

## Weariness and Trust in the Battle (Exodus 17:8-13)

Pastor Phil Layton, GCBC, May 7, 2023

*Pray for Pastor Paul & CBC – Cliff preaching there*

Please open God's sufficient Word to Exodus 17. The words of the hymn help us review the context:

**All the way my Savior leads me, cheers each winding path I tread  
Gives me grace for every trial, feeds me with the living bread  
Though my weary steps may falter, and my soul athirst may be  
Gushing from the Rock before me, Lo! A spring of joy I see<sup>1</sup>**

The Savior has been leading Israel all the way out of Egypt.

- He gave grace for every trial on their winding path through the wilderness.
- Every day He fed them with the living bread from heaven (ch 16).

At start of ch 17 in Rephidim they're thirsty and the Rock of Ages gave water of life and joy.

- But now their steps falter and a new challenge makes them grow weary.

Ex 17:8 *Then Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim.* <sup>9</sup> *So Moses said to Joshua, "Choose for us men, and go out and fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand."* <sup>10</sup> *So Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought with Amalek, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.* <sup>11</sup> *Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed.* <sup>12</sup> *But Moses' hands grew weary, so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it, while Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side. So his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.* <sup>13</sup> *And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword.*

**This is God's Word. Beyond physical swords, there's also spiritual truth for us here**

Following the Lord often brings conflict.

- God never gives a never-ending vacation of all ease.

God did give Israel some R&R at a temporary oasis, end of ch 15: *they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees, and they encamped there by the water.*

- But their home isn't a Palm Springs resort.
- They couldn't stay at a family camp by the water.

God knows what grows His people isn't when it's smooth sailing,

- it's hard walking by faith where I must depend on Him.
- I wish it was by relaxing, but there's resisting required.
- Believers face opposition and enemies.

**Sometimes we have to be knocked down to look up, to feel weak so we seek God's strength**

The life of faith isn't spring break all the time, sometimes sins spring up that break hearts.

- It's not all a summer water-park, it's spiritual warfare, too.
- It's not a playground, it's a battleground

- (and if not a physical fight, a battle in our minds, or often a war of words in a family).

It can be wearisome to go from one conflict to another, as I know some here have.

- You may look around and God's enemies seem to prevail, even good leaders fail.
- Our hands or hearts can grow weak.

**We're not Moses or Joshua, but we have the same need and the same Lord**

This passage shows us God's power for human weakness.

- Not so much the power of prayer as the power of God (represented in the staff of God).
- It shows the battle belongs to the Lord, and there's victory in Him (as Brian Sayers said)

His people prevail but we need His power and His people alongside.

Main point/title: Weariness and trust in the battle.

1. The battle with terrorists
2. The battle with weariness
3. The victory with trust

**1<sup>st</sup>, Amalek's men have been called the 1st terrorists.**

- This is the 1<sup>st</sup> war on terror in OT. In some ways, this is the 1<sup>st</sup> holy war (or jihad).
- It's the 1<sup>st</sup> conflict over Jews occupying land, and terror tactics against them.
- Amalek seemed to live in Arab lands and into modern Palestine.

Moses in v. 7 says Amalek came and fought Israel, but Moses later says more about their tactic.

Dt 25:17: *Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you came out of Egypt, how he attacked you on the way when you were faint and weary, and cut off...those who were lagging behind you, and he did not fear God.*

Other versions: *Amalek...attacked among you all the stragglers at your rear...when you were tired...and worn out...they attacked you when you were exhausted...they struck down those...even all that were feeble behind... attacking those who could not keep up with the others...he surprised...and killed all those...mercilessly cut off...*

In other words, this wasn't normal warfare against the army of Israel,

- it was a cowardly ambush of non-combatants.
- They're targeting women, children, elderly, slow, handicapped.
- This is evil terrorism that doesn't face off for a fight against soldiers,
  - o it's an unexpected sneak attack from behind, on civilians who can't fight back.
  - o They literally backstab and want to terrorize the rest.

This isn't just OT Amalek, it's Al Qaida, Boko Haram kidnapping girls, communist terror, etc.

## It's the evil behind those who shoot schoolchildren and the culture of death today

There's nothing new. In fact, 6,000+ years ago God promised

- the evil one and his people will have enmity against the woman and her children,
- and only her seed in Messiah will fully defeat the serpent Satan.

That's in Gen 3, Gen 36 said Amalek was a grandson of Esau.

- Esau fought Jacob even before birth, remember they were twins battling in the womb.
- A family feud is still going centuries later
- descendants of Esau's grandson Amalek again fighting descendants of Jacob/Israel.
- As Jacob and Esau were born, remember the heel-grabbing?
- Amalek became an Achilles Heel to Israel,
- they kept sneaking up from behind to strike the heel like Gen 3:15 said.
- They keep creeping up to attack Israel into the book of Judges.

Samuel told Saul to wipe out the Amalekites and even their animals.

- Saul claimed he did but the "baaa" of their sheep interrupted his speech.
- Saul spared their King Agag and apparently others because Amalekites keep coming back
  - o in the days of David, Hezekiah, even the exile.

Haman is an Agagite. Agag the Amalekite king apparently had this descendant Haman

- he tries a sneak attack to annihilate Jews but God raised up Esther for such a time as that.

Haman died, but Hitler, Hamas, hate still attacks Israel.

Jewish Encyclopedia: 'Every year... "Remember what Amalek did unto thee" (Deut. 25:17-19), is read in the synagogue on the Sabbath preceding Purim...the rabbis say...the seed of Amalek [is] the principle of hatred and wrongdoing...Amalek became the popular term for Jew-hater.'<sup>2</sup>

To this day terrorists and racists often hate Jews and use the same tactics as Amalek of the OT.

Antisemitism and anti-Christian persecution is on the rise here as is terrorism around the world.

Israel doesn't negotiate with terrorists, they go to war against them, but they need God's help.

Ex 17:8 *Then Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim.* <sup>9</sup> *So Moses said to Joshua, "Choose for us men, and go out and fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand.*

**They were to lift up their eyes unto the hill where their help comes from: the Lord**

But Joshua can't be passive in this, he has to go find guys who can fight

- (and whatever weapon they have or can make).
- Even if they plundered some off Egyptians, Israel has no trained army.
- This is the motley militia of Moses.

- But their secret weapon is the staff of God in his hand up on a hill.
- The staff that could turn into a snake or turn water to blood or turn the Red Sea back.
- God's staff that sent down plagues and drowned Pharaoh's chariots can handle Amalek

Even walking through a valley of death, we fear no evil if He's with us, His rod/staff comforts

<sup>11</sup> *Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed ... [the power of God's rod, not power of Israel's army].*

It's not a magic wand, it's not Moses, it's the mighty power of God symbolized in this staff.

- In the NT we need power for an enemy not flesh and blood,
- it's spiritual (world, flesh, and devil).

So as you read this, remember we're called to fight, too, but we must look up to God's power.

**That takes us to**

**the 2<sup>nd</sup> battle Moses faced that we face, too: the battle with weariness**

The end of v. 11 says when he couldn't hold up the staff in his hand, they were losing the battle.

<sup>12</sup> ***But Moses' hands grew weary...*** Remember Moses said Amalek attacked when Israel was weary.

And remember this happened at Rephidim, which in Hebrew seems to mean "props, supports ... shrinking of hands" or maybe a play on the Hebrew *rafu yadayim*, "the hands become weak."<sup>3</sup>

Even youths grow weary and faint, and remember Moses is 80 years old.

- Try to stand up all day and hold anything over your head, you'll be weary, too!
- The end of v. 12 says this was till sun-down, but Israel won't win the battle hands down.
- Weariness is Moses' battle. <sup>12</sup> *But Moses' hands grew weary, so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it, while Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side. So his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.*

First he stands with the rod in one hand above his head,

- but as Joshua's forces start losing they look up and see his drooping hand is why.
- So what do his brothers do? They come alongside to give him a place to sit
- and they stand on each side holding up both his hands to uplift his staff.

It doesn't say Moses asked, but this is what good brothers for a man down or weary in the fight.

It's not just a spiritual issue – Moses believes God's power – but he needs physical support, too.

- They didn't just pray for him, or say 'Moses, hands up!'
- They stayed his hands and upheld him.

## It's good to be WITH people you're praying for and UPLIFT physically, emotionally

Brothers and sisters, when you see someone weary in the battle,

- don't just pray, or say 'if you need anything let me know.'
- They don't always know what they need and often won't ask, but come alongside them.
- Do something. Offer specific help.
- It may be bringing a meal, stopping by, sitting by them, calling, praying in person if possible, or sharing scriptures to help uphold them.
- You don't have to ask a leader, ask that weary believer how they're doing.
- If they need physical support, bring it, if they need steadying, do it if you can before the sun goes down.
- the wall behind says '*encourage one another*'=come alongside to help. Who, how, when?

## Text, talk to, try to bear one another's burdens today, even after the service

In the psalms, David is weary with sorrow and grief and tears (6:6-7).

- So with weariness there's sometimes loneliness.
- Even the great King David needed brothers alongside him just like Moses.

The Reformer John Calvin also battled loneliness and weariness

- from the sorrow of his children dying early in life.
- His wife his life companion also died, and he never remarried.
- Calvin's many battles included enemies threatening and firing guns outside his home.
- He battled all kinds of physical weariness.<sup>4</sup>
- I heard somewhere late in life Calvin was so weak he had to have a couple friends sit him in a chair and carry him, one at each arm, to a pulpit so he could preach.

## How can you uplift, uphold, support believers and leaders by helping share their load?

**Calvin** wrote that Ex 17 shows how Israel as they 'support their leader ... was sustained. Yet does not Moses here boastfully commend his own zeal in praying but ... rather the public witness and proclaimer of his weakness, that the glory might be entirely attributed to the gratuitous favour of God. Nor is there any question, that, conscious of the infirmity which he afterwards confesses, he associated with him Aaron and Hur, who might assist him in his task...And surely when they stayed his hands they also lifted up their minds, and prayed together to God in common supplications; but Moses speaks chiefly of himself...as intercessor, to conquer the enemies from afar by the stretching forth of the rod.'<sup>5</sup>

## In ch 9 Moses lifted up his hands in prayer, and we need help at times praying together.

Isaiah may be thinking of Ex 17 when he wrote '*Strengthen the weak hands...Say to those who have an anxious heart, "Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God..."*' (35:3-4). Other translations '*steady...tired hands...*'

50:4 '*The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary*' (NIV)

- In the book of Acts we read repeatedly how the apostles strengthened believers with words and prayer.<sup>6</sup>
- Peter wrote *'God's mighty hand...may lift you up in due time...and make you strong, firm...steadfast'*<sup>7</sup>
- Even the apostle Paul confessed to the Corinthians his **'weariness...infirmities...weakness...needs...'**<sup>8</sup>
- To the Thessalonians *'do not **grow weary** in doing good...the fainthearted, **uphold...support** the weak'*<sup>9</sup>
- To Philippians *'help these women, who have **labored side by side with me**'*<sup>10</sup> (not just men, women too)
- To Timothy: *'in every place the men should **pray, lifting holy hands...**'*<sup>11</sup> (maybe thinking of Moses)?
- Paul's last words in 2 Tim 4 confess his need for brothers by his side to uphold him: *'Do your best to come...Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry ...no one came to stand by me...But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me...Do your best to come'*

**Ultimately the Lord stands by to strengthen, but the best of men still need others**

**That takes us from the battle with weariness, to our**

### **3<sup>rd</sup> last point: the victory with trust**

In the end of v. 12 the Hebrew word for *steady* hands is the root word for faith or trust.

- It isn't just a physical demonstration for Israel, this showed spiritual dependence to Israel.
- Moses lifts to heaven the rod of God by faith, and the people prevail.
- They look up on the hill for victory (they see their intercessor in touch with God's power)

We don't have a staff to hold up with the same power that Moses did,

- but we have something better.
- We have the power of the Spirit and sovereign God holding us up as we look up in faith.

<sup>13</sup> *And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword.*

- Rom 8:37 applies that, *'we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.'*
- Paul says NT believers have a better sword of the Spirit, the word of God.
- We have the Lord on our side and say to Him Ps 18:35 *'...your right hand supported me...'* (*'held me up'* NKJV). Ps 37:24 promises the trusting believer *'...though he fall...the LORD upholds his hand.'*

**When we're weary, Mt 9:36 says Jesus sees and has compassion on the weary (NKJV)**

Isa 40:28–31 *Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and... He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak...those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength...and not grow weary...and not faint (NIV84).*

God says in Isa 41:10 *'Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right*

hand... <sup>13</sup> “For I am the LORD your God, who upholds your right hand, Who says to you, ‘Do not fear, I will help you.’ (NASB95).

We sang earlier ‘by His own hand He leadeth me...Lord, I would clasp my hand in Thine.’

- Do you trust like that?
- Do you lean on your own understanding, or lean on the everlasting arms?

Where does your help come from?

- Lift up your eyes unto the hill faraway where there stood an old rugged cross.
- Paul says ‘*the word of the cross...is the power of God*’ (1 Cor 1:18)
- His enemies were defeated when ‘*He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross*’ (Col 2:15 NLT).

In humanity, Jesus had to sit at a stone well midday, ‘**wearied as he was from his journey**’ (Jn 4:6).

**In glory, He now sits at the right hand of power, and there’s victory in Jesus**

Think of Jesus in the garden, asking the inner 3 to stay with and pray, because the flesh is weak. Weary Peter slept but Jesus said I ‘*prayed for you that you faith may not fail...strengthen the brothers.*’<sup>12</sup>

- The book of Hebrews says Jesus is greater than Moses
- He upholds the universe by the word of His power as He sits,
- and He’s able to sympathize with our weakness, to help in time of need.

The key in the battle is someone you can see on high who is interceding God’s power for you.

Jesus our great High Priest above never dies or tires

- but ‘*always lives to make intercession*’ (3:3, 1:3, 4:15-16, 7:25).

The point is the victory with trust in Jesus. Israel looked above their battle, we look even higher

**Before the throne of God above I have a strong and perfect plea;  
a great High Priest whose name is Love, who ever lives and pleads for me.**<sup>13</sup>

Moses couldn’t stand on his own to uplift Israel with his hands,

- but with Jesus our names are in His hands while in heaven He stands.
- In glory He never slumbers, sleeps, never weary or weak.

He says come to me all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest...for your soul.

- If you’re sick and tired of your sin, come to Him in repentant faith.
- Trust Jesus as Savior and Lord.
- If you don’t, He comes with His powerful rod of judgment and an overwhelming sword.
- It’s a terrorizing terrifying thing to fall into the hands of a living God with unforgiven sin.
  - o But His nail-pierced hands are open to those who come begging for forgiveness
  - o Those interceding hands never grow weak, and He will hold me fast

- Every believer is secure in His hands, no one can snatch you out of His hands PTL

Heb 12 tells believers ‘*fixing our eyes on Jesus...consider Him who has endured...so that you will not grow weary...strengthen the hands that are weak*’ (v. 3, 12).

- Moses’s hands held up a symbol of God’s power.
- Today we’ll hold up symbols in our hand in the bread and cup,
- nothing magical but symbols of the gospel that is the power of God.
- There’s power in the blood to prevail over sin.
- This can be a soul strengthening time of God’s special presence
- and being unified with those at your side.

Confess sin in this time, commit to live in His victory, and let’s come alongside weak believers.

Amen? Let’s pray. Our Father in heaven, thank you for your Spirit who gives us your power to fight sin and win. We thank you for your Son who taught us ‘men ought always to pray and not to faint.’ For the faint and physically struggling here, help them look up to you. Lift up heavy hearts here and drooping hearts or depressed souls needing care. Help weak believers struggling to stand firm. Hold up the stay-at-home mom battling discouragement or defiant children, or the young people at schools battling ungodly influences, or the senior saint battling loneliness, or a spouse tempted to give up. Help those in this room fight against anger and anxiety and lust and living selfishly, and in all these things and more help us now how we can help come alongside.

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<sup>1</sup> Fanny Crosby, “All the Way My Savior Leads Me.”

<sup>2</sup> Isidore Singer, ed., *The Jewish Encyclopedia: A Descriptive Record of the History, Religion, Literature, and Customs of the Jewish People from the Earliest Times to the Present Day, 12 Volumes* (New York; London: Funk & Wagnalls, 1901–1906), 483.

<sup>3</sup> Stelman Smith and Judson Cornwall, *The Exhaustive Dictionary of Bible Names* (North Brunswick, NJ: Bridge-Logos, 1998), 204–205; *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 483.

<sup>4</sup> John Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy: God’s Triumphant Grace in the Lives of Augustine, Luther, and Calvin* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006), 136.

<sup>5</sup> John Calvin and Charles William Bingham, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses Arranged in the Form of a Harmony*, 1:292–293.

<sup>6</sup> Acts 14:22, 15:32, 41, 16:5, 18:23.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Peter 5:6, 10 NIV84.

<sup>8</sup> 2 Cor 11:27-30 NKJV.

<sup>9</sup> 2 Thessalonians 3:13, 1 Thessalonians 5:14 NKJV, KJV.

<sup>10</sup> Philippians 4:3, see also 1:27 ESV.

<sup>11</sup> 1 Timothy 2:8.

<sup>12</sup> Luke 22:32, Mark 14:37-40.

<sup>13</sup> Charitie Lees Bancroft, “Before the Throne of God Above.”