

God Gives Victory over the Amalekites -Exodus 17:8-16--09/20/20

Intro: "While the methods we use may change, we need God's leading to handle our present problems."

I A GREAT BATTLE—Ex. 17:8-13

A Formidable challenge (Ex. 17:8)

- a **Encounter**-While the Israelites were still encamped at Rephidim, which was now an oasis in the desert (vss. 1-7), **they encountered a new threat to their survival**: "*Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel.*"
- c **Enemies**-Amalek was a **grandson of Jacob's brother, Esau** (Gen. 36:12). His descendants, the Amalekites, formed themselves into a **nomadic nation**. They appear frequently in the history of Israel up till the time of Hezekiah and were **persistent enemies of Israel** (cf. Num. 14:40-45; Judg. 3:12-13; 6:3-4; I Sam. 14:48—15:35; 27:8; 30:1-20; I Chr. 4:41-43). The Amalekites "**lived partly by attacking other population groups and plundering their wealth** (cf. Judg. 3:13). The Amalekites had domesticated the camel and used it[s] swiftess effectively in surprise attacks" (Stuart, New American Commentary: Exodus, B&H Publishing).
- d **Exploiting**-Deuteronomy 25:18 gives details that are not found in Exodus, giving the Israelites this reminder: "[Amalek] *met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God.*" Apparently, ever since the crossing of the Red Sea, the Amalekites had been periodically **attacking the weakest of the Israelites who were trailing behind as the nation moved south toward Sinai**.
- e **Expectation**-Now, perhaps determined to take control of the oasis, they "had become bolder in their hit-and-run tactics.... Moses probably had hoped that Israel's journey southward, directly away from the Amalekites' natural habitat, would dissuade this enemy from continuing to pursue. **From the fact that Joshua seemingly knew when and where to expect their attack at the time of the battle, it is clear that the raids had been increasing in frequency**" (Wood, A Survey of Israel's History, Zondervan).

B Physical preparation (Ex. 17:9-10)

- a **Soldiers**-Forced to respond, **Moses called on Joshua to choose men to fight against the Amalekites** the next morning. This is the **first mention of Joshua in the Bible**. Of course, he played a major role in Israel's subsequent history as **Moses' assistant, military leader, and eventual successor**.
- b **Salvation**-We do not know where or how Joshua might have gained his military expertise, but he proved, both in the wilderness and in the conquest of Canaan, to be a very able leader as well as a man of God. **His name was originally Hoshea**, which means "**salvation**." **Moses changed his name to Joshua**, which means "**the Lord is salvation**." In Greek this name is "**Jesus**," certainly an appropriate name for our Saviour (cf. Matt. 1:21).
- c **Selection**-Joshua was assigned to **choose, organize, and prepare** men for **battle** against the Amalekites. This was no easy task. It is doubtful the Israelites had much more than knives, weapons they had made themselves, and perhaps, as some surmise, some that they had collected from the destroyed Egyptian army at the Red Sea. However, **they were not trained in using those weapons** or in military tactics. In fact, **this would be their first military engagement**. They would be facing experienced Amalekite raiders, and **Joshua had only a day to prepare** for the battle.
- d **Staff**-Not only did Moses task Joshua with the military preparations, but he also told him, "**I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand**" (Ex. 17:9). It is interesting that what is often termed Moses' "**rod**," or **staff**, is here called the "**rod of God**."
- e **Symbolism**-From the beginning the **rod had symbolized not only Moses' authority as the Lord's chosen leader but also the supremacy, power, and presence of God**. It had **no power in itself** but was "designated to convince Moses and Aaron, then the Israelite leadership, and in turn Pharaoh, and finally the nation of Israel of God's sovereign control in his plan to liberate his people from their bondage. **It becomes progressively clear that the staff was not really Moses' or Aaron's (or anyone else's) but God's**" (Stuart).
- f **Seeking**-While Joshua and his **soldiers fought**, the presence of **Moses holding forth the Lord's rod would assure them of God's presence with them**. We find in this a principle for life. The **Lord does not ask us to sit idle** as if we have no responsibilities in life. He has **given us minds to plan wisely and to take appropriate actions** to confront the challenges we face. Yet our plans and actions are never to be independent of Him. Even as we make wise choices and act, **we are to seek His wisdom and trust Him fully**.
- g **Serving**-Joshua obeyed **Moses' words** and took his chosen soldiers out to confront the Amalekites the next morning. **Moses also did as he had promised and ascended a hill overlooking the battlefield**.
- h **Seniors**-Accompanying Moses were **two men, Aaron and Hur**. Aaron, Moses' older brother, had been by Moses' side from the time he had returned to Egypt to lead the people out of bondage. It is no surprise then that Aaron went with Moses to the top of the hill. But **Hur is unfamiliar to us**, being mentioned here for the first time in Scripture and only one other time later (Ex. 24:14). It is **clear that he was a leading elder in Israel**, but beyond that we know nothing about him. Moses clearly selected these two to accompany him. **They were not going along just to observe the battle, and neither was Moses**. They were there to influence its outcome.

C Spiritual help (Ex. 17:11-12).

- a **High**-As Moses observed **from the hill**, he **lifted up his hand that held the staff of the Lord**. When he did so, the Israelites prevailed in the battle. **Whenever he lowered his hand, however, the Amalekites prevailed**.
- b **Heavy**-Verse 12 actually indicates that Moses was holding up both his hands, and as might be expected, he soon became **extremely tired**. At **eighty years old** (cf. Acts 7:23, 30), Moses was not a weak man (cf. Deut. 34:7), but as **the battle continued and the day wore on**, he could not continue to hold his hands above his head.
- c **Helping**-Moses' **companions** solved the problem by **having him sit on a stone while they stood on each side, holding up his arms**. Even this would have become **tiring for all three as the battle continued till sunset**.

d	Him -What are we to make of this episode, and what did it mean? First the “ rod of God ” held aloft indicated that this was the Lord’s battle . While the Israelites carried out their duty as soldiers, it was the Lord who brought the victory. He was present and He was supreme . They could and they must depend on Him to give them victory, just as they must look to Him to meet their physical needs (cf. Ex. 17:1-7).
e	Humility -The correspondence between Israel’s success and the raising of Moses’ hands also has a second closely related meaning that we should consider. As Philip Johnson notes, “Commentators, ancient and modern, almost unanimously consider this act of Moses an act of prayer . As such, it expressed an attitude of dependence upon God that determined the outcome of the battle , and it served to demonstrate the reality of this dependence to all the people” (Pfeiffer and Harrison, eds., The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Moody).
f	Harmony -The Bible makes it clear that for believers, the means of strength and victory are in our possession. We are to act, but our every action is to be accompanied by prayer . We are to pray always (I Thess. 5:17), in everything (Phil. 4:6), and with steadfastness (Col. 4:2). We will never achieve anything of lasting value apart from prayer .

D Decisive victory (Ex. 17:13)

a	Prostrated -As Moses continued to hold the staff high, the Lord gave the Israelites a decisive victory. The Bible puts it this way: “ <i>Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.</i> ” The Hebrew word translated “ <i>discomfited</i> ” means “ to be weak ” or “ prostrate .” The idea is that Joshua’s army brought the Amalekites to their knees, and they did it by God’s power .
c	Precedent -This victory, and the means by which it was effected, was very significant. As Israel’s first military engagement, it was designed to set a precedent . It was established conclusively that this victory, and consequently every one to follow, came from their all-powerful God . Joshua proved to be an effective general, and he employed sound military tactics, as we see later at Ai (Josh. 8). But on this occasion and in the first conflict in the Promised Land at the city of Jericho (Josh. 6), no one could have credited the victory to the military genius of Joshua. All the credit belonged to God.
d	Presence -These victories assured the people of the Lord God’s presence and that their success came from Him. We do well to remember this principle in our spiritual challenges.

II A DIVINE DECLARATION—Ex. 17:14-16

A God’s judgment (Ex. 17:14)

a	Rivals -By the power of God, victory over the Amalekites was secured . By no means was this the end of them, however. Their hostility toward Israel would continue for centuries to come . This first attack exhibited their extreme wickedness , as it was unprovoked and launched initially at the weakest and most vulnerable of the Israelites .
b	Removal -As a result of the Amalekites’ actions, the Lord issued a devastating statement : “ <i>I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.</i> ” In making this pronouncement, the Lord was putting the Amalekites in the same category as the Canaanites and other inhabitants of the Promised Land, whom He said were to be exterminated (cf. Deut. 7:2; 20:16-17). Only God can make such a determination, of course , and thus only He could issue such a proclamation.
c	Record -This announced judgment was of such importance that God told Moses to note it in a permanent record . Moses may have kept a diary of sorts during the wilderness journeys (cf. Num. 33:2).
d	Remember -He was told to record the Lord’s words concerning Amalek so that His judgment would be remembered .
e	Replacement -The Lord added that Moses was to make sure Joshua heard this . This may have been to make sure Israel’s military leader was vigilant concerning the Amalekites and tolerated no concessions to them or treaties with them. It may also hint that Joshua would be Moses’ successor and as such would need to remember what was expected of God’s people in relation to the Amalekites.
f	Recognition -While we feel a natural revulsion at the thought of an entire group of people being exterminated , it is only because we do not grasp the depth of human sin, our own included. We must not dare try to stand in judgment of our holy God, especially knowing that our own sins deserve divine judgment and it is only God’s mercy and grace that frees us from it .

B Israel’s remembrance (Ex. 17:15-16)

a	Reverence -As we frequently find in the Old Testament, a significant event was marked by the building of an altar in honor of what the Lord had done (cf. Gen. 12:7-8; 13:18; 35:7). Moses gave the altar the name “ <i>Jehovah-nissi</i> ” (Ex. 17:15), meaning “ the Lord is my banner .” The altar expressed thanks to God for delivering them from the Amalekite threat and giving them victory. The name was a reminder that the Lord Himself was the one around whom Israel’s army rallied as they went forth in battle .
b	Rumbles -Moses then connected the altar and its name to the fact that the Lord had sworn to “ <i>have war with Amalek from generation to generation</i> ” (vs. 16). Through Israel the Lord would continually be at war with the Amalekites until His word was fulfilled and they were no more (cf. Deut. 25:19). While the Amalekites could expect God’s judgment, the Israelites were reminded again of His tremendous grace to them. He was their banner, their protector, and their ever-present and all-powerful God.
c	Reminder -While the Amalekites could expect God’s judgment, the Israelites were reminded again of His tremendous grace to them . He was their banner, their protector, and their ever-present and all-powerful God .
d	Recipients -We are no less the recipients of God’s grace . The last verse in Matthew’s Gospel reminds us that the Lord Jesus Christ is always present with us . We have all we need to be victorious in this life, but we must be utterly dependent on Him and avail ourselves of His power by communing with Him continually through prayer.

Conclusion: “Christians need to make sure that, like Moses and Joshua, we are depending on God’s help in facing present opposition.”