

The Stone of Remembrance

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Date: 05 February 2023

[0 : 0 0] We'll begin our worship now by singing to God's praise. We're singing in Psalm 118 at verse 20. Psalm 118 at verse 20, the tune is Warwick. Psalm we're so familiar with maybe at communion times when we sing it. This is the gate of God by it, the just shall enter in. Thee will I praise, for thou me heardst and hast my safety been. We'll sing from verse 20 down to the end of the psalm to God's praise.

Amen. Thee will I praise, for thou me heardst and hast my safety be.

That stone is made at cornerstone, which shinders in his eyes.

This is the doing of the Lord, and what has in our eyes.

This is the day, O made in it, will joy triumphantly.

[1 : 5 0] Sing now, I pray thee, Lord, I pray, send thou prosperity.

Blessed is he in God's great name, that command us to save.

We from blood, which to the Lord, work day to bless it, are.

And what is the Lord due unto us, and make light to our eyes?

I pray thee unto thee, O Lord, work day to our hearts, with course the sacrifice.

[3 : 1 2] Thy heart, my God, I'll be exiled. My Lord, I will be praised.

Give thanks to God, for he is good. His mercy lasts always.

Let's come to God in prayer. Let us pray. Our Father in heaven, as we come to worship you, we thank you for the promise that you delight to hear our singing of praise.

You delight to hear your people offering a prayer to you, and you delight in worship. And we pray, Lord, that we would delight in coming to you as well. That we would rejoice that you are a God who hears and listens to all our prayers, from the youngest to the oldest here.

That you hear what we offer up to you in all our worship. And we thank you that even as we come in prayer, it doesn't have to be with big words or long prayers.

[4 : 3 2] But we can just come offering up just words of thanks to you, words asking for help from you, words asking for help for others.

And so much of our prayer, Lord, is that you will do us good. That you will help us to know Jesus and the joy that he gives. That you will help this world in which we live to know how precious a saviour you are and the hope that you are able to give in the midst of all that goes on.

We thank you that the light of your word, your truth, shines in around us and even through us. And so we pray, Lord, your blessing on us today.

Upon all that we hear and all that we do, may you be with us and guide us and keep us. We pray especially for our young ones as they will go out shortly to the Sunday school, the creche and the tweenies.

We pray your blessing on them. Encourage them together around your word as well and all of us together. So hear all our prayers and accept our worship of you this day and pardon our sins as we ask it all in Jesus' name.

[5 : 39] Amen. Well, it's good to see you today and see so many young ones here today scattered all over. Sometimes it's hard to find where you are because everyone's sitting in different places.

Well, it's good to see you and I want to ask you a question this morning. Does anybody here have a pet at home? Put your hand up if you've got a pet at home, yeah? A few hands going up around the place.

All right. Quite a few people have pets, yeah? Maybe we have pets, different kinds of pets. Anybody got a pet snake? No? Thank goodness, isn't it?

No, you wouldn't want a pet snake, would you? Some people do, though. Most people, maybe you have a dog or a cat or a hamster or something like that. And when you get a pet, what's one of the first things you do?

When you maybe get a pet dog, what's the first thing you do? Do you just call it dog or doggy? No, you called a name, don't you? Very often you give a pet a name.

[6 : 38] So when your pet hears you calling that name, it might come running back to you. Especially for dogs. We've got a dog, he's called Benji. And so if you shout Benji, you hope that he's going to come running back to you.

Now, maybe this seems like a strange question. Does anybody have a pet stone? It's not a pet, is it? You don't have a stone that's a pet, do you?

Does anybody have a pet stone? No? It seems quite strange maybe to the idea of having a pet stone. But perhaps you've got stones at home. Maybe you've been to the beach one day.

Do you like collecting stones at the beach? Maybe you see a nice colored stone and you take it home with you. Maybe you've been out walking on the moor and you see another kind of stone lying there and you think to yourself, that would be pretty at home.

So you take it home with you. And sometimes people can collect a lot of stones in different places. But do you ever give a stone a name? Maybe not.

[7 : 42] But in our Bible story today we're going to be looking at, we're going to be thinking about someone who gave a stone a special name. A man called Samuel had this special big stone that he called Ebenezer.

That's a funny name, isn't it? Ebenezer. Now, why do you think he called the stone Ebenezer? Seems a funny name to us, doesn't it? But to Samuel and to God's people it meant something really special.

They weren't calling this stone Ebenezer so that the stone would hear them. They were calling this stone Ebenezer because it reminded them of something special.

Because the name Ebenezer means, till now God has helped. And what they were doing was they had this stone that they would look to and they would see it and it would remind them.

Just like maybe a stone would remind you of a beach you've been to or something like that. This stone reminded the people of what God had done for them. And they were able to say, till now the Lord has helped us.

[8 : 48] So they weren't calling the stone a name as a pet. They weren't calling the stone so they could shout to the stone Ebenezer. They were calling it Ebenezer so they would remind them to call on someone else.

To call on God. And to call on God giving thanks to him and rejoicing in him that he is the one who is able to help. And today we don't have a stone called Ebenezer.

We have another stone described in the Bible as a stone, a rock. He's the Lord Jesus Christ. And we are able to call on him for help. And to say that even till now he has helped us and he always will as we put our trust in him.

So we think of the Ebenezer stone today. The stone that reminds us that till now the Lord has helped us. Well, we'll say the Lord's prayer together.

Now let's pray. Amen. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

[9 : 55] Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen. Amen. Well, we'll sing again to God's praise this time in Psalm 130 in the Scottish Psalter.

Psalm 130. We're going to sing the whole of this psalm. The tune is martyrdom. And this is a psalm that reminds us, just as we were saying there, that we can call on the Lord and that he hears us and is able to help us.

Lord, from the depths to thee I cried. My voice, Lord, do thou hear. And to my supplication's voice give an attentive ear. We'll sing the whole of this psalm to God's praise.

Lord, from the depths to thee I cried.

[11 : 00] My voice, Lord, do thou hear. And to my supplication's voice give an attentive ear.

Lord, you shall sigh if thou, O Lord, should smart iniquity.

But yet with thee forgive me. Forbiveness is the fear of the mayest need.

I wait for God, my soul of grace. My hope is in his word.

Lord, I may not for more remorse. My soul of grace.

[12 : 31] My soul of grace. My soul of grace. For the Lord. I say, Lord, I may not for more remorse.

My soul of grace. For the Lord. I say, Lord, I may not for more remorse. For the Lord. I may not for more remorse.

Let Israel open the door, for with him ask his feet.

And then Jesus' rejection, his severed heart, with him, And from all his liberties, he Israel shall redeem.

Amen.

[14 : 20] And so they decided eventually to return the ark back to God's people.

But even as it came back to God's people, as it returned to Israel, as you see in chapter 6, the people of God didn't really know what to do with it either. They had lost their focus of it.

They rejoiced in its return, but they didn't really know what to do with it. And it was almost left for this period of time. But then Samuel comes onto the scene in chapter 7.

And that's what we're going to focus on this morning. But we'll take up our reading at verse 20 of chapter 6. Then the men of Beth Shemesh said, So they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath-Jerim, saying, The Philistines have returned the ark of the Lord.

Come down and take it up to you. And the men of Kiriath-Jerim came and took up the ark of the Lord and brought it to the house of Abinadab on the hill.

[15 : 40] And they consecrated his son, Eliezer, to have charge of the ark of the Lord. From the day that the ark was lodged at Kiriath-Jerim, a long time passed, some twenty years.

And all of the house of Israel lamented after the Lord. And Samuel said to all the house of Israel, If you are returning to the Lord with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtoreth from among you, and direct your heart to the Lord, and serve him only.

And he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. So the people of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtoreth, and they served the Lord only. Then Samuel said, Gather all Israel at Mishpah, and I will pray to the Lord for you.

So they gathered at Mishpah 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 people of Israel at Mishpah. Now when the Philistines heard that the people of Israel had gathered at Mishpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel.

[16 : 56] And when the people of Israel heard of it, they were afraid of the Philistines. And the people of Israel said to Samuel, Do not cease to cry out to the Lord our God for us, that he may save us from the hand of the Philistines.

So Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the Lord. And Samuel cried out to the Lord for Israel, and the Lord answered him.

As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines threw near to attack Israel. But the Lord thundered with a mighty sound that day against the Philistines, and threw them into confusion.

And they were routed before Israel. And the men of Israel went out from Mishpah, and pursued the Philistines, and struck them as far as below Beth-kar.

Then Samuel took a stone, and set it up between Mishpah and Shen, and called its name Ebenezer. For he said, Till now the Lord has helped us.

[18 : 01] So the Philistines were subdued, and did not again enter the territory of Israel. And the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. The cities that the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel from Ekron to Gath.

And Israel delivered their territory from the hand of the Philistines. There was peace also between Israel and the Amorites. Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.

And he went on a circuit year by year to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mishpah. And he judged Israel in all these places. Then he would return to Ramah, for his home was there.

And there also he judged Israel. And he built there an altar to the Lord. Amen. And may God bless that word to us. We'll again come to God in prayer.

Let us pray. Our Father in heaven, we continue to worship your name and praise you that you are the God who has spoken to us.

[19 : 05] And you continue to speak to us through your word. We thank you for the way we are reminded there of how Samuel brought your word to your people so long ago.

A word that they had maybe become disinterested in or didn't know what to do with. But yet a word that awoken them from their slumber and brought them to recognize that they had sinned against you.

And it awoke them to see their need of repentance and turning to you and the blessings that come from that. And we pray that as your word is proclaimed today far and wide throughout our land and throughout the world, that there will be a word that is powerful to many to awaken and to bring many people to see that we have sinned against God, but yet to see too the mercy that is found in Christ Jesus.

And we pray, Lord, that you will turn us in repentance to you. For as we confess our sins, as we have sung together in that wonderful psalm, that you are the one who is able to forgive our sins.

And so we pray, Lord, that you will help us to put our hope in the Lord. So may you bless us together here and remembering those tuning in online as well and those who will tune in maybe even in days and weeks coming, Lord.

[20 : 29] We pray for your word to be blessed to us and for you to be in the midst of us as we come to worship and praise your name. We thank you that you alone are worthy of our praise, that we are people just as of old who so often make idols, who we worship in different ways, the things that come between us and you so easily.

And just as of old, Lord, as Samuel warned to put away, so help us to put away our own idols today, that we'll be able to worship you aright, that we'll be able to come seeking, Lord, that you will redeem us as your people, that you will rejoice over us as your people, and that we will delight in you as the God of our hope, the God of our salvation.

And we do remember, Lord, all going on within our congregation and within our communities at this time as well. We thank you, Lord, for the work of the gospel as it goes on.

We thank you that your gospel is powerful and mighty to save. We thank you for the way it works in people's lives, the way it reaches out, even when we maybe feel that there is nothing happening.

We thank you, Lord, that you have power over all through your mighty spirit. And we pray, Lord, for a day of your refreshing over us, a day of your blessing with us, Lord, as a people, a day where you would see young and old coming to rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[22 : 02] And as we anticipate, Lord, and look forward to, God willing, our communion season, we pray, Lord, your blessing on all of us as we prepare for it and upon the preachers as they prepare to minister as well, not just with ourselves here, but throughout our town and indeed throughout our islands over these coming weeks, that it will be a time of refreshing and nourishing of our souls, a time of building up your people, a time of people rejoicing and sinners being saved.

May it be a time of real blessing as we look forward, not for our own glory, but for yours. Be with us, Lord, in it all. And may your name be praised.

Remember, too, the induction taking place, God willing, on Friday. Again, we commit around all my cloud to your care at this time. And we pray, Lord, for your blessing on him as his new ministry will begin.

Remember, Reverend Paul Murray, as he will lead the service on Friday evening. Be with him. Uphold him in his preparation and on the evening as well. And may we see many people coming to rejoice with those in North Tolstain.

Give thanks for your goodness in this way and seeking your blessing upon the ministry of your word there. Remember our islands, Lord, as a whole.

[23 : 21] We know, Lord, it's been such a sad time for so many, so many funerals taking place over these last few weeks. And we just pray for your comfort.

We pray for your blessing. We pray for your peace to be upon us. It's a peace that we cannot understand. It's a peace, as the word says, that passes understanding.

But we thank you for it. And how in times of need, when you provided, we are so refreshed refreshed and encouraged, even in the sorrow of our hearts, that we know that you are God and that you are with us.

So we pray, Lord, that people will be able to call upon your name together as a people, that we will hear your voice speaking to us, that there will be a voice that makes us turn to you and seek your face.

Remember our land, O Lord, we pray as we continue to pray for our nation as a whole and all that goes on around us. We hear so much sorrow and sadness in so many places.

[24 : 22] And as we've heard so often, Lord, that we are in a day of darkness, we thank you for the light of the gospel and we pray that it will shine brightly throughout our land and throughout the world, that your word will go out with power from those leading over us in positions of power and authority right down through every people and place of our land that your voice will be heard and that your name will be praised.

Keep us, O Lord, looking to you and help us to pray. Help us to pray even in all our doubts and fears and worries that we will remember that you are God and there is no other.

So hear us now and continue with us in our worship of you and may your name be praised and glorified in our midst and in our hearts. Hear our prayers and forgive our sins as we ask it all in Jesus' name.

Amen. So again, sing to God's praise before we turn back to look at this passage in Psalm 138. Psalm 138.

We sing verse 1 to verse 5. Thee will I praise with all my heart. I will sing praise to Thee before the gods and worship will toward Thy sanctuary.

[25 : 41] We'll sing from verse 1 to 5 to God's praise. And the tune is mantras. Amen. Thee will I face with all my heart.

I will sing praise to Thee before the gods and worship will to Lord Thy Son o cop 107.

Lord Thine and worship ■ill Oldalition divine, O thy great name above.

Thou didst me a solid dirty when I to thee did cry.

I've learned my painting so will spread. Dissent and inwardly.

[27 : 30] All kings upon the earth that I shall give thee praise, O Lord.

When a state groan, thy heart shall hear thy true unfaithful word.

Yea, in the righteous ways of God, with madness they shall sing, for grace and glory of the Lord, will not forever reign.

We can turn back now to a reading in 1 Samuel chapter 7. We read again at verse 12. 1 Samuel chapter 7 at verse 12.

Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen and called its name Ebenezer. For he said, till now the Lord has helped us.

[29 : 11] We're very familiar living where we do and seeing stones and rocks all around us. It doesn't matter how often you go through the garden and weed out all the stones.

There seems to be always more that will come back. And as you go out and about, everywhere you look around yourselves, you see stones and rocks of different shapes and sizes. But as you look around, there's sometimes particular places where you see stones that stand out for a reason.

It may be a pile of stones placed in the shape of a cairn. And you wonder to yourself, what does that mean? Why is it there? It may be as you're passing through villages, you see stones that have been shaped and formed to form a memorial.

Like the war memorials we see throughout our islands. And you see them and you ask yourself, or maybe you're asked by somebody else, why are they there and what do they mean?

You also see standing stones and different kinds of stones around the island that seem to have been placed there maybe a very long time ago. And people again ask, you know, where do they come from?

[30 : 24] What do they mean? What do they represent? So we're surrounded by these kinds of things. And they make us ask questions. And perhaps that's the very reason why they've been put there in the past.

They're significant for a reason because they bring us back to ask these questions. What does it mean? What does it stand for? And they stand as a reminder to something.

Like war memorials keep reminding us day by day and year by year of the great sacrifices that were made for our freedom. And very often as you're reading through the Bible, you find the different parts, especially in the Old Testament.

You find times when the people set out piles of stones or certain kinds of stones. And they placed them there for a reason. And the reason was that as people would see them, they would ask, what do they mean?

What does that stand for? And here in Samuel, 1 Samuel chapter 7, we have one of these occasions when a stone is placed there as a marker.

[31 : 30] So people, when they ask, what does this stone mean? We'll have an answer. Samuel, it says in verse 12, took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shennan and called its name Ebenezer.

For he said, till now the Lord has helped us. It will be a reminder to the people continually that the Lord has helped them. And this is the last time you see Samuel mentioned in this book is way back in chapter 3.

When you see Samuel called by God as a young man. Samuel, it's an amazing story to read through his life story. How he came to be dedicated to the Lord by his mother.

To serve the Lord all his days. But in chapter 3, you then jump forward to chapter 7. Now in chapter 3, it's talking about how the word was blessed through Samuel.

It says in the end of chapter 3, verse 21, The Lord appeared again at Shiloh, for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the Lord.

[32 : 39] The word of the Lord was blessed through Samuel. But in the intervening time, and it seems that a number of years have passed by between chapter 3 and chapter 7, You think to yourself, well, if they had the word of God, things would have gone well for them.

They would have carried on and been blessed by God. But that's not what happened. The Ark of the Covenant was taken away by the Philistines. The people felt hopeless.

They felt as if almost God had left them. And there's a sense of dismay and despair. And what's interesting is when you see at the beginning of chapter 4, There's two verses in chapter 4 that stand out for us.

Verse 1 says, The word of Samuel came to all Israel. There's the end of Samuel speaking. Now Israel went out to battle against the Philistines. They encamped at Ebenezer.

And the Philistines encamped at Aphek. And so it goes on, the Philistines conquered them. But then when you go forward to verse 21 in chapter 4, And this is after the Ark's been captured.

[33 : 53] Eli has passed away, the one who raised Samuel, who looked after him. His two sons had disobeyed him. They had been unfaithful towards God and his word.

And one of the sons, Phinehas' wife, gave birth. And look at what she called the name of the child. In verse 21, She named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory has departed.

It was significant that that's what he was named. The glory of God had departed. The Ark of the Covenant had been taken away. And yet here now we begin to see a turning point.

The glory had departed because the Ark was lost. But now there was a return. But even then they didn't know what to do with it.

Now when we think of our own situation today, And you think of the glory of God that was enjoyed throughout our land. And the blessings that were enjoyed from God's hand throughout our land.

[34 : 59] It's almost like we could say Ichabod today. The glory of God has departed. Instead of losing the Ark in battle, We're almost in danger of giving away the presence of God And the blessing of God through casting him out of our society.

Casting him away from ourselves as a people. But in the midst of that, there's still this hope. And that's the hope that Samuel calls the people of Israel to here in chapter 7.

And the call that we have to ourselves as well. There's a warning for us here when you come into chapter 7. And Samuel says in verse 3, There's a call to return to the Lord.

Because when you see in verse 2 of this chapter, It says that all Israel lamented after the Lord. There was a sense of, I'm sorry, but I don't know what to do with this sorrow.

There's a sense of not knowing how to go about their lives. They know they've turned against God. They know they've offended God. But they don't know where to go with it.

[36 : 28] For 20 years, there's been this lamenting. Until Samuel comes with this word. And for ourselves today, think of, Even looking back in your own life, 20 years.

What has been your experience of the Lord through those 20 years? Have you been lamenting, just like the children of Israel here? Maybe feeling sorry about the things that you're doing, But not knowing what to do about it.

Have you been maybe just ignoring God for 20 years? Or have you known the blessing of God's transforming power in these 20 years? There's so much that we can look back over in our lives and think, Can we truly be thankful to God for what He has done for us?

Are we just lamenting or are we truly repenting? There's a huge difference. And that's what Samuel comes to call the people to.

And our nation could so easily become a nation that sees stone buildings, Church buildings throughout our land emptied, Standing empty in many different parts of our nation.

[37 : 42] And people may be passing by and saying, What do they mean? What was that place once used for? Why is it empty now? And what explanation would we give?

Or would we long to see our nation a place where these places are full With people coming to seek the Lord? Well here, Samuel enters the people once again.

And he comes with a word. And the word is mercy. The word is mercy. And that's the word we want to think about together today especially.

The mercy that we see that Samuel speaks of. And the first thing we notice about this is, Samuel highlights the need of God's mercy. The need of God's mercy.

Back in chapter 3 when Samuel appeared, It was a period of grace for God's people. It was a period of God's favor upon them.

[38 : 44] And Samuel was in the midst with God's word to the people. And it was blessed. But they had gone away. And as someone puts it in one of the commentaries, He says, The reappearing of Samuel here in chapter 7 Is a reappearing of fresh grace from God.

The people who have been lost and despondent And not knowing what to do with the presence of God in their midst, Samuel comes to give them direction.

Samuel comes to show them their need of God's mercy. So that's what he says in verse 3. The people have been lamenting after the Lord, But not repenting.

And Samuel comes and calls to them and says, If all the house of Israel, If you are returning to the Lord your God with all your heart, Then put away the foreign gods and the asterisk from among you And direct your hearts to the Lord and serve Him only.

This is a call to repentance. It's a turning away from the idols that they have And turning back to God. And that's the heart of repentance.

[40 : 06] Turning from one thing to another. The Shorter Catechism puts it like this, Repentance unto life is a saving grace, Whereby a sinner, Out of a true sense of his sin And apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, Doth with grief and hatred Turn from, Of his sin, Turn from it unto God With full purpose of And endeavour after new obedience.

It's about turning with hatred of sin, Turning to God. And that's the call That Samuel is giving to the people here. Turn from your idols, Turn from your false gods, And come to God.

Pour out, Direct your heart To the Lord And serve Him only. And He will deliver you Out of the hands Of the Philistines.

Lamenting for 20 years Is not hating sin And turning from it. Repenting Is turning from sin And looking to God.

And that's the call That Samuel's putting out To the people here. Confess your sins Towards God. And it's not easy.

[41 : 29] It's not easy for them. It's not easy for us. It's not an easy thing to do. It doesn't come naturally To come and bow the knee Before God. Because we think we can manage By ourselves.

But a realization of sin Is a realization of Who God is. And what our sin Deserves. And Samuel here Is calling them To see the mercy of God That is on offer.

So the first step Is so often As for many people To acknowledge Our sin. To acknowledge Where we are going wrong. To acknowledge That we need help.

There is a man By the name of Kenny Sampson. Some of you If you're interested In football You may be familiar With him. He used to play For England. He played in the 1986 World Cup.

He used to play For Arsenal. But for many years He was struggling With an addiction. An addiction To alcohol. And there was A program on about him Just a few years ago.

[42 : 38] And there were So many people Just wanting to help him Trying to love him Trying to be there For him Trying to show him That he needed help. But he just Wouldn't listen.

And it was such A sad program. And at the end of it The interviewer Speaking to him Telling him You know you've got Such a beautiful family You've got so many Friends around you You stand To lose it all If you don't stop.

And his response was I won't stop drinking. It was such a sad picture. He wouldn't stop.

But just a couple of weeks ago I was reading about him. And he's been sober For two years. People didn't give up. People continued To look out for him And tried to help him.

And eventually He acknowledged He needed help. And he got the help He needed. Now Samuel here Is addressing a problem.

[43 : 42] A problem Not just like an addiction Like Kenny Samson had But a problem That we all have. A problem that we all Have to acknowledge. That we are all sinners In need of mercy From the Lord Jesus Christ.

To put away The idols. To put away The things That we are addicted to That keep us From having a right Relationship with God And turning to him Instead.

So Samuel comes With this fresh grace This call To realize Their need of mercy From God. But then it goes on And what we see is Samuel speaks then Of an experience Of God's mercy.

And how they experience God's mercy In such a wonderful way. And you see that In verse 5 Through to verse 11. Samuel gathers The people together.

Look at verse 5. It says Then Samuel said Gather all Israel At Mizpah And I will pray To the Lord For you. All the people Recognizing That they have Fallen short of God That they need God's mercy They come together With Samuel At Mizpah And he says I will pray For you.

[45 : 04] And look at the response Of the people In verse 6. So they gathered At Mizpah And drew water And poured it out Before the Lord And fasted on that day And said there We have sinned Against the Lord.

There is this Acknowledgement. There is this Realization We have sinned Against God. But Samuel Comes with a plea For the people.

He is praying For them. And the plea For help In the midst Of the plea For help The wonder is That God Is there to help.

It's not always An easy path As you see As it goes on here. And sometimes It's a path That leads us To be afraid And wonder Just what way To go And what to do.

And you see that In verse 7. They acknowledge They have sinned Against God. But And Samuel Judged the people There. That means he brought The word of God To them.

[46 : 05] But then in verse 7. Now when the Philistines Heard that the people Of Israel Had gathered at Mizpah The lords of the Philistines Went up against Israel. And when the people Of Israel Heard of it They were afraid Of the Philistines.

What's their response When they hear? They're afraid. And so often When we come Before God And acknowledge Our sin It leaves us Afraid.

And another thing It does Is just like When the people Of Israel Here gathered And the Philistines Heard about it And they gathered To come And fight Against them again When we show An interest In the things Of God When we begin To realize And acknowledge Our sin And say before God We have sinned Against you There is an enemy That will attack As well The devil When he sees Someone interested In the things Of God He will come And fight That battle To take you back He doesn't want To lose any To God And so the battle Will go on And the struggle Will be real And it may leave You a sense Of fear Afraid What am I doing How can I go on In my own strength How can I keep going I'm not up For this battle And that's why It's so important To realize It's so important The experience Of God's mercy That the children Of Israel Enjoyed here They cried

To Samuel And said Do not cease To cry out To the Lord Your God For us And so Samuel Continued To pray He offered up A sacrifice And as he did What happened God came To the people And you He showed Them mercy The Philistines Threw near It says In verse 10 But the Lord Thundered With a mighty Sound That day The Lord Is greater The Lord Is mighty To save The Lord Is on your side As you put Your trust In him You will Be afraid We will all Be afraid At times We will all Struggle At times But to remember The Lord Is on our side The Lord Is with you And that is what The people Were again Realizing here And that is what

We are to realize For ourselves As well The Lord Revived his people And the Lord Revived his protection Over them Samuel They call To him To help Them We don't Call On Samuel Today But who do We call On In the midst Of all Our doubts And fears And anxieties Of going Forward For the Lord Who do we Call on We look To Jesus We call On him We call On him Who gave Himself For us We come In prayer To him And he Hears Your prayer And he Is able To thunder Out Just like The Lord Did here He is able To protect You He is able To keep You He will Shield You He will Never Leave You That is The great

[49 : 35] Promise We will All have These doubts All have These anxieties But we can Take them To the Lord In prayer If you have Ever read The book Pilgrim's Progress This will Be familiar To you If you have Never read It do Read it Because it Speaks so Much of The Christian's Journey Of carrying This great Weight Of sin On our Back And the Way The journey Takes so Many twists And turns And there is One point In the book Where John Bunyan wrote Speaking of Christian And a Friend he has With him Hopeful And once Again They have Taken a Deed Through Of the Right Path And they have Ended up In a Place Called Doubting Castle And everything In this Book It just Relates To so Many Experiences We have On the Christian Journey And Christians Will have Doubts There will Be times When we are

Afflicted With doubts But what Do we do In these Times Well In this Book Christian And hopeful Are in Doubting Castle And the Owner of The castle Is called Giant Despair And his Wife Is a Scary Woman Too And they're Locked up Here And they're Suffering There They're being Tortured There And then They turn To God In prayer And as They're Praying Christian Remembers That he was Given a Key Before On this Journey And he Has this Key in His Pocket And this Key is Called Promise And what The key Does Is it Unlocks Every door For them To get Out of Doubting Castle Back Onto The right Path Every way Is opened Up And it's Just a Reminder To us That the Lord has Given us Promise Promise That he Will help

Promise That he Will be With us And so As we Go through Life As we Go on This Journey And as We take Maybe the Wrong turns At different Places And as We suffer In different Ways Take it To the Lord In prayer And remember All his Promises And so You have This Call To Mercy You have This Experience Of Mercy Then thirdly And finally We have This Remembrance Of Mercy How Forgetful We are As a People How often And how Easily We forget So much We forget The Lord's Marshes We forget What the Lord has Done for Us How he's Helped Us So many Different Times And yet Here we See Samuel Put a Reminder Down For the People He took A stone In verse 12 And set It up Between Misbah And called His name Ebenezer For he Said

Till now The Lord Has Held Us Hither To The Lord Has Held Us What a Wonderful Remembrance They have Hither To The Lord Has Held Us It stands There before Them as a Constant Reminder The Lord Has Blessed Us The Lord Has Been With Us The Lord Has Been Faithful To Us Help Us To Be Faithful To Him When They Looked At This Stone They Were Reminded Of Two Things They Are Reminded Of The Way That They Had Forgot God Of How They Disobeyed God Going Back The Stone Is Called Ebenezer You Go Back To Chapter 4 The Very Place That They Disobeyed God Was Called Ebenezer So It's A Reminder To Them They Have Done Wrong Against God But

That Wasn't The Only Reminder You See The Second Reminder Was That God Had Showed Marshy God Had Helped And So This Stone As It Reminded Them Of Their Weakness It Reminded Of Their Strength God Hitherto The Lord Has Helped Us For Ourselves Today Do We Have A Stone Of Remembrance Well we Sang In Psalm 118 And There It Mentions A Stone It Says The Stone The Builders Rejected Has Become The Cornerstone And What Is The Stone That That Psalm Is Speaking About It Reminding Us Of The Stone Who Is Our Help The Lord Jesus Christ A Stone For His People A Stone That

[54 : 37] Is A Rock That Nothing Will Defeat Nothing Will Put Down It Is The Rock Of Salvation The Lord Jesus Christ So Why Are We Looking At This Passage Today Well A Fortnight From Now We Will Gather Just As The People Here Were Reminded Of Their Sin And Of The Mercy Of God So We Will Be Reminded And Remember The Mercy Of God To Us As We Take Communion Together Maybe Now I Hope We Are All Thinking What Does That Mean For Me When We Think Of The People Here Lamenting For Twenty Years They Came To The Point Where They Realized I Have Sinned Against God And Even In All Their Fears And Worries They They They They They Were And That Is The Great Reminder

For Us At The Cross Too As We See The Bread And The Wine They Are Reminders To Us To Remember What The Lord Jesus Christ Has Done For Us Because As We Look To The Cross Just Like The People Were Reminded Of Their Sin Here And The Mercy Of God So As We Look To The Cross We Are Reminded Of Our Sin That Put Our Savior There How Far Short We Fall Of His Glory And What He Had To Do For His People To Bear Our Sins On The Cross It Reminds Us Of Our Sin But More Than That It Reminds Us Of The Mercy Of God That Whoever Believes In Him Will Not Perish But Have Everlasting Life We Have A Remembrance Ourselves

A Remembrance Stone And That Stone Is The Lord Jesus Christ And If You Could Say Today Till Now The Lord Has Helped Us Till Now The Lord Has Helped Me Should You Not Be Coming With All Your Heart To Worship God And To Do This In Remembrance Of Him To Show I Love The Lord Because My Voice And Prayers Heeded Hear The People Here They Were Given This Reminder A Constant Reminder That Would Say To Them Every Time They Saw It Till Now The Lord Has Helped Us And So We Too Will Gather In Remembrance Of What The Lord Has Done And That We Will Be Able To Say With All God's People Hitherto The Lord Has Helped Me And That We Would Acknowledge

That And Bow The Knee Before Him In Worship Not Lamenting Not Just Feeling Sorry For The Way You Wronged God But Repenting Knowing The Need Of His Mercy And Coming Before Him Crying Out For Help Experiencing His Mercy Experiencing His Help In Time Of Doubts And Fears And Times Of Worry Times Of Need And In All Of That Coming To Rejoice In Remembering The God Who Is Faithful And The One Who Has Done All For Us May He Have Mercy On Us As His People And Help Us To Look To Him As The Rock Of Salvation And Put Our Trust In Him Let Us Pray Our Father In Heaven We Do Rejoice In The Gospel And How It Speaks To Us Lord It Reminds Us Of Our Great Need For We Have Sinned And Fall

Short Of The Glory Of God But We Thank You To That It Points Us Towards A Merciful Saviour One Who Has Done All For His People And One Who We Can Call Upon In All Our Times Of Need And So be With Us In All Of These Things And Help Us To Look To You And Find Our Strength In You As We Ask It In Jesus Name Amen We'll conclude Our Worship By Singing To God's Praise In Psalm 54 This Is The Sing Psalms Version On Page 71 We'll Sing From Verse 4 To The End Of The Psalm Consider This God Is My Help The Lord Upholds My Way And Faithfulness Destroy My Foes Their Slander Lord Repay I'll Sacrifice I'll Bring A Sacrifice To You

[59 : 39] A Free Will Offering Because Your Name O Lord Is Good Your Praises I Will Sing We'll Sing From Verse 4 To 7 To God's Praise The Tune is Torwood God To Consider This God Is My Help The Lord Upholds My Way And Faithfulness Destroy My Foes Their Slander Lord Repay Come Bring A Sacrifice To You A Free Will Offer

A Because Your Name O Lord Is Good Near Christmas I Will Sing For You O Lord I Rescued Me From My Distress And All My Eyes Have Looked In Victory Upon My True Health Lord After the benediction I'll go to the door to my left.

Now may grace, mercy and peace from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with us all now and forevermore. Amen.

Amen. Thank you.