



Rising *from the* Ashes

**Seventh Day Baptist
Week of Prayer**

January 1 - 7, 2023

Seventh Day Baptist Week of Prayer

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Sponsored by the
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During the first full week of January since 1967, Seventh Day Baptists around the world have united in prayer by sharing in meditations centered on a theme chosen by the author of the SDB Week of Prayer booklet. This year, there is a general author, who has solicited the writings of three other authors to complete the booklet. The general author is Dr. Carlene Wynter, President of the British Seventh Day Baptist Conference. The other authors will be introduced later.

We are encouraging prayers each day of the week for all countries of the world where Seventh Day Baptists exist; not just the countries which are members of the World Federation. Again this year, participants are being referred to the World Federation website (www.sdbwf.org) where some basic information is provided about the churches in each country. Hopefully that information can serve as a helpful guide for prayer.

Purposes of the SDB World Federation include:

1. **To provide increased communication** among Seventh Day Baptist groups around the world.
2. **To promote projects of mutual interest** which will benefit from international cooperation.
3. **To stimulate fellowship** among Seventh Day Baptist Christians through periodic meetings of representatives between Conferences or groups and programs of mutual aid.
4. **To receive and evaluate statements** of need as may come to the Federation and to share such expression of need with its members, inviting their response as the Lord may lead.
5. **To provide leadership training** for Conference leaders, pastors and lay leaders appropriate to each individual conference, as determined through consultation.

Contributions:

The SDB World Federation encourages all member Conferences to designate an offering from their churches at least once a year in support of the purposes of the SDB World Federation. Other contributions and designations from Conferences, churches, and/or individuals are also welcome. Please make all checks or money orders out to SDBWF. Contributions may be mailed to: Treasurer, SDB World Federation, P.O. Box 1311, West Palm Beach, FL 33402 or you may also donate via PayPal at treasurer@sdbwf.org

Sessions:

The last General Session was held in Brazil (Curitiba, Parana) on January 22-28, 2017 with the theme, "The Kingdom of God is Like...". The next General Session was scheduled to occur in the United States, July 17-24, 2022. However, those Sessions were postponed to July 2023, because of the global pandemic brought on by the COVID-19 virus.

Officers for the World Federation include General Secretary Andrew Samuels (general.secretary@sdbwf.org); President Luciano Baretto Nogueira de Moura; First Vice President & Vice President for the Caribbean, Claudia Ferguson; Treasurer, Garfield Miller (treasurer@sdbwf.org); Assistant General Secretary, Michael Spearl; Recording Secretary, Karen Umana;

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Regional Vice Presidents: Canaan Phiri (Africa), Douglas Machado (South America), and John Pethel (North America). Luis Lovelace serves as Editor of Publications.

Overview

This year's week of prayer meditations are based on a collection of reflections, presentations, studies and sermons from The British Conference's 2021/22 theme, **"Rising from the Ashes."** The subtheme is *"How to Rise from Challenging Circumstances."*

The objective of these meditations is to encourage fellow Seventh Day Baptists worldwide to celebrate, rebuild our heritage, support each other, maintain a questioning mind, seek God's answers in all our activities, maintain an eternal focus, and answer the call to volunteer and serve regardless of our circumstances. Isaiah 35 is the main scripture passage.

A little bit about the theme. We are all to some degree acquainted with ashes. Ashes are defined as the *solid residue left when combustible(burnable) material is thoroughly burned or oxidized (rusted) by chemical means. Ashes symbolize grief, humiliation and repentance* (Merriam Online Dictionary). Ashes are mentioned numerous times in the Bible and are often mentioned in relation to grief, sorrow, mourning and repentance of sins (See Job 2:8; 42:6; Jonah 3: 5-6; Jeremiah 6:26; Psalm 102: 9-10). For our meditations, we will limit the meaning to challenging circumstances such as grief and sorrow in our life's journey. The action of rising suggests moving upward, and growing or increasing gradually. Taken together, we could say rising from the ashes is a gradual moving out or away from our challenging circumstances, whether grief, distress, poverty, sickness, death, anxiety etc. The question is how should we behave when shifting from this state. Our theme

passage, Isaiah 35 paints an excellent picture of this rising out of these circumstances! We will also look at three supporting passages: 2 Corinthians 1, Nehemiah 4 and 1 Samuel 30, which provide us with additional know-how. Isaiah was a major prophet, who ministered in the 8th. century. He served amongst contemporaries like Jotham, Ahaziah and Manasseh. Whilst Isaiah's prophecies were directed at Judah's idolatry and oppression, it was also delivered to Israel and all nations. They were mostly of judgment, renewal and hope. In reviewing the theme passage, note is taken of the vision or imagery of beauty, encouragement, restoration, celebration, renewal, hope and perfection following God's judgment. Even though God's judgment was severe as reflected in Isaiah 1-34, there is a break! One scholar argues that God was just as thorough in his compassion as he was severe in his judgment. God charts the path for us right into eternal glory! As we traverse this path, we encounter challenges, such as seen in Nehemiah 4 and 1 Samuel 30, for which strategies are given to overcome them. 2 Corinthians 1 calls on us, regardless of our circumstances, to serve each other.

The daily meditations (as listed below) are co-authored by the various presenters: Pastor Norman Fearon, Evangelist Hurley Taylor, Pastor Andy Samuels and Dr. Carlene Wynter (co-author and editor).

Sunday – Isaiah 35: 1-2
Celebrate with Joy and Singing

Monday – Isaiah 35: 3-6
Show of Empathy and Compassion

Tuesday – 1 Samuel 30
Rising from Ground Zero

Wednesday – Isaiah 35: 7-10
Rising from the Ashes:
An Eschatological Perspective

Thursday – Isaiah 35:7-10
Rising from the Ashes:
An Eternal Perspective

Friday – Nehemiah 4: 1-3 & 6-15
A Journey of Questions and Answers

Sabbath – Summary
Having Risen, Will I Answer the
Call to Serve?

As we explore these passages, I cannot help but call out to you to celebrate, show empathy, start all over, rebuild, maintain a questioning mind, keep an eternal focus, and be prepared to serve as you are *Rising from the Ashes!*

God bless you.

Dr. Carlene Beth Wynter (Editor)

Our Contributors



Carlene Wynter

Carlene Wynter has been following the Lord from she was a child and since then she has been involved in Christian ministry. Carlene is the president of the British Conference of Seventh Day Baptist Churches and also Leader and Deaconess of the Birmingham Seventh Day Baptist Church. Prior to her sojourn to the United Kingdom, she served in the Jamaican Seventh Baptist Conference in various capacities at both the national and local levels. Her passion includes evangelism and teaching.

Carlene is a lecturer, researcher at Aston University in Birmingham, UK, and mother who loves to serve others.



Andrew Samuels

Andrew Samuels is married to Kay, has 2 daughters, a son-in-law, a grandson and a granddaughter. He serves as the General

Secretary of the Seventh Day Baptist World Federation, Chief Executive Director of the Seventh Day Baptist Missionary Society, and a member of the Miami Seventh Day Baptist Church in the state of Florida, USA.



Norman Fearon

Norman Fearon who was born in Jamaica, served as a pastor on the island before migrating to the US where he presently pastors the Seventh Day Baptist Church of Fort Lauderdale, Florida. He is married to Alethia and has two sons.



Evangelist Hurley Taylor

Evangelist Hurley Taylor prefers to be referred to as a simple God-fearing man, who loves to spend time in the word, with the word, sharing the word. He is an itinerant preacher. Hurley's passion is the start-up of new church groups, he is the PRO of the Jamaica Seventh Day Baptist Conference Evangelist Committee, and a long-standing Director of the Conference's Board. Currently, he is engaged in the start-up of the Highgate Seventh Day Baptist Group in Highgate, St Mary, Jamaica. He also lends himself as a volunteer in several community service organizations. He is a historian by training.

Celebrate with Joy and Singing

Dr. Carlene Wynter

Scripture: Isaiah 35: 1-2

Today is our first meditation under the theme, *"Rising from the Ashes,"* with our specific topic of, *"Celebrate with Joy and Singing."* Pastor A.A. Black an old Seventh Day Baptist Pastor, who pastored the Wakefield Seventh Day Baptist Church in Jamaica, West Indies for many years, said this, *"Worry is like a rocking chair, it rocks, and it rocks, but it takes you nowhere."* Jesus the Master, warned us, *"never worry," because "it cannot add a moment to your life."* (Matthew 6:27). Yet for many of us, our first or normal reaction to challenging circumstances is to worry, get anxious and nervous, with feelings of being overwhelmed. But these do not solve the problem. Some people have even gone further, and turned to alcohol, drugs, cursing, domestic violence, running away from home, and the most extreme of all, taking their own lives. Still, others go a little further, advise others to do it double, *'curse God and die'* (Job 2: 9). But these coping strategies have never worked and will never work.

We are told to give thanks in all things! (1 Thessalonians 5:18); or see it as a joyful thing when we fall in diverse temptations (difficult circumstances)(James 1:2). When we are joyful, we will be able to sing (James 5:13). In other words, we are to maintain a celebratory lifestyle of joy, punctuating it with singing.

Joy is an emotion, *vital to well-being...fundamental to human existence...[it is a]quality that makes life worth living... opens up our soul, giving our existence a certain fluidity/flexibility, and a sense of easiness* (Emmons, 2020). Joy, therefore, gives us optimism, hope, expectation, and makes us more pliable, flexible and adaptable. It arms us with an attitude that says, "I cannot give up, I will not give up, I will listen, I will be adaptable, I will change." When there is joy, we sing! Such an attitude will help to dig us out of the *"ashes"*- our grief, distress, brokenness, depression, poverty, poor church growth, financial worries, etc.

Paul and Silas celebrated with joy and singing while seeking to get out of their awful circumstances (Acts 16: 16-31). Their act of celebration was unnatural, to say the least, as their arrest was

particularly horrifying. They were stripped, beaten, whipped and placed in stocks in the inner dungeon of the prison. The Lord intervened with an earthquake and released them. Jehoshaphat, king of Israel, and his army celebrated and sang their way to victory (2 Chronicles 20), an unnatural way to fight a large army that could possibly wipe them out. But they listened, taking advice (vv14-17 and 20-21). With their singing, God created ambushments against their enemies. The opposing army turned on themselves doing what Judah should have done. You see, when there is joy in your life, you are more open to suggestion, more pliable, and more flexible, thus making it easier for others and the Lord to work with you. The Lord can therefore mould you into doing what is best for you, and so your life can be a blessing to others!

Isaiah 35:1-2 paints a beautiful picture of the celebration of joy and singing - the type that should envelop our lives! When we envelop or embed joy and singing in our lives, the unproductive areas in our lives become transformed, making us fruitful. Those feelings of loneliness and unfriendliness will take their leave. Those talents and gifts which remained dormant, ignored and undeveloped, will now get a chance to be active, productive, developed and established, becoming useful and beneficial to others. And you know what, you will receive recognition and accolades from those you serve! You see, you will be like the *majestic cedars of Lebanon...towering high... providing nesting for birds...a source of wealth, shelter for animals* (Ezekiel 31) and like Sharon, you will regain your prominence of productivity (Isaiah 65:10).

Let's pray that we live a lifestyle of joy and singing, a fitting recipe for ***"Rising from the Ashes"*** to become fruitful, productive and beneficial to others.

Today we will pray for Seventh Day Baptists in the countries of: Angola, Australia*, Bangladesh, Brazil*, Burundi*, Cameroon, and Canary Islands.

**Conferences which are members of the Seventh Day Baptist World Federation.*

Further Reading:

Emmons, R. A (2020) Joy: An introduction to this special issue, The Journal of Positive Psychology, 15:1, 1-4, DOI: 10.1080/17439760.2019.1685580

Show of Empathy and Compassion

Dr. Carlene Wynter

Scripture: Isaiah 35: 3-6

As we navigate life, we are often confronted with challenging circumstances, whether illness, financial troubles, poor or broken relationships, unemployment, career stagnation, death, etc. Despite these challenges, God still expects us to show concern, pity, compassion, and mercy to support others who are in our space. In today's passage we observe such an expectation or call; the call to empathic action or a call to show empathy or compassion. But what is empathy? There are many studies on empathy, but regrettably, there are no consistent definitions, and so this results in it being described in different ways. Some scholars have argued that it's a core ability, skill, capacity or aptitude that each person has. Since it is a skill or ability that each person has, then it stands to reason that it can be developed, nurtured, fostered or encouraged. But in a nutshell, drawing from a simple definition: *"Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of others."*¹ Empathy involves *having a perspective or point of view on another person's thoughts and feelings as if you are experiencing and understanding their circumstances through their eyes*. In other words, you are *walking in their shoes*, but at the same time you maintain who you are. When empathy is shown to others, it raises care, concern and compassion for others, changes their circumstances and contributes to their reintegration in society.

Philippians 2:5-7 reminds us that Jesus' life was a perfect example of what empathy entails. He was *'made in the likeness of man...being fashioned as a man...being in the form of God.'* Caring for us, Jesus stepped into our shoes, to reintegrate us into God's family, giving us rest, literally changing how we live.

The Bible contains other examples of persons who showed empathy. These include Elijah, who cried and prayed to the Lord for a distressed widow whose son died, with the son being revived (1 Kings 17: 17-23); Elisha who listened to the widow who feared her sons being taken as slaves, understood her plight and offered a suggestion of how to get her out of debt (2 Kings 4: 1-7); Peter who did not just pass the crippled man, but stopped, spoke to him and healed him (Acts 3: 2-6); and Paul who organized the collection of donations

for the Jerusalem brethren who were experiencing famine (1 Corinthians 16: 1-4).

What we notice from the foregoing passages is that the showing of empathy by Jesus, Elijah, Elisha, Peter and Paul led to life altering changes for us, the widows, the crippled man and the Jerusalem brethren. For us who accept Christ there is full restoration of our relationship with the Heavenly Father. In the case of the crippled man, he was now able to (re)integrate within society, probably get a job, pay his taxes, do his shopping, have his own family, attend the synagogue as a worshiper etc.

Today's lesson, Isaiah 35: 3-4 asks us to show empathy in three ways:

- 1. Strengthen the weak hands**
- 2. Confirm the feeble knees**
- 3. Encourage the fearful**

The call to strengthen weak hands and feeble knees is to give support, make stronger, brace or prop-up those around us who are frail, puny and scrawny. But why should we carry out these actions? We want them to become relaxed and calm, bringing them into restorative health or for them to be wholesome so they can cope with life. Recall that strength lies mostly in our arms and lower limbs, or the knees. When hands and knees are weak and feeble, the whole body tends to get frail and unable to cope. Another perspective is that weak hands and feeble knees could refer to people's fragile emotional state. The medical literature suggests that when this happens, people become weak physically as well. When the body gets weak, then fear, anxiety, worry, or distress often sets in (See Ecclesiastes 12: 1-5). Finally, we are called to reassure, comfort, cheer up and inspire those who are afraid, frightened or scared, reminding them of God's deliverance (Isaiah 35: 4b). Thus, the call to empathic action is the call to support others, to bring about change in their circumstances for them to be restored.

Verses 5-7 give us glimpses of the change of circumstances in those to whom empathy is shown: sight to the blind (*fresh and new perspectives, new ways of thinking*), hearing for the deaf (increased awareness, becoming more mindful and alert); jumping for the lame (*renewed energy, vigour and vitality*), singing for the dumb (*joy, rejoicing, having a spirit of celebration*). All these represent turnaround in the circumstances to those to whom empathy is shown. Interestingly, even the environment around us changes!!!(v7).

As you rise from the ashes, that is, from your respective challenging circumstances, remember to show empathy and compassion. It will

1. empathy meaning - Search (bing.com) [Accessed October 2, 2022]

Rising from Ground Zero

Evangelist Hurley Taylor

Scripture: 1 Samuel 30:1-8; 18-20 & 26

You, being the “Called” of Yehoshua the Christ and also the trusted servant of our Father Yahweh God will not necessarily prevent tribulations from overtaking you. Tribulations come for varying reasons; but whenever you weather them, you end up being better-off than at the beginning. “... knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience...” (James 1:3).

Also consider if you may, the case of Job (Job 1:1ff), and many others, but especially David, the acclaimed, “...man after God’s own heart...” (Acts 13:22), and how his adopted home and city ZIKLAG was burned to ashes, leaving him and his 600 warrior companions homeless and their wives and children kidnapped.

Quite simply put, Ashes are the remains left from fire burning through solid things. In this case, David’s home, his cattle pens, storehouses, armoury, corn fields, granaries, everything was burnt – to ashes! But, wait, his wives and children were kidnapped also!

David was in dire straits! He had come, it seemed, to the “ashes” of life’s experiences. Consider this:

1) Saul wanted him dead or alive (See 1 Sam. 20:31 and 33).

2) The Philistines to whom he had run away and among whom he had been hiding from Saul, their princes did not trust him anymore (See 1 Sam. 29:3-5).

3) Ziklag, his final refuge, was burned to ashes, and everything he had and loved, had been taken by the raiders (See 1 Sam 30:1-2).

4) And, to “add insult to injury,” his own people turned against him and plotted among themselves to stone him to death (1 Sam. 30:6).

David was in crisis. But, crises provide new opportunities!! Can you too earn new opportunities? Read on please!

So, David still trusted God (v.6) “...David encouraged himself in the Lord his God...”

Also, read Psalm 56:3: “...What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee...”

Let us quickly review the result of David’s trust in Yahweh God:

1) David turned to Yahweh God in his ashes of crisis and Yahweh God assured David of his salvation (v.8b).

2) God turned opposition to proposition, as the conspirators now readily joined him to pursue the raiders (v.9). See also, Proverbs 16:7 “...When a man’s ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him...”

3) God provided help from the most unlikely person (vv11-15).

4) God delivered the captors to defeat by David’s warriors, and the captives safely returned to him and his men.

Here is a mnemonic -**ACID**- to assure you of what Yahweh God will do for you whenever you may feel your life is “burnt out” and only ashes remain, whereupon you turn to Him for the answer.

A – ASSURANCE -Yahweh God will give you assurance whenever you turn to Him in a prayer of faith in your crisis of ashes.

C – CONVERGENCE -Yahweh God will make your opposition join forces with you, so that you may rise from your ashes.

I – INTELLIGENCE – Yahweh God will provide the know-how from even the unlikelyst of sources to help you to rise from your ashes.

D – DELIVERANCE – Yahweh God will deliver into your hands all that the enemy has stolen from you, and make your latter end more prosperous....

...BUT you must remember to turn to HIM in Prayer of Faith - FIRST OF ALL!!!

Let us pray in Faith!

Today, let us pray for our brethren from the following countries: England*, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Conakry, Guyana*, and Haiti.

*Conferences which are members of the Seventh Day Baptist World Federation

Rising from the Ashes: An Eschatological Perspective

Evangelist Hurley Taylor

Scripture: Isaiah 35:7-10

In our lesson on Tuesday, we vicariously experienced with David, his loss of Ziklag, and also his rise from the ashes of that destruction. Today, using the lens of Eschatology, we look at another type of destruction and restoration; the Eternal destruction (The Judgement) and the Millennial Reign.

But what is eschatology? Eschatology is that part of theology which deals with death, the final destruction of the world, and the fate of man's soul.

But, you might ask; Did Isaiah really prophesy about these things in this passage?

What do you think? Well, consider that many prophecies do have a long-term, as well as a short-term perspective. Consider therefore, that Isaiah's prophecy has these types of perspectives, and on that basis, we consider that longer-term perspective; which is the coming judgment and the circumstances surrounding it. This is the meaning of eschatology, as applied in today's Lesson.

But back to the short-term perspective of this passage, which is, that, Isaiah prophesied that the Jews could look forward to a time of peace without the military hegemony of a superpower, to a time of almost Eden-like conditions to the blooming of the desert (v1). At the time he prophesied, Jewish captivity, destruction and restoration of Jerusalem were a long long way in the future. Some of his hearers might have been quite disbelieving about any such destruction. Yet it happened! How?

Well, around 609/608 BCE, Emperor Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem, and later in 586 BCE burnt it and its Temple to the ground.

But in 539 BCE, Yahweh God stirred the spirit of the Persian Emperor Cyrus to restore Jerusalem and His Temple there. This brought in a time of relative peace and stability for God's people. The "wilderness" was now being repopulated, farmed and made to "blossom" again (Isa. 35:1ff).

Let us now step over to the long term perspective. So, read again Isaiah 35: 1 and 7, with the following in mind:

• Could the blooming of the desert and the watering of the parched ground also typify the time of the Millennial Kingdom?

• May we interpret "coming with vengeance" (v.4) as also aligned with Rev. 19:11-15?

The reign of peace comes after the raging fire of the "end time" persecution of God's people, in which many of us will be killed "for the Word of God" (Rev. 6:9,11 and 13:15).

Isaiah tells us that God will come with a vengeance to raise us up from the ashes of "the tribulation" (Isaiah 35:4).

In Revelation Chapters 19 and 20, we are assured of the reign in earth of Yehoshua the Christ, the Prince of Peace, (and we His triumphant saints with Him), for 1000 years (the Millennial Kingdom). This is a time of peace and joy for the saved. Satan will be bound by an angel for those 1000 years (Rev. 20:1-2). There will be NO conflict at all in the Millennial Kingdom involving neither man nor beast! (vv8 and 9).

But before all that happens, there will be **TRIBULATIONS!!** (Rev. 13: 1-18; vv7-8; vv16-17 in particular); and **plagues** upon the unsaved, (Rev. 14:11 & 14-20; 16:1-21). Right alongside these happenings will be the total destruction of the evil worldwide satan-directed monetary, commercial and trade systems, called in prophecy - "BABYLON" (Rev. 18:1-24).

This program will signal the ending of the age of grace, at which time, the door opened for sinners to receive salvation will be closed (Rev.19:5-7, 9,11-18).

Through these prophetic writings Yahweh God firmly says that we will rise from the destruction inflicted by the dragon, the beast and false prophet! We will live again and reign with Him in the Millennial Kingdom! How sweet the Hope!

Let us not only comfort one another with these words, but let us also share them, so that many more sinners will call upon the name of Yehoshua the Christ and believe in Him through the work of the Holy Spirit! Read (Romans 10:13-15)

Let us pray therefore, that many more will be sent to preach and to teach, so that millions more may hear and call upon Him and be saved.

Today let's pray for Seventh Day Baptists in the following countries: India*, Indonesia, Ivory Coast, Jamaica*, Kenya*, Lebanon, and Liberia.

**Conferences which are members of the Seventh Day Baptist World Federation.*

Rising from the Ashes:
An Eternal Perspective

Evangelist Hurley Taylor

Scripture: Isaiah 35: 7-10

So far, we have been considering the various ways revealed by Prophet Isaiah, in which Yahweh God preserves and redeems His people.

Today, we consider another aspect; that of His preservation and redemption for all future times, a real everlasting period that has no ending. We call this the *"Eternal Perspective of His redemption."*

You see, it is **NOT** the plan of Yahweh God for His people to only live out their natural lives on earth, no matter how triumphant they are in their salvation, or for that matter, how they go about demonstrating a good life of prayer, worship, moral and ethical uprightness, and so on.

THERE IS CONSIDERABLY MORE THAN THIS TO OUR SALVATION! Apostle Paul calls the notion of a mere human lifetime in Christ on earth "...most miserable..." If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable (1 Corinthians 15:19 KJV).

The truth is, Yahweh God has a plan for much more than a saved lifetime on earth. He has an eternal rest and goodness for His people!

Revelation declares, *"And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever"* (22:4-5).

So, Isaiah the prophet, some 800 years prior to Yehoshua's Revelation to John, also visioned the same eternal reign. He further revealed that no lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away (Isaiah 35:9-10).

As we have established, Isaiah visioned also the Restoration of Israel and Judah, which was fulfilled following King Cyrus' Decree of 539 BCE! The Jews were restored to

their own land, in relative peace and quiet, and with the certainty of self-determination under their own Jewish leaders such as Ezra, Nehemiah and Zerubbabel. Far removed was the threat of a Haman-type program of extermination (See Esther 3:8-9).

Once again, we see that Isaiah prophesied for the immediate; (restoration of Judah to a physically restored Zion, circa 539 BCE), as well as the long term; the Eternal City- the New Jerusalem. (See Revelation 21:1-4). Notice the similarity of feelings of comfort, security, joy etc., to the Jews as well as to the citizens of the New Jerusalem as seen in the passage below:

And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life. (Revelation 21:27 KJV).

Nothing to harm or hurt!

The Eternal Kingdom is very different from the Millennial Kingdom in very important ways as differentiated below.

Differences between Eternal and Millennial Kingdoms

Millennial Kingdom	Eternal Kingdom
Lasts 1000 years	Lasts forever
Centered in Jerusalem	Comes from Heaven
Has days and nights	Lamb is the light
Ordinary Streets	Golden Streets
(Compiled by the Author)	

So, when we pray today, let us bear in mind the eternal aspect of our redemption; not only to live a triumphant Christ-like life here on earth; but to anticipate the eternal joy of the eternal day in the eternal city; and pray earnestly that His will be done for us to be eternally triumphant with Him.

Let us pray that He will keep us ever faithful so that the Eternal home will be ours; and, that the Holy Spirit through our witness in word and example will lead more and more of our family members, relatives, neighbors and colleagues to eternal life in the Eternal City.

Today's countries for prayer are: Seventh Day Baptists in Malawi*, Mozambique, Netherlands*, New Zealand*, Nicaragua, and Nigeria*

*Conferences which are members of the Seventh Day Baptist World Federation.

A Journey of Questions and Answers

Pastor Norman Fearon

Scripture: Nehemiah 4:1-3 and 6-15

Life sometimes seems like a journey filled with questions and answers. Some of these questions are worth careful consideration while others may seem to just be an attempt to distract us from what is really important. The story of Nehemiah rebuilding the wall of the beloved city of Jerusalem has been one of the most inspiring over many decades. This story is one that is filled with challenges from start to finish, and was also filled with all kinds of questions. I would imagine that Nehemiah was faced with several questions before he even got to Jerusalem. As soon as he got there, he was faced with a lot more than he probably expected. Nevertheless, it did not seem like any of those questions caused him to stall even for a moment because he knew where and how to get the answers.

Sanballat, who was in opposition to the rebuilding of the wall, asked five rhetorical questions in verse 2.

- 1) What are these feeble Jews doing?
- 2) Will they restore it for themselves?
- 3) Will they sacrifice?
- 4) Will they finish up in a day?
- 5) Will they revive the stones out of the

heaps of rubbish and the burned ones at that? (ESV).

These questions as we may observe were not intended to express concern for the Jews but to ridicule them. Sanballat was saying in essence, "you are wasting your time because you don't have what it takes to build this wall." Although Sanballat's questions had no form of support for the mission, Nehemiah did not ignore them or consider them irrele-

vant. Instead, he went to God in prayer (v 4). I guess Nehemiah could have answered with a resounding "yes we can build this wall, and we will." But he also understood that the best way to answer certain questions is to submit himself to God and allow Him to bring the outcome.

Several more incidents happened before the wall was completed. It is possible that there might have been times when they felt like they were way in over their heads and may have asked, "are we really in God's will?" Even though they had physical threats against their lives and had to change their building strategies a few times, they eventually completed the wall. The completion of the wall was not just dependent on the people because "...they had a mind to work," (v6, ESV), but also because Nehemiah was able to determine whether his mission was God ordained and God supported.

It is no secret that the times we are living in are challenging ones, and there seems to be more Sanballat-type characters now than ever. However, as Seventh Day Baptists, we cannot allow that to stop us from (re)building the wall, *our heritage*. Let's take a lesson from Nehemiah. As challenges arise, let us avoid making the mistake of not maintaining a questioning mind. Let us not look to ourselves for the answers but instead rely totally on the Sovereign God who never fails and who has all the answers!

Let's pray that Seventh Day Baptists will maintain a questioning mind and that we look to our Heavenly Father for the answers we seek.

Today we will pray for Seventh Day Baptists in the countries of: Pakistan, the Philippines*, Poland*, Rwanda*, Sierra Leone, South Africa*, and South Korea.

**Conferences which are members of the Seventh Day Baptist World Federation.*

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make a world of difference. Remember, if you are short on it, you can cultivate it!

Let's pray that we have empathic hearts towards our brothers and sisters in the following countries: Canada*, Chile, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cuba, Czech Republic, Ecuador, and Egypt. *Conferences which are members of the Seventh Day Baptist World Federation.

Further readings:

Decety, J. (2014) (Ed). *Empathy: From Bench to Bedside*. The MIT Press.

Mathew Henry Bible Commentary

Wynter, C. and Oats, L. (2021). Knock, Knock: The Taxman's at Your Door! Practice Sense, Empathy Games, and Dilemmas in Tax Enforcement. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 169: 279-292.

Having Risen, Will I Answer the Call to Serve?

Pastor Andy Samuels

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

The Corinthian Church was filled with people who had sinful pasts... but had been washed, cleansed and redeemed through the Holy Spirit. But old ways are hard to forsake; selfishness is hard to crucify. Servant towels are hard to pick up, especially when your focus is on your own struggles. "My feet are dirty...I need a slave to wash them!" is almost always how each of us think. It's natural.

Thinking about comforting others when you need comfort is supernatural... thinking about others dirty feet when yours will be nailed to a cross shortly is nothing short of God-like.

For those who have experienced the comfort of the Lord in the midst of suffering, trouble and distress, he says, "We don't pick up the servant towel of Jesus only to bitterly shed tears into it... we pick it up so we can lay it on the wounds of others."

"God comforts us... so we can comfort others in trouble." This is real ministry. And if you are a disciple of Jesus Christ... only you can choose to pick up this towel in your life.

Have you ever wondered why the Lord does not usually kill us and take us directly into eternity with Him immediately after saving us and rescuing us and raising us up out of our ashes? Why does He usually leave us here for varying lengths of time? It is because He intends for us to pick up our towels and serve others, helping them to be comforted and healed and delivered and restored just like we have been.

You will hear two voices speaking to your spirit in the ashes... The Holy Spirit who is the comforter... telling you "Take heart, trust God, nothing will touch you that doesn't pass through Jesus' nail-scarred interceding hands." But you will also hear from the adversary... the Evil One, the inventor of lies, "God must not love you to let this happen... If He was really in control He'd have stopped it immediately."

Abraham heard both those voices as he walked up the hill with Isaac. Moses heard those voices as he stood trapped at the Red Sea. Jesus heard both those voices in the garden and as He carried His cross up to Calvary. But trust, faith and obedience let God provide a ram, part a sea, and produce a resurrection.

Until all of that happens, each of us has an opportunity to minister to those who have hurt like us. Some of the most powerful words of hope that can be spoken are "I know how you feel." I would warn you though... be careful about speaking those words if you are not being truthful!

Comforting someone with the same comfort you've received is one of the most unselfish and powerful acts of ministry possible. And only you are able to pick up this towel. No one can share your experiences and God's goodness in your life, but you. It takes trust and sometimes time, to walk back into the burn unit, or the hospital, or the recovery group. But it's my firm belief that when you use your greatest hurt for ministry, you have come to understand God, the Father of compassion and comfort in the most intimate way.

The truth is that challenging circumstances do one of two things to us they will either "...make us better... or make us bitter..." And as a child of God, His plan is ALWAYS to make you and me better.

God is more concerned with molding our character than making us comfortable.

We are saved to serve.

Let's take on the challenge to serve each other within our conference, churches, homes and communities.

Let's pray that the Lord will give us a servant heart, heart of service beyond the natural!

Today, we will pray for our Seventh Day Baptist conferences in the following countries: South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda*, Ukraine, United States of America*, and Zambia*.

**Conferences which are members of the Seventh Day Baptist World Federation.*



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