

My Ebenezer

Then Samuel took a stone, and set *it* between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us. 1 Samuel 7:12

By

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Every believer knows something of the power of the father of lies to lead us into sin, sorrow, trouble, temptation, doubt and afflictions.

During one of these times of temptation (and there have been many others not described herein) by which that old serpent, the Devil, sought to overcome me. These events occurred about fifteen years ago (1980). Perhaps my experience and the Lord's gracious deliverance can be of some help to my fellow travelers as we journey toward the Celestial City. At least that is my purpose for writing. Being in great distress of soul, Satan began to tempt me to end my life and it was an extremely strong temptation [Cf. Mt 4:6; Ac 16:27]. This is the manner of that temptation by the Devil and the way the Lord delivered me.

My home was then in Jamestown, Indiana and the road which led to my home, Highway 136 was straight in one section for about a mile then it made a left turn of about fifteen or twenty degrees. In a direct line with that straight section of the road and just a few feet off the road stood a huge elm tree, three feet or more in diameter.

Satan tempted me to in my life by driving my car in to this tree. I deplored the very thought. I knew that such an act was a great transgression because it is an attempt, howbeit, a vain attempt, to snatch the scepter out of God's hand. Yet, I was much tempted to this sin. Because I've had trouble staying awake at the wheel, the deceiver tempted me to end my life by driving into this tree and by this means my family would be relieved of the stigma of suicide, for everyone would assume that I had just fallen asleep and failed to make the turn. Satan is very cunning in his temptations and seeks to represent himself as an angel of light, rather than the Prince of darkness which he is [2 Co 11:14]. He has used many methods in his attacks upon me but none more pungent than this.

I kept no written records of those struggles. For one thing, I feared the Devil might succeed, and I would certainly not want to grieve my wife and children such an added burden. Now these temptations went on for three or four weeks. They were of the most powerful kind. In all my life (I am 57 years old as I write this) I've had few if any temptations which have approached these in power and none in intensity, frequency or persistence.

When I would get within a mile or two of this elm tree, Satan would set on me with such vehemence that I would be almost overwhelmed. I would attempt to reason with Satan but he could out reason me. I would debate with him but he would trounce me. I would seek to change the subject, but it wasn't possible. I would flee from the devil to Christ and pray for grace and strength to overcome, 1 Corinthians 10: 13, but the closer I would get to the tree the more powerful the temptation and the more my groaning

would go up to the Lord Jesus, Hebrews 4:16. The tension would be absolutely insufferable, and only by God's grace could I get past that tree! Even then Satan was hot on my heels. My life was full of groaning before the Lord for the grace to overcome.

The next day on the way home, the conflict would be revived again all over again. I've never gone through anything just like this in my life, before or since. During the day the temptations would somewhat abate as I was busy in my work. Yet in the evening they returned with a vengeance. When I left the place where I met my ride and was alone in the car, Satan would get in the car with me and set on me with all the force of a hurricane. Day in and day out he pressed me with this great sin, as Delilah pressed Sampson for the source of his strength. I believe Satan has led many a saint into sin by his persistence. (Cf. *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, by John Bunyan, for examples of Satan's persistence in tempting men to sin).

Sometimes I would drive home by a different road. This gave me some relief but it was only temporary. As sure as I drove Highway 136 this temptation would sound in my ears like the trumpet of Sinai and it would grow louder and louder, Ex 19:19. At times I really feared that I would yield to Satan the arch enemy of all souls.

I think this went on for about three weeks it became almost unbearable. I kept pleading with my Lord for help, strength, and deliverance. Sometimes it would seem that I got some relief, but as soon as I was near the tree, all my strength would vanish and I was again pressed to the breaking point! One thing that helped me to hang on was that passage in first John would often come into my mind" and ye know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him" first John 3:15. I knew that the sin of suicide is an exceedingly great sin, a sin of the most despicable kind, and one that affords no repentance. This greatly alarmed me.

It happened one day that as I turned on Highway 136 that Satan began to sift me again, Luke 22:31, as he had done before. My faith seemed to fail me [Mk 4:4]. My resistance was very low. My adversary had worn me down to the very breaking point. The stress and strain of being thus between the hammer and the anvil for such an extended period of time almost overcame me. I prayed for grace and strength as I drove toward the tree. The closer I came to the tree, the more the temptation increased, and the greater its power. I thought myself ready to yield and just at that moment when I was in sight of the tree – I saw no tree! The tree was gone! I looked in utter amazement! The road crew had cut it down and removed it!

I shall never be able to tell anyone how my poor soul extolled and praised my God. He had done great things for me! He was my strong and mighty tower! He had preserved my life! He had answered my prayers! Oh, the joy I had as I drove on toward home. My heart was literally singing the praises of my Savior God. He caused me to triumph in Christ Jesus. All glory and praise unto His dear name!

Again I cannot remember the exact time frame of these events but it certainly was not more than three or four days after the tree was cut down as I was driving home, I was rejoicing that this tree had been cut down and that the source of my temptation had been removed. I had been careful to display these things before the adversary. But Satan is ever on the alert to do us harm. Accordingly, as I came in sight of the place where the tree stood, he tempted me with the stump! The work crew had left the stump standing about three or 4 feet high. Satan brought the whole thing back desperately hard." Your God has not delivered you."" You are without help and I will yet get the best of you and you shall curse your God." " You are in my hands to do with as I desire." Again I was hard put to overcome the Devil's temptation. I

began immediately to cry out to my God and somehow the Lord enabled me to get past the stump. This went on in the same vein for a few days, no more than three or four. But every day there was a battle. The Devil would besiege me with all his anger and with every argument Hell can muster. Oh, the sinking of heart that I had! On the final day, as I turned on Highway 136, he set on me with all his power tempting me to consent to him and to agree to take my life. My cry went up to my Lord constantly as I approached the turn in the road. By God's grace I never submitted to the devil. I never consented to commit this awful sin. Yet the temptations came as thick as the Persian arrows at Thermopylae. Finally as I got to the place where the stump stood, I looked and the ground there was so smooth you could push a lawnmower over it—literally ! My soul praised the Lord of glory! I nearly shouted for joy! The Lord had done above and beyond what I asked for.

The workers had actually *planed* the stump level with the ground! The joy which the Lord gave me, the sweetness of this victory, the assurance which the Lord gave me flooded my soul like a river and will refresh me as long as I live! I felt I could sing and shout and praise the name of my God forevermore. I was like the Israelites on the safe side of the Red Sea. I lifted up my song of deliverance! I looked back at the destruction and disarray of Satan and his strategy. He was defeated without hands! I knew the victory was mine. I was safe in the hollow of the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ! It seemed I could see the Devil tail tucking away. The Lord had done great things for me!

Sometime after this I took my camera and a tripod. I went to this place and took a picture of myself standing on this stump. I was raising my flag after this great battle. The victory was made mine by the Lord who alone gives us the victory through Christ Jesus our Lord! This was an Ebenezer for me, 1 Sa. 7:12.

I no longer live where I did when these events took place. But on occasion I pass that way. It is as quiet there as any battlefield is after the war is over. I never go by the place without praising the name of my God. It is a blessing to me to remember what went on there and how the Lord gave me the victory. I also like to take a few jabs at Satan. I remind him that his efforts to overthrow me all miserably failed because of the Great Shepard of the sheep, who keeps us safe in His own hand. I like to remind the Devil that this place is a monument and a promise of how it will one day be throughout the whole earth. May the Lord haste the day when the knowledge and glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as waters cover the sea, Hab. 2:4.

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