

HERE I RAISE MY EBENEZER... LEST WE FORGET

Slide #1 Scripture I Samuel 7:1-12 Timothy 2:3,4

Slide #2 Today is Remembrance Day Sunday. Each year on November, the 11th month, the 11th day and the 11th hour

we pause to remember the thousands of Canadian soldiers who laid down their lives in the past century to ensure that the Western World remained free. Certainly some were there by compulsion, drafted into a war they wanted nothing to do with, others were young and naive with visions of glory and battle honour,

Slide #3 yet still others were men and women of stature and maturity fully recognizing the horror of war, but also seeing the need to fight and even die to ensure their children, grandchildren and generations to follow were free from tyrants.

I am feeling blessed to be able to share with you today, on this Remembrance Day Sunday. My family honours Remembrance Day in particular because my Dad served in the Canadian Army in Korea and my Uncle Jerry served in England during WWII. Uncle Jerry came down with rheumatic fever and returned to Canada on a stretcher and was told he would never walk again... well that did not happen, I always remember him walking. My, Dad, Ray Robillard never talked much about his war days...He didn't want to remember.

Slide #4 However we have taught our children to remember,

Slide #5 they have taught their children to remember

With all that is going on in the world today, the political and social unrest, seen even in our own country, Canada, it is good to remember what we have. Yes, there are things wrong in society, with the government, with the whole system, yes.

Slide #6 Look at countries where your faith or my faith might be illegal, where speaking out is grounds for offence, where a citizen is not allowed to vote, where standing up against the rules is grounds for execution... Canada is such a great country to live in. And days like today, we take time to remember why.

In one of his most intimate and personal letters the apostle Paul writes what is likely the last letter of his life, to his dear young friend Timothy. In 2 Timothy 2:3-4 he points to the soldier as a picture of how the Christian should conduct himself in the service of his Lord. This passage in 2 Timothy helps us better understand the parallels between Christian service and the life of a soldier that we might apply them to our own lives.

An examination of the life of the soldier will reveal the nature of Christian service.

Slide #7 *“Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.*

No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs, he/she wants to please his/her commanding officer”

- 2 Timothy 2:3,4

By all reports, throughout the history of humanity there appears to be not a more difficult place to live than on the battlefield.

Slide #8 In the field of battle, conditions are less than ideal, at the mercy of the weather, whether it be snow, rain, sleet or scorching sun. The little sleep a soldier receives in battle often times is not in a warm bed, but on a cot or with a few blankets on the hardened ground.

Slide #9 They're food rations were often joked about being used as ammunition, but we can be assured throughout history food eaten by soldiers in battle was sparse and probably of poor quality.

Perhaps the most difficult battlefield of all time was the Battlefield of Western Europe during the Great War, the war we now refer to as the 1st World War. In that battle soldiers of all nations gathered to do battle.

Slide #10 The trenches were dug for hundreds of miles through France, Belgium, Austria, Germany and the Netherlands. In these battle thousands of soldiers endured drizzling rain and constant shelling that reduced tracts of land into a sea of mud. In fact, millions of casualties during the 1st World War occurred because of the hardships of the battlefield and not actual fighting. But those who would ultimately win the day were those who were willing to endure the hardships.

Paul warns his young friend Timothy that anyone who wishes to live a godly life in Jesus Christ will face persecution. Paul knew this too well. As Paul wrote this final letter to Timothy, he was chained as a criminal to a Roman guard. As the messenger carried this message to Timothy in Ephesus the blade of the executioner was sharpened, and perhaps as Timothy read these words of exhortation Paul may have already departed this earthly life. How many of the early Christians lost their lives for their faith, ...according to the United Nations in 2002 as many as 16 million Christians lose their lives annually.

I know of you have like you are in a great battle and that there are certain spiritual objectives that you have not yet reached. Let me encourage you to commit your way to the Lord and to prepare yourself to endure hardship like any good soldier of Jesus Christ. For it is only when we are willing to endure that the victory is obtained.

Slide #11 Perhaps the greatest military disaster for Canadians was the failed operation on the beaches of Dieppe on 19th of August 1942. The majority of those who landed

on the beach were killed or captured in eight hours of fighting.

Slide #12

Captain Foote, a chaplain with the Canadian army spend the time coolly and calmly walking about collecting the wounded, saving many lives by his gallant efforts and inspiring those around him by his example. At th end of the grueling time he climbed from the landing craft that was to have taken him to safety, and deliberately walked into the German position in order to be taken prisoner so that he could be a help to those soldiers who would be in captivity until the end of the war. For his gallantry he was award the Victorian Cross, the highest award given to soldiers in the British Commonwealth. He is an example of serving with distinction... a solder who serves with distinction will be rewarded and will avoid painful discipline and reprimand.

Paul tells Timothy that it should be his desire to serve with distinction so as to please his commanding officer, Jesus Christ. At the end of his letter Paul returns to a military theme as he states,

“7. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith, 8. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing”

2 Timothy 4:7,8

Paul identifies the fact that God will serve those who serve well.

Now I want take you back even further in time in the Old Testament, to a battle, a war between the Israelites and the Philistines.

In 1 Samuel 7:7-12 we find the Israelites in a long, drawn out war. The people were growing tired and losing heart. But the nation had a godly leader in Samuel. He was not the king, but what we call a judge: a leader appointed by God to help the people remain faithful to the Lord. Samuel called on the people to revive their affections for the one true God, to get rid of their back up plans, their idols, those things they would pray to when other things didn't seem to work. Samuel told them to rid themselves of all their Plan B's, AND STICK TO GOD'S PLAN "A"!

He also instructed them to come back to God, to repent, to admit fault and blame. The people led by Samuel, gathered at a place called Mizpah, where they sacrificed animals to the Lord, as a symbol of restoring their faith in Him. Meanwhile, the Philistines heard that the people were gathering at Mizpah, and they thought that a “sneak” attack would be a great idea. But God had other plans, His Plan A. The Lord fought for His people that day, and threw the enemy into confusion. The Israelite army thoroughly routed the enemy Philistines that day.

Slide #13 AND Samuel wanted the people to remember that, the day God fought for His people. So Samuel took a stone, a single stone, and set it up where the army had won the battle. He called it “Ebenezer”, which means “stone of help”. It was meant to help people remember what God had done for them. Samuel himself said, “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us’ ----- hitherto.

The word Ebenezer has come to mean something else. We usually attach it to the word Scrooge, which of course means someone miserly and cheap, mean and bitter. Bt before Charles Dickens forever changed wha we think about the word Ebenezer someone else wrote about this. His name was **Robert Robinson, and he wrote the lyrics to an old Hymn** that many of us know by the first line,

*Come thou Fount of every blessing, Tune my heart to sing Thy grace.
Streams of mercy, never ceasing, call for songs of loudest praise*

The 2nd verse says this:

*Here I raise my Ebenezer; hither by thy help I'm come;
And I hope, by thy good pleasure, safely arrive at home.*

The word “hither” really means “so far” The songwriter and Samuel both looked back at where they had been, where they had come from, and realized that the Lord had been with them. They got to the place where they were, not by themselves, but because the Lord had brought them this far.

Slide #14 I remember when were in Virginia, we went to the top of the Blue Ridge mountains...it was beautiful...as I looked around and seen the sights of God’s wonderful creation...and we could see clearly how far we had come up that mountain..

Ebenezer is like the top at the lookout of the Blueridge Mountains for me. Stopping, looking around, seeing God’s handiwork, and being thankful for what He had done in our lives.

Psalm 103 verse 2 tell us... “...not to forget all His benefits”

All the things that God has done for us. He’s given us life and breath, health and strength..He’s provided for us forgiveness and clean consciences. He’s promised us eternal life and hope in the midst of death. Our lives have purpose and meaning because of what the Lord has done. Our Bible tells us in Romans 8:28...Every thing, from good to bad, from fair to middling—works together for the good of those who love God, who have been called according to His purpose” This God’s Plan “A”

Do you see what that means?...that even the worst things that could possibly happen to a person

can be used for the good of people who have a relationship with God. Even the worst tragedies don't have to go to waste, because we serve such a powerful and loving God who can bring something beautiful out of them.

Ah, but we forget so easily. We lose sight, we lose hope, we lose faith. We go about our daily existences, forgetting all the wonderful things God has done, forgetting all the great “:stuff” ahead.

Slide #15 No wonder that over and over in the Bible, someone builds an altar of stones, from Noah to Moses, from Jacob to Elijah, for the purpose of remembering what God had done for them. One stone upon another, laid carefully to withstand the elements, to serve as a reminder for generations that God had been kind to them.

We need more Ebenezers. Life gets tough sometimes...the battle rages hard sometimes and we forget where we have come from. We need things like fridge magnets with Bible verses, to remind us when we get our orange juice that the Lord is our Shepherd. We need bookmarks in our favourite reading materials, to remind us that God will never leave us or forsake us. We need the company of other people who love the Lord, to remind us that we are not alone on our journey.

This explains why we have so many things like gravestones or fasten seat belt lights in our vehicles...to help us remember. Even a wedding ring is a symbol and a reminder of love and commitment... and Samuel's Ebenezer served the same purpose. Years later people would look at that stone and be reminded of God's love for them, and commitment to them, and they would be thankful.

Slide #16 **The Cenotaph is a reminder.** After all, what do we say? Lest we /forget. We never want to forget what someone had done for us. It's easy enough, I think. Unless the hurt is fresh or we are into genealogy, do we remember during the rest of the events of today? In January do we remember Vimy Ridge? In April do we remember Passchendaele? It's possible that we remember Juno Beach around June 6, but do we remember the Netherlands or the Rhine Sea? This is why we need a cenotaph, to remember what our troops fought for so many years ago...

Slide #17 **AND our troops are still fighting.** Serving as peacemakers around the world, trying to help people survive totalitarian regimes and unjust rules, tyrants. The cenotaph reminds us that even today, Canadians lose their lives to fight for freedom and well being of others. Even though the stone etched with markings contains the names of those long since gone, the list of Canadians who have given their lives for their county and for others, even to the point of making the ultimate sacrifice... that list continues to grow.

Slide #18 **It is good to remember.** Lest we forget the sacrifices made by those we did not know; for those they did not know. Lest we forget how young men and women laid down their lives for the lives of others. Lest we forget those who made careers of serving in the Canadian forces, giving many years for the sake of peace and safety. Lest we forget those who came and went on this earth with no family, no one to write their names in a family tree no one to preserve their legacy for years to come. Let us remember today soldiers fallen in earthly conflict and commemorate their brave sacrifice.

Slide #19 Let us also remember as we gather at a cenotaph this week, our Ebenezer, our reminder made of stone that we have received help,

Let us remember Jesus Christ, the victor of the cross, who has given us his victory and called us to be soldiers of the cross; to that end, let us serve with purpose and distinction. Be encouraged in the fact that the final battle is already won and that in Victory our King waits for us and someday soon we will be with Him.

We are having communion this morning....this we do in remembrance of what Christ has done for us!