

SERMON: AN EBENEZER MOMENT

1st Samuel 7:5-12

(5) And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the Lord. (6) And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the Lord, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the Lord. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh. (7) And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines. (8) And when the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that He will save us out of the hand of the Philistines. (9) And Samuel took a suckling lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the Lord: and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel; and the Lord heard him. (10) And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel. (11) And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Bethcar. (12) Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.

Introduction

The geographic area of our text was the scene of two defeats of the Israelites by the Philistines. This happened in a span of more than twenty years. In the first battle, the Israelites lost four thousand men and in the second battle, thirty thousand were lost. In the second battle, the Ark of the Covenant was taken by the Philistines and the sons of the prophet Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain.

The Israelites in desperation gathered with Samuel at Mizpeh and Samuel prayed on their behalf as the people fasted. While they were there, the Philistines prepared to attack. Samuel offered a burnt offering to God and asked for His deliverance. In response, God sent thunder that created great confusion among the Philistines and enabled the Israelites to overcome them.

After the Israelites chased the fleeing Philistines, Samuel erected a stone monument between Mizpeh and Shen to perpetuate the memory of this significant victory granted to Israel over the Philistines. God had answered his prayer and delivered Israel. He called it Ebenezer, which means “stone or rock of my help.” Ebenezer can also be translated as “my help is a rock.” It served as a lasting commemoration that the battle had been won “only” with the help of the Lord.

An “Ebenezer moment” is when God changes a bad situation around so quickly, until it almost blows your mind. You never thought God would move in such a way or that quickly. Some of us have already experienced one or more Ebenezer moments. Make sure you build your Ebenezer monument after you experience your Ebenezer moment. How do you get to an Ebenezer moment? Let’s look at the steps to reaching an Ebenezer moment.

Exposition

1. Total Dependence on God

(Belief That God Is The Only Deliverer.)

2. Consecration

(Confession and Fasting.)

3. Unity

(Unity of Spirit, Purpose, and Motive.)

(A Threat or Trouble Will Make Reasonable People Unify.)

4. Prayer

(Including Intercession for Others.)

5. Sacrifice

(The Suckling Lamb Was a Type Of Christ.)

(A Lamb That Had Not Been Weened Was the Epitome Of Innocence and Purity.)

(We Don't Sacrifice To Receive Salvation-Christ Did That.)

(Holy Communion Reminds Us of His Saving Sacrifice.)

(We Sacrifice To Worship God And To Serve Others.)

Closing Thoughts

The ancients Greeks had several key words which greatly influenced their culture. One was *sophia*, which is wisdom. Philosophy is the love or pursuit of wisdom. Another key word is *techne*, which literally means "know how." From *techne* we get our English words technology and technician. Simply put a technician has "know how." God knows how to turn a bad situation in to a blessing in the blinking of an eye. God knows how to give us an Ebenezer moment. God knew how to create the universe just by speaking it into existence. He knew how to open the Red Sea and allow the children of Israel to cross over. He knows how to repair your life. He knows how to give you eternal security. God is the greatest technician of all time.

Give God Glory! Give God All The Glory!

End Notes:

1. Please don't get the stone erected by Samuel, called Ebenezer, confused with the site also called Ebenezer in 4:1 and 5:1 of 1st Samuel. At the first Ebenezer the people acted on their own and were defeated and the Ark of the Covenant was captured. At the second Ebenezer they trusted the Lord and were victorious.

2. When the Israelites drew water and poured it out before the Lord, they were denying themselves liquids as a symbolic confession that the Lord's favor was more important to them than life-sustaining water. One might call it a "water fast" or a "water offering." See Jonah 3:7 and 2nd Samuel 23:16.

3. Samuel "judged" the people. The word judge in Hebrew is a blanket term that covers many activities. It refers to giving advice, giving encouragement, correcting unwise behavior, demonstrating leadership, and

settling disputes. On this occasion Samuel was probably giving spiritual encouragement after they had confessed their sins.

4. I cannot resist quoting the second verse of the hymn, *Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing*:

“Here is raise my Ebenezer;
Hither by Thy help I’m come;
And I hope, by Thy good pleasure,
Safely to arrive at home:
Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wand’ring from the fold of God;
He to rescue me from danger,
Interposed His precious blood.”

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