

### Jude

v16 Small church, beware grumbling

### Revelation

1.4-6 God’s concern for all churches

3.8 Christ commends a weak church

5.6, 10 The weak lamb conquers

7.9 God’s salvation purposes are large

12.13f The small and weak is the devil’s target

18.4 Small church adopt a different culture from the world

19.5 All God’s servants (great and small) praise him

20.12 Great and small will face judgment

21.4 No more tears – small church, God knows your tears

22.7,14 Blessing comes not with size but by obedience and Christ’s blood