

DAY 4

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."¹³ 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.¹⁴ 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.

1 Samuel 7: 12-14

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Isaiah 55: 9

And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.

Ephesians 3: 19-20 (NLT)

In Hebrew, *Ebenezer* means "stone of help". Samuel knew the nation needed to remember this amazing victory not just for a few days, but for generations. This *Ebenezer* would remind the Israelites how the Lord had won the battle for them when they were humble and repentant before Him.

Of course, Israel's story was not over yet. There would be more challenges, dangers and hardship ahead. Hence, Samuel declares "Till now the Lord has helped us." This *Ebenezer* would also remind them to trust God for future help.

Through this mighty intervention, God revealed who He is and what He is able to do to the people of Israel. On Day 2 we reflected on what this victory revealed about God's character. The attributes that flow out from

God's deepest being is mercy and grace! After that victory, no doubt that the Israelites view of God would have changed.

When commenting on Isaiah 55:9, Dane Ortlund says,
"God's ways and thoughts are not our ways and thoughts in that his are thoughts of love and ways of compassion that stretch to a degree beyond our mental horizon." (*Gentle and Lowly*)

In other words, God's ways and thoughts are so different to ours' that it would actually surprise us just how compassionate His heart is. The Hebrew word for "thoughts" refers to plans, intentions and purposes. This means that when we continue to trust in the Lord, the best is yet to come!

God had done a great thing for the Israelites that day, but there was more of His goodness to experience moving forward. As the Israelites kept trusting in the Lord under Samuel leadership, they were protected against the Philistines for a long time (throughout Samuel's lifetime). The cities from Ekron to Gath that the Philistines had taken from them were restored, and Israel freed the surrounding countryside from Philistine control. There was also peace between Israel and the Amorites.

So it is with us. The Lord may have done a great thing (or many great things) to help you up until this point. But His work in your life is not finished yet. As you continue to trust in Him you will discover just how boundless His mercy and compassion is toward you.

We must also recognize the supernatural way in which God saved the Israelites. When we trust in the Lord, nothing is impossible! Both the Israelites and the Philistines heard the thunder, but only the Philistines were thrown into confusion. The successful outcome of that battle can only be credited to God, who is sovereign over His creation.

It was important for the Israelites to remember what that victory revealed to them about who God is and what He can do in order to keep the faith in the days to come. Likewise, every time God has helped us, He has revealed more of who He is and what He can do so that we can continue to have faith in Him. And the most wonderful thing? We have not yet fully experienced just how wide, how long, how high, and how deep His love is for us.

"When sinners and sufferers come to Christ, they person that they find is exceedingly excellent and lovely."

Jonathan Edwards

REFLECTION

What do I learn about God from the passages I have read today?

What is your Ebenezer?

What have you learned about who God is and what He can do from the help you have received from Him up to this point?

What do I learn about people (myself) from these passages?

APPLICATION

What does God want me to do?

Is there something that God is prompting you to do that requires you to step out in faith?

PRAYER

Respond to God's Word by writing your prayer.
