

Exodus 17:8

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 03 February 2019

Preacher: Rev George MacAskill

- [0 : 0 0] We will now turn to the portion of scripture that we read together in the book of Exodus chapter 17 and we'll read at verse 8. Then came Amalek and fought with Israel in Rephidim.
- Amen. Over the past few weeks we have been reflecting on the journey of the children of Israel from the Red Sea to Rephidim.
- We have looked at their journey not merely in its immediate context but at the wider context. For the Bible is a unit and its one simple theme is the redemptive plan or purpose of God.
- We see how throughout the history that we have in the Old Testament that God is moving in different ways and preparing the world for the coming of his son Jesus Christ.
- Into the world. That through his life, death, resurrection, that he would deal with sin.
- [1 : 2 0] And the book of Exodus brings before us the true history of Israel's salvation from Egyptian bondage.
- But it also shows us the pattern of our salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. This is why the New Testament describes the work of Christ as an exodus.
- The exodus and the wilderness journey were a historical event that pointed to a much higher spiritual reality.
- The experience of Israel living in slavery, trusting in the shed blood of the Lamb, embarking on a long pilgrimage, living by God's word and finally reaching the promised land.
- It's also the experience of God's people who are the new Israel of God. But we also saw how Israel during their wilderness journey kept falling again and again into doubt and grumbling and complaining.
- [2 : 3 8] Yet despite their grumbling and complaining and sin, God acted graciously towards them and provided for their protection and needs.
- He gave them food and water in the desert and he turned the bitter waters of Marah into sweet waters for them. He gave them angels food to eat and he brought water from the rock to provide for their thirst.
- And also his presence went before them in the pillar of cloud and fire. And truly the Lord was shepherding his people as they journeyed through the wilderness.
- And the experience of the wilderness.
- And the experience of the wilderness.
- [4 : 2 5] And the experience of the saithing of spreading. And the car that hi■n in the Doucourious inch of the wild in the Video of God. It's holy saying oh God, there's no fairest.
- But how we learn, there's nothing to waste. The Electral boy who said, the Jericho algorithm should be accomplished. So nothing We've reached our first completion of the Antrag■ren's times 1st century p■■er in 19 202 00.

But now we come to the first battle that confronted Israel. Up to this point, much of the difficulties that they encountered were not strictly caused by their outward circumstances, but because of their own unbelief and their own discontentment.

But suddenly they are confronted by the Amalekites. Now the Amalekites were nomads who could trace their lineage back to Jacob's brother Esau.

So there is a sense in which there is a relationship between Israel and the Amalekites. Now in the words of Balaam in the book of Numbers 24, when he says, And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable and said, Amalek was the first of the nations, but his latter end shall be that he perish forever.

[6 : 02] There were strong people. They were deluded partly by attacking other groups and plundering their wealth.

And the Amalekites, as we can see from the book of Judges, domesticated camels and used them in the raids, for the camel over short distances were much faster than a horse.

And so there were a body of people that lived plundering other smaller groups.

But we cannot be sure why they attacked Israel at this time. Perhaps they thought that Israel was relatively defenseless and that they could be easily plundered.

Moses later reminds Israel when he says, Regarding this time, remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt, how he 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 gone.

[7 : 27] Israel is still here at Rephidim. They have been graciously blessed by God in providing water for them from the rock.

And while they were basking there and enjoying the blessings of God, they are suddenly confronted by the Amalekites, who wage war against them and continue to wage war with Israel.

During the wilderness journey. This confrontation between the children of Israel and the Amalekites at Rephidim reminds us of how quickly our circumstances can change and how we must always be on guard.

For often it is when we are enjoying the blessings of God, that we let down our guard, become perhaps complacent, and the enemy very often catches us out.

One moment they were enjoying the drink from the rock, and the next moment they were being challenged by the Amalekites.

[8 : 47] And notice what we said there about how Moses later reminded Israel of this battle, and how he says that Amalekites came and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary.

Reminding us that when he came to attack Israel, he attacked the weak. And you know that spiritually, that is where the enemy always attacks.

Peter writes that the enemy is like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. And if you watch the hunting lion, you always find that he surveys the herd to see where he can find the weakest.

And that is what the devil does. That's what Satan does. He knows your weakness better than you know yourself, and he knows my weakness as well.

And these are the points where he will attack. You see, Peter knew this from experience. Peter was a very self-confident person.

[10 : 00] But that was Peter's weak point. And that is where Satan attacked him. Paul exhorts us in putting on the armor of God.

He says, My brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Not in ourselves. We meet here in this battle, Joshua.

And we meet him here for the first time. And his name means the Lord is salvation. The name Joshua in the Old Testament and Jesus in the New Testament both mean the same.

And Moses said to Joshua, Choose out men and go out fight with Amalek. So Joshua chooses men out of the tribes and he goes down into the valley to fight.

Now the Christian life is brought before us in the Bible as a life of warfare. Paul writes, For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh.

[11 : 16] For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God and bringing it into captivity even through thought to the obedience of Christ.

Every thought to the obedience of Christ. And the warfare in which the Christian is involved may at times be physical in the sense of being outward and seen as we fight with the world's philosophy and attitude and with our secular society who meets and assemble themselves to try and hinder the advance of the gospel.

The great question is, are we as Christians ready to enlist with Joshua to fight those Amalekites of our own day?

The day may soon be upon us when we will be called to fight for the freedoms and the liberties that we enjoy today in our worship.

We see constantly how organisations are engaged to teach our children things that are not appropriate or in accordance with the word of God.

[12 : 44] We remember what Jesus said to Peter upon this rock and that was in reference to Christ himself.

Upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. He is telling us that the gates of hell are going to be in constant warfare against the church and the gates were places the gates of a town or a village were places where they would gather and where they would enact their policies that they were going to enact throughout the village or town.

And so here Jesus is saying that the enemies that the gates of hell would be in warfare against the church but should not prevail.

So when we see the world coming against us it should not surprise us at all. When we see the world's philosophy and when we see secular society coming out against us to try and trample upon the word of God and upon Christian example upon Christian doctrine it should not at all surprise us.

There is a continuous and constant enmity in the world against the cause of Christ and it never gives up.

[14 : 24] Just like the Amalekites who were constantly against Israel. but not only are we in a sense engaged in what is what is outward and visible but we are also engaged with an invisible and spiritual battle.

In the book of Ephesians we read put on the whole armour of God that he may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil for we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities against powers against the rulers of the darkness of this world against spiritual wickedness in high places wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day and having all done all to stand.

So that we are engaged with an invisible and spiritual battle. And here in this narrative that we have before us today we read that there was a sword in the hand of Joshua.

The sword with which he overcame the Amalekite army. And as we make battle with our enemies as Paul says we are to carry not carnal weapons but spiritual which is the full armour of God as detailed for us there in Ephesians chapter 6.

but within that armour there is a sword. The sword of the Spirit which is the word of God.

[16 : 07] Into every battle with which we are engaged we must bring the sword along with us. We must bring the word of God.

God. In the gospel we have the example of Jesus. When he was involved in a conflict with Satan he wielded the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God.

God. And into every battle into which we come into every conflict into which we come we must always bring the sword with us. The sword of the Spirit which is the word of God.

But also involved in this battle against the Amalekites not only did Joshua have a sword in his hand as he battled with them in the valley but we also notice that involved in the battle against the Amalekites army was a staff or a rod.

Moses said tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.

[17 : 29] So not only was there the sword that was in Joshua's hand but there was also the rod that there was in the hands of Moses.

Moses is not on the battlefield but he is on the top of the hill and he's looking down on the scene of battle with the rod of God in his hand.

And although he is looking at the battle from a distance nevertheless he is just as involved in the battle as Joshua is.

It could be argued that Moses' involvement in the battle is much more strenuous than the work of Joshua. The rod of God is in the hand of Moses.

And we read when Moses held up his hand that Israel prevailed and when he let down his hand Amalek prevailed.

[18 : 30] And as Moses looked down on the scene that was before him he figured out that what happened down in the valley depended on what was going up on the hillside.

He came to realise that what happened down in the valley depended very much on what was going up on the hillside.

When his hands were up Israel prevailed but when his hands were down the Amalekites prevailed. So for Joshua to prevail the rod of God needed to be kept up.

Now there are many opinions as to whether Moses prayed at this time. We are not told specifically that he prayed.

Nevertheless when we look at his posture it is an unmistakable sign of prayer. He was standing with the rod of God and both hands were raised up to God.

[19 : 57] He was in that posture of prayer. That rod in the sand with which he smoked the Nile back in Egypt when the waters of the Nile were turned to blood and with which recently hit the rock and the water gushed out is now held up before God.

And we are of the opinion that Moses in holding up the rod before God also interceded or also prayed.

And in his prayer that he was appearing for God's health to show forth his power in saving Israel from the Amalekites.

prayer so that for Joshua to prevail the rod of God and prayer needed to be kept up.

And the same principle holds through for our spiritual battles against the world the flesh and the devil. That is why Paul ended his teaching upon the full armour of God by commanding praying always with all prayer and supplication.

[21 : 14] Not only did he say to put on the whole armour of God but he said after putting that armour on that we needed to pray always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit and watching their entry with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

We need the sword of the spirit which is the word of God but we also need prayer. These two must go together.

But regarding prayer we must not think that if we pray long enough or hard enough or often enough then that God will do what we want him to do.

You see the power of prayer is not in the prayer itself. The power of prayer is in the power of God. And so that when we come to pray to God we must acknowledge our absolute dependency upon him.

For we believe that here where Moses prayed he prayed and he was acknowledging his absolute dependency upon God.

[22 : 40] He was holding up the rod in prayer acknowledging his absolute dependency upon the power of God to win the battle.

It wasn't just in the prayer itself. It wasn't merely in the exercise of prayer but in his absolute dependency upon the power of God to win the battle because Moses knew that it was only through the power of God that the battle with the Amalekites could be won.

Because in prayer we must acknowledge our own helplessness and we must acknowledge our dependency upon the power of God because in that way prayer glorifies God.

And with the rod of God held up along with prayer the sword in the hand of Joshua can do its work down in the valley. God helps Joshua to fight his battle and to overcome the Amalekites in the valley through the intercession enacted by Moses on the top of the hill.

They two must be together. We read that Moses' hands were heavy and they took a stone and put it under him and he sat there on and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands the one on the one side and the other on the other side and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.

[24 : 39] Aaron of course was his brother. We're not sure who Hur was. There are various opinions. We do not know much about Hur.

But these two were up on the hillside with Moses and when Moses hands grew heavy they came to his aid. You know prayer can be an exhausting work.

And Moses was not a young man so he found it quite exhausting. But then we read of the help of Aaron and Hur.

And if this teaches us anything surely it is this the value of praying together. The value of being together. The value of corporate prayer.

The early church as we find in the book of Acts always was putting a great value on corporate prayer. On praying together.

[25 : 46] That is why we have prayer meetings. In order for us to come and to pray together. While there is a place for private prayer nothing strengthens our common life of prayer like praying for and with each other.

And so we find here how Aaron and Hur came and helped Moses. They were there together and that is very important for us.

That we pray for and with each other. That is where our strength is.

When we come together and we pray for and with each other. prayer. However, this also teaches us how dependent that we are upon prayer.

Although it is good and proper for us to preach the gospel and to educate our children in the word of God, it is not enough for us simply to preach the gospel or to educate our children in the things of God.

[27 : 11] It must be attended with prayer. We must invoke God to bless what is being done.

We must intercede with God. We must be on the hillside like Moses was in interceding to what was going on down in the valley.

Joshua was dependent upon the prayers of Moses on the hillside. And so the preaching of the gospel is dependent upon the prayers of God's people.

And the teaching of our children is dependent upon the prayers of God's people to invoke God to bless what is being done.

Of course the opposite is also true. It is no use for us to pray unless the means with which we are to engage the enemy is put into place.

[28 : 15] We need to preach the gospel. We need to educate our children. We need the sword as well as prayer. They are both to be together. And the serious thing is that if they don't come together the enemy will prevail.

If the preaching of the gospel is not attended with the prayers of God's people the enemy will prevail. The Amalekites will prevail.

If we educate our children in the things of God and if it's not accompanied with prayer then the Amalekites will prevail.

They are both needed. They are both to be together just as Joshua in the valley with the sword needed Moses on the hillside praying.

So as we wield the sword of the word of God in the preaching of the gospel we also need our Moses to be on the hillside praying. They are both together.

[29 : 29] Joshua was down in the valley with the sword fighting and Moses up on the hill interceding for him. And that must have been encouraging for Joshua to know that prayer was made for him.

When perhaps in the heat of the conflict he was unable to pray for himself. But it was encouraging for him to know that on the hillside there was a man who was praying for what was going on down in the valley.

And while it is good for us to pray for one another and it is encouraging and confident to know that others are praying for the work that is going on in the valley.

nevertheless of course our greater encouragement and comfort is to know that there is one at the right hand of God who ever lives to make intercession for us.

He never grows tired and his hands never needs to be held up and our great need of mine and yours today is to be found in his intercession.

[30 : 50] He who said to Peter I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not. My security this morning is in his intercession.

Father I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me for thou lovest me before the foundation of the world.

And my encouragement to preach the gospel is also found in his intercession where he says neither pray I for these alone pointing to his disciples but for them also who shall believe on me through their word.

And the Lord said unto Moses write this for a memorial in a book and rehearse it in the eyes of Joshua for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven and Moses built an altar and called the name of Jehovah Nessai for he said because the Lord has sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation Jehovah Nessai or the Lord is my banner the Lord is my banner a banner as you know is a military standard a piece of cloth bearing an army symbol which is raised on a pole and when the soldiers are in conflict they always look to their banner because there is the emblem of their army there is the emblem which establishes their identity and on the battlefield such gives them courage and such gives them hope for

Moses and the children of Israel the Lord was their banner he was the one who established their identity he was the one who gave them courage and hope so what is your own banner today what is the emblem of your own hope today what gives you courage and hope today where do you look for for courage in times of difficulties and hardships and challenges Isaiah wrote and in that day there shall be a root of Jesse which shall stand for an end sign of the people to which shall the Gentiles seek and his rest shall be glorious because Isaiah's promise is fulfilled in Jesus Christ it is by looking to Jesus that we are saved it is by looking to

[34 : 00] Jesus that we are encouraged it is by looking to Jesus that we find strength courage and hope Jesus rather John in his gospel says that that as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the son of man be lifted up that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life Jesus was lifted up on the cross to die for our sins but now he has risen and he has ascended to the right hand of the father where he intercedes on our behalf so we must raise our eyes to him who prays for us and who has become our banner and who has become the captain of our salvation the

Amalekites kept fighting Israel until the time of David it was David that destroyed them God destroyed the Amalekites through his servant David and our Amalekites will be destroyed by a greater king than King David they will be destroyed by the greater son of David the Lord Jesus Christ the psalmist says to us the Lord said unto my Lord sit thou at my right hand and make thine enemies thy footstool the Amalekites of our day the Amalekites that fights us the enemy will become his footstool in principle he has already won the battle he has spoiled principalities and powers and he has made a show of them openly triumphing over them but the day shall come and it shall be open to all people to see the victory that Christ has gained and to which we will share in him that victory over the

Amalekites yes go forth in the battle and go forth with the sword of the word of God but attend it with prayer both together both together and together victory was won for Israel and it is together that we will have power over the Amalekites that is always out to destroy to destroy the gospel to destroy the cause of Christ always out to try and bring us down but through the thought of the word of God and through prayer then we can prevail and we can have the victory here it is said in verse 13 and

Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword but it also required Moses on the hillside and may the two together be evident among ourselves that there is the word of God but may that word be attended with prayer and if it truly is then we shall have the victory then we shall prevail may the Lord bless our thoughts to us let us pray to