



Tower of Strength

**“The name of the Lord is a strong tower
The righteous runs into it and is safe.”**

—Proverbs 18:10

Here I Raise My Ebenezer

—Part Two—

Last week we read about the “stone of help” that Samuel erected to commemorate the Israelite victory over the Philistines, saying, “thus far the Lord has helped us.”

I think it is worthwhile to do the same thing, to raise our Ebenezer. To meditate upon the ways the Lord helps us. To think about things in which, so far, God has proven reliable.

I Have Never, Ever Gone Hungry

Jesus said in Matt. 6:31–33, “Do not be anxious then, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘With what shall we clothe ourselves?’... Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

There have been tough and scary times in our married lives. Especially at the beginning, when we made the decision to set aside a normal career and preach the gospel, we were not at all sure how we were going to make it. There were many days when we had to eat whatever was left in the cupboards until a new month rolled around.

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And yet, somehow, God has always provided. We have never once skipped a meal or gone hungry. Even in the worst moments, something would happen that would supply what we needed to get by.

Here I raise my Ebenezer, on the fact that so far I have never gone hungry, and that God takes care of those who focus on His work!

God Always Has My Best Interests in Mind, Even in Difficulties

The presence of suffering and obstacles give many people reason to doubt the love of God. Why am I sick? Why am I poor? Why haven't I found a spouse yet? But Scripture says, "all discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness" (Heb. 12:11). And, "God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

Here I raise my Ebenezer, on the realization that I can trust God completely. If I just wait a while and see what He is doing, He never lets me down!

The Word of God Has Never Failed

Skeptics and atheists assault the word of God daily. We hear of so-called contradictions in the gospels. We hear how the authors of the gospels were really people making it up 400 years later, rather than the eyewitnesses they claimed to be. We hear people accuse the Bible of being outdated, the product of an ancient society and completely unable to answer to the needs of modern people. The History Channel runs specials on how the body of Jesus has been located, and the Discovery Channel runs specials on how the ten plagues upon Egypt can be explained by natural means.

Sometimes, these rumors are challenging. They can be very convincing to those who do not investigate those claims. But every time I've heard something that has given me pause and concern, and I have looked deeper into the actual claim, I have discovered that the Bible

weathers the assault and emerges victorious. Many other so-called revelations are complete frauds—the Book of Mormon, the writings of Mary Baker Eddy, etc. But the Bible’s claim to be the divine word of God has been proven firm and true each and every time. The evidences both external and internal are very solid.

Here I raise my Ebenezer, on the fact that I have never seen a successful challenge to the inspiration of the Bible!

When I Plant the Seed, God Gives the Increase

Sometimes we go several months in between baptisms. I wonder what the problem is; then, I quickly remember, the problem is likely me! In 1 Cor. 3:6, Paul said, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.” When God’s messengers spread the seed of the gospel, it finds places to grow! It’s amazing—every time we as a congregation speak up, invite friends, and have in-home Bible studies, people are baptized into Christ. When we don’t, they aren’t. Clearly, if we are willing to do our part, God is willing to do His.

Here I raise my Ebenezer, on the power of God’s word for salvation, when it is faithfully communicated!

He Always Helps Me Resist Satan, If I Want To

God promises in 1 Cor. 10:13, “God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.”

Now, I might close my eyes to the “way of escape” which might have been earlier in the temptation. I could have said “No” at many, many different junctures before puffing on the lighted joint, or before disrobing in the backseat of a car. I have never found myself in a situation where God forced me to sin. The escape hatch was always there. The blame is always squarely with me.

Here I raise my Ebenezer, on the faithfulness of God in times of temptation! Satan is tough, but God is much tougher, if I will just listen to His will.

When I Repent, God Grants Forgiveness and Mercy

Let's be clear about two things. One, God does not want me to sin. Two, I am going to sin. "Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be!" (Rom. 6:1). And yet, when I find myself on the losing end of temptation, and I give in to sin, I know that God wants me back, and will help me up out of my shame. All it takes is repentance and confession. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Here I raise my Ebenezer, on the assurance that my Father wants me to live with Him eternally, and is willing to forgive my sin every time I sincerely return to Him. He has never withheld mercy from the penitent.

Prayer is Powerful

James 5:16 says "the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much."

Here I raise my Ebenezer, that I have seen prayer move some pretty big mountains! Prayer has healed the sick, comforted the bereaved, removed obstacles, opened up job opportunities, broken the ships of the immoral, provided future spouses, opened wombs to bear children, protected the saints from harm, and given hope to the hopeless. Knowing its great power, we should learn to communicate our needs to our heavenly Father.

—*John Guzzetta*

Quote of the Week:

"Because of sin, man has taken,
The deity out of religion
The supernatural out of Christianity
The authority out of the Bible,
God out of education,
Morality and virtue out of literature,
Beauty and truth out of art,
Ethics out of business,
Fidelity out of marriage."

—*author unknown*