

“A Victory Marker!”

I. **INTRO:**

- A. TY for those who remembered to **fast & pray** 1 day this week for the marriages at CM.
- B. **In 1818, Ignaz Phillip Semmelweis** was born into a world of dying women. The finest hospitals lost 1 out of 6 young mothers to the scourge of “childbed fever.” A doctor’s daily routine began in the **dissecting room** where he performed **autopsies**. From there he made his way to the hospital to **examine expectant mothers** without ever pausing to was his hands. Dr. Semmelweis was the 1st man in history to associate such examinations with the resultant infection and death. His own practice was to **wash with a chlorine solution**, and after **11 years** and the delivery of **8,537 babies**, he **lost only 184 mothers** - about 1 in 50. He spent the vigor of his life lecturing and debating with his colleagues. Once he argued, “Puerperal fever is caused by decomposed material, conveyed to a wound. I have shown how it can be prevented. I have proved all that I have said. But while we talk, talk, talk, gentlemen, women are dying. I am not asking anything world shaking. I am asking you only to **wash**. For God’s sake, **wash your hands**.” But virtually no one believed him. Doctors and midwives had been delivering babies for 1000’s of years without washing, and no outspoken Hungarian was going to change them now! Semmelweis died insane at the age of 47, his wash basins discarded, his colleagues laughing in his face, and the death rattle of a thousand women ringing in his ears.
1. For God’s sake, wash your **hearts!**
- C. **Outline:** Clean up - Look up - Set up!

II. **A VICTORY MARKER!**

- A. **CLEAN UP!** (1-6)
- B. (2) The **ark** had been returned to Israel, **but Israel** had not returned to the Lord.¹
1. The **mere presence** of the ark did not guarantee God’s favor, **rather** it was **submission to the God of the ark** that was essential!
 2. **So Samuel called them to repentance.**
 3. They put away foreign gods, **&** then met at Mizpah to renew their covenant with their Lord.
- C. **Twenty years** - actually it was there 100 years. [arrived 1104bc David took to Jer. 1003bc]
1. So it was there 20 years before Samuel starts his 1st public ministry.

¹ Warren Wiersbe: With The Word; 1 Sam.7.

- D. (3) What great advice for anyone at anytime: **return** to the Lord w/all your heart; **put away**; **prepare** your heart; **serve** Him only...**Result?** And He will **deliver**/save you from the hand of your enemy.
- E. (4) **Baal**(m; god of storm) & **Ashtoreth**(fem; fertility goddess) [1 Kings 18:19 Elijah said, “**send & gather all Israel to me on Mount Carmel, the 450 prophets of Baal, & the 400 prophets of Asherah**”]
1. Samuel was calling for **absolute & undivided** loyalty to the Lord. [any in your life?]
 2. **Interesting:** The pagans **make** their gods; **their gods** do not **make** them.
They **carry** their gods; **their gods** do not **carry** them.
They **protect** their gods; **their gods** do not **protect** them.
They **sacrifice** to their gods; **their gods** do not **sacrifice** to them.
 3. **On the other hand our God**...made us, carries us, & sacrificed Himself for us!
- F. (5) **I will pray for them** - **Read Jer. 15:1**, where Jeremiah preserves the memory of Samuel as **a man of prayer!**
1. **The function of a prophet was 2-fold:** to declare the will of God & to intercede w/God for the people. [so many want to **speak** for God, but what about the **prayer** part?]
- G. (6) The penitence of the people was acted out *symbolically* by the **pouring out of the water**. Remember water was precious in that area.
- H. **LOOK UP!** (7-11)
- I. (7) Temptation would be to prepare for **physical** battle...not **spiritual!**
- J. **Gathered** - The Philistines thought the Israelites were “**gathering**” for war.
1. But Israel was not ready, nor equipped for battle.
 2. Samuel & Gods people used **spiritual** weapons to defeat the enemy.
 3. **Samuel prayed, & God sent the enemy back in confusion.**
 - a) Samuel, **born** in **answer** to prayer; **lived** in **dependence** on prayer!
- K. (10) **Thundered w/a loud thunder** - the 2nd **thunder** is the Heb word (קוֹל). It can be translated both *thunder & voice*. It was often interpreted in those early days as **the direct intervention of the Lord Himself**.
- L. (10,11) God responded with a miracle, causing the Philistine army to **panic & run** at the sound of **thunder** - a sound which the soldiers probably interpreted as the advance of an **angry deity** against them.²

² Shepherd's Notes; 1 & 2 Samuel; pg.15.

M. **SET UP!** (12-17)

N. **Ebenezer** - *stone of help*. **A victory marker!** This large rock became a “*war memorial*” in a special sense - a reminder of Jehovah’s power in battle.

1. **Last Monday**(Memorial Day), the first phase of the *Murrieta Veterans Memorial* was unveiled at our Town Square Park.
 - a) Designer *Suzanne Palmer*, said “*the mission was to create not a war memorial but a veterans' memorial...It became an expression of feelings of **ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances** making an everlasting commitment to our country”.*
2. **Another example** was last night. *Alex & Lori Escorcía* hosted an event in our gym that was basically an **Ebenezer**. **It was** for Erica Edmonson, who was so closed to death a # of times, yet the Lord saw fit to heal her from the H1N1. **It was** to remember what **God** had accomplished through much prayer of her mom & dad(Eddy/Janet), family, friends, churches; through many impossible situations; through all odds stacked against her.
3. **Since the beginning God has sealed special events w/some kind of physical memorial:** He gave **Noah** a **rainbow**; the **passover feast** as a reminder of **Israel’s deliverance** from Egypt; **2 tablets** of stone to remind them of all the **Mosaic Law**; the tabernacle, the ark, the cloud, all visible reminders of God’s ever present help.
 - a) Ps.46:1 **God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.** (Korah)
(1) (lit.) *an abundantly available help in tight places!*
 - b) **Q: Are you in a tight place today?** – Run to Jesus, *not to escape*, **but** to receive **strength** to get back to face your problem or fear.
4. Samuel’s **Ebenezer** was a **memorial**, a **visual testimony** to God’s saving work.
 - a) **It acknowledged God has helped them from the beginning to that very day.**
 - b) Missionary Hudson Taylor had a plaque in his home that read, “**Ebenezer & Jehovah-Jireh**”. *Meaning, Thus far the Lord has helped us & The Lord will see to it.*
(1) **I.e.** God takes care of the **past & the future**, so why worry about the **present**?
(a) God is in control!!!

O. **We too as Christians need to remember God’s benefits; to take a spiritual inventory;** to look back over our lives recognizing **God always came through** no matter how serious the crisis we faced!

1. Through poverty, through wealth, through sickness, through health, at home, abroad, on the land, on the sea, in honor, in dishonor, in perplexity, in joy, in trial, in triumph, in prayer, in temptation, “*thus far the Lord has helped us!*”³

³ Spurgeon: Morning & Evening; Dec.29th.

2. **Picture...**looking down a long line of trees, gaze from end to end.
 - a) Look down the *long aisle* of **your years**; at the **green boughs** of **mercy** overhead; and the strong pillars of lovingkindness and faithfulness which bear up your joys.
3. During times of **doubt & discouragement** Israel could look at that rock & remember God's **character & power**.
 - a) **Family Eben-ezers** - Does your family have physical reminders pointing to times when "*the LORD has helped us*"?
 - (1) Search for ways to pass on to your children(or those in your sphere of influence) a stability which comes from confidence in God's providential care?
 - b) **Work Eben-ezers** - What reminders do you have set up at work to encourage you during times of trouble & doubts?
 - c) **Musical Eben-ezers** - Let the words of the favorite **old hymn** be such a reminder each time we sing it.
 - d) *Joni Eareckson Tada* said, "My **wheelchair** is my Ebenezer. I've raised it up as a memorial to commemorate **God's grace** in my life."
 - (1) Look for memorials, stones of remembrances in **your** life.
 - (a) Perhaps a **ring**; a pair of **crutches**; a **pebble** you picked up during a journey; a **shell** from an important event near the beach...**they can be an anchor** to your soul.

P. (13) **What a day that was!** Samuel accomplished w/**1 prayer** a victory that Samson could not win during the entire 20 years of his leadership!

1. Such is the power of a **dedicated life**, the power of **prayer!**

Q. **Results:** They returned to God; National Revival; Victory over their enemies;

R. **Communion:**

S. **Clean up - Look up - Set up!** [do **Set Up** first!]

1. **Set up** - Set up a memorial in my honor at your dinner table. **Do this in remembrance of Me!**

T. **Song:** lets prepare our hearts; hold elements, we'll share in the bread/cup together.

1. **Clean up - Bread** (from vs.3) [**return to the Lord w/all your heart; put away your foreign gods; prepare your hearts for the Lord**]

- a) **David** said, **Wash me** thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin.
John the Baptist said, **come & wash**(i.e. Be baptized)!
Jesus said, **If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.**
Mom always said, "wash your hands before supper." So let's!

b) Where do you need to **return** from?

Lord, I return this morning from being off track in *this* area _____.

Lord, I return from the stoney path I was on.

Lord, I return from my sin of _____.

Lord, I return from following *MY* way.

c) What **idols** in your life do you need to **put away**?

Lord, I need to put away _____.

Lord, I need to put away my **bad attitude** towards _____.

Lord, I need to put away my **immorality** in this area _____.

d) What **preparations** need to be made in your heart?

Lord, I prepare for **You**.

Lord, I prepare my heart for **Your will** in my life.

Lord, I prepare my heart for **Your blessed interruptions** in my life.

U. Let's eat together! - Song:

1. **Look up** - Cup (vs.9) [do not cease to cry out to the Lord our God]

a) Lord, let this cup be a reminder for me today to *not cease to cry out to You*.

b) Lord, let this cup be a reminder for me to give *Thanks* for all you **have done & will continue to do** in the future.

c) Lord, let this cup be a reminder for me to **pour out** of my life what is **precious** yet **temporary**, so You can **pour in** what is **more needful & eternal**.

V. Let's drink together! - Song: End.