

1 Samuel 7:12-14
My Ebenezer!
WRCob 10.6.24

I have a devotional book entitled
My Utmost for His Highest
By Oswald Chambers.

I keep it at home next to my Bible
On the coffee table where I have my morning coffee.

I read a devotion every day, before I start my day
As a spiritual discipline.

The book means a lot to me
Not only for its contents
But for the context around the book.

You see, when I had my spiritual conversion
And recommitted my life to Jesus
I reconnected with church and Sunday school.

My SS teacher became a mentor to me
And gave me this book.

It symbolizes the start of my new life in Christ.

It is, you might say, my Ebenezer!

Your what? You say!

Yes, my Ebenezer.

Our Scripture Lesson takes us back
To the prophet, Samuel.

Samuel was the first of God prophets
To lead the Israelites
Following the period of the Judges.

For years, the Israelites fought the Philistines
Over control of the land
Along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

The people, in the midst of war, pleaded with Samuel

1 Samuel 7:8b CEB

“Please don’t stop praying to the Lord our God for us, so God will save us from the Philistines’ power!”

In the midst of battle
Samuel cried out to the Lord for rescue
And the Lord delivered them from the Philistines.

In response to their victory
Samuel took a stone and set it up
On the road between Mizpah and Jeshanah

He named the stone, Ebenezer.

In Hebrew
Stone of Help.

He set it there as a reminder of God’s faithfulness.

Maybe, you have a “stone of help”.

Something that reminds you of God’s goodness?

Maybe a special Bible

A piece of jewelry

An item from the beach or woods.

Robert Robinson, the author of our hymn

Come Thou Fount has one.

Here I raise my Ebenezer

Hither by Thy help I’ve come.

Like me, you probably sung those words

Without really knowing its meaning.

Now you do.

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Robinson was dramatically converted

To the Christian faith

Through the preaching of the great evangelist

George Whitefield.

Three years after his conversion

Robinson wrote this hymn for Pentecost Sunday.

He uses imagery from both the OT and the NT:

A fountain of blessing, streams of mercy

Flaming tongues, shepherd’s fold

And the mount of God’s unchanging love.

We are not sure what he uses as his “Stone of Help”

But Robinson raises it to mark his own conversion
And to help keep him in way of Jesus.

In verse 3, He uses another word we don’t often see.

Fetters

Fetters are chains.

But rather than chains holding him captive in sin
The way we often use the metaphor

Robinson uses fetters as “chains of grace”
That binds his wandering heart to God.

As we know from Israel’s history
Even with God’s faithful presence
They would be prone to wander

Robinson later on his life
Wandered from the God he loved

An uncorroborated story of him
Has Robinson leaving the shepherd’s fold.

The story has it that not long before his death
He was riding on a coach
Next to a woman who was singing
His song “Come Thou Fount”.

The woman saw that her singing affected Robinson
And asked him if he was okay.

Robinson's eyes filled with tears and he replied

*“Madam, I am the poor unhappy man who wrote that
hymn many years ago, and I would give a thousand
worlds, if I had them, to enjoy the feelings I had then.”*

I pray that Robinson raised his Ebenezer once more
And that after wandering from the fold of God
He returned to his first love
And had his heart sealed for the courts above.

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God approves of Ebenezers.

God approves of having symbols as reminders
Of God's goodness and faithfulness.

It is not an idol to worship
But a reminder to worship the God we love.

Samuel, in our passage, set a large stone as a reminder
And called it Ebenezer.

On an earlier occasion, when the Hebrew people
Crossed the River Jordan for the first time
Under the leadership of Joshua

The Lord told Joshua to do the same.

Joshua 4:2-3 CEB

²“Pick twelve men from the people, one man per tribe. ³ Command them, ‘Pick up twelve stones from right here in the middle of the Jordan . . . Bring them across with you and put them down in the camp where you are staying tonight.’”

Joshua 4:6-7 CEB

⁶“This will be a symbol among you. In the future your children may ask, ‘What do these stones mean to you?’ ⁷ Then you will tell them . . . These stones will be an enduring memorial for the Israelites.”

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Centuries later, Jesus, himself, used symbols
So that we might not forget him.

In John 13:1-17, He took a towel and basin
And washed his disciples’ feet



He did it to symbolize his own humility and willingness
To take on a servant’s role

John 13:14 CEB

14 If I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you too must wash each other's feet.

The basin and towel are our Ebenezers

A reminder to live to simply, peacefully and together.

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To further the need to remind us of God love

Jesus gave us communion

A way to memorialize his love and sacrifice.

1 Corinthians 11:24b, 26 NRSV

24b "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.



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I'm thinking the greatest Ebenezer

We have of God's grace and goodness

Is the cross on which Jesus died.



The meaning of which is so aptly summarized by Jesus

“For God so loved the world”

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Along with the aforementioned Ebenezers
What items or symbols do you have
That are Ebenezers to you?

I mentioned my devotional book.

I also keep my great, great grandfather’s Bible
As a reminder of my own family’s devotion
To the cause of Christianity

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I’m also reminded of the story Judy and Susan told me
Of their cousin who was unaccounted for
The night of the flood in Taylor’s Valley.

She was found in a room of her house
That had been torn from its foundation
And swept away.

Maybe she picked up something from inside the house
To remind her of God's deliverance.

Or her husband who clung to a tree for 3 hours
While the raging flood waters
Sought to pull him from his safety.

I'm sure that particular tree
Will become an Ebenezer for him.

And so, let us all raise our Ebenezers
That point toward our deliverance
By the God who loved us and loves us still.