

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

EX. 17:8 Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim.

9 And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.

10 So Joshua 'did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amatek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

11 And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.

12 But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; 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.

13 And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

14 And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the

remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.

15 And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovahnissi:

16 For he said, Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.

God Gives Victory over the Amalekites

Lesson Text: Exodus 17:8-16

Related Scriptures: Deuteronomy 25: 17-19;
Psalm 83:1-18

TIME: 1445 B.C.

PLACE: Rephidim

GOLDEN TEXT—"And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel

prevalled: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed" (Exodus 17:11).

'Preparing to Teach the Lesson

TODAY'S AIM

Facts: to see that God actively delivers His people.

Principle: to know that while the methods we use may change, we need God's leading to handle our present problems.

Application: to make sure that, like Moses and Joshua, we are depending on God's help in facing present opposition.

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Moses and the children of Israel were on their way to the Land of Prom-

ise. They had gone through several different regions and now encountered the Amalekites. They opposed their march through what they considered their territory. For the first time, Israel had to fight another people. God was leading them toward the Promised Land, and now the barrier was not the Red Sea or the severe and foreboding

wilderness but opposition by a fierce and resisting adversary. How would Israel respond?

DEVELOPING THE LESSON

1. **Facing the problem** (Ex. 17:8-

10). We learn from Deuteronomy 25: 17-19 that the Amalekites and his forces came up from behind the Israelites and picked off the stragglers—the weak and weary

who were the most defenseless. This tactic was, of course, cowardly and condemnable.

Satan uses a similar tactic against believers. He especially targets those who are the weakest in faith and endurance.

2. **Handling the difficulties** (Ex. 17:11-13). To implement the plan God gave them, Moses, Aaron, and Hur climbed to the top of a hill. Moses held up his staff while Joshua and his men battled the Amalekites in the valley below. Holding the staff

aloft signified the same power of God that had opened the Red Sea; it also indicated that Moses was actively interceding for God's people.

But Moses' physical stamina was not equal to the task. He could not keep his arms held high during the whole battle, so Aaron and Hur brought a rock for him to sit on and helped him hold up his hands. As long as they kept Moses' hands in the air, the Israelites prevailed. By sunset, the enemy was finally vanquished.

It may be that you have never gone through a problem that could only be solved by the direct intervention of God. You (or your church) may not be facing one just now. But in the course of time, we will all be confronted with overwhelming obstacles of one sort or another. What we then need is continual, fervent prayer until God accomplishes the victory.'

3. **Remembering the lesson** (Ex. 17:14-16). God told Moses plainly to make a special record of this event for Joshua. God also declared that He would be continuing to act against the Amalekites until they were no longer a problem. It was wrong of Amalek to oppose God's people to their journey to their Promised Land, so the Amalekites were under God's wrath.

Moses built an altar to memorialize God's victory for succeeding generations.

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

Our next lesson looks at the help God gave Moses in handing the responsibilities of leadership and delegation of authority.

—Brian D. Clouse

Studying the "Text"

A GREAT BATTLE 17:8-13
Formidable challenge (Ex. 17:8).

While the Israelites were still encamped at Rephidim, they encountered a new threat to their survival: "Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel." 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. 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] swiftness effectively in surprise attacks" (Stuart, New American Commentary: Exodus, B&HPublishing).

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 the Amalekites had been periodically attacking the weakest of the Israelites who were trailing behind.

Physical preparation (Ex. 17:9-10).. Forced to respond, Moses called on Joshua to choose men to fight against the Amalekites. This is the first mention of Joshua in the Bible.

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, scene they had collected from the Egyptian army at the Red Sea. However, they were not trained in 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.

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."

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.

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.

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.

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 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 and neither was Moses. They were there to influence its outcome.

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

Verse 12 actually indicates that Moses was holding up both his hands, and as might be expected, he soon became extremely tired.

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.

What are we to make of this episode, and what did it mean? 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.

Decisive victory (Ex. 17:13). As Moses continued to hold the staff high, the Lord gave the Israelites a decisive victory. The Hebrew word translated 'discomfited' 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.

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.

These victories assured the people of the Lord God's presence and that their success came from Him.

DIVINE DECLARATION

Ex. 17:14-16

God's judgment (Ex. 17:14). 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.

As a result of the Amalekites' actions, the Lord issued a devastating statement: "I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." In making this pronouncement, the Lord was the Amalekites in the same category as the Canaanites and other i^s-habitants of the Promised Land, 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.

This announced judgment was of such importance that God told Moses to note it in a permanent record. Moses may have kept a of sorts during the wilderness journeys (cf. Num. 33:2). He was told to record the Lord's words concerning Amalek so that His judgment would be remembered.

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. 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.

Israel's remembrance (Ex. 17:15-16). 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 "Jehovah-nissi" (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.

Moses then connected the altar and its name to the fact that the Lord had sworn to "have war with Amalek from generation to generation" (vs. 16) 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.

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.

—Jarl K. Waggoner.

QUESTIONS

1. Who were the Amalekites, and what did they do?

2. With what task was Joshua charged?
3. What made his task especially difficult?
4. What role did Moses play in the battle?
5. What did Moses' staff, the "rod of God," symbolize (Ex. 17:9)?
6. How did Aaron and Hur assist Mo-

7. What did the victory and the means by which it was achieved teach Israel?
8. judgment did the Lord pronounce on the Amalekites and why?
9. How would the Lord's judgment be remembered?
10. What did Moses name the altar he built at Rephidim, and why did he give it that name?

—Jarl K. Waggoner.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. Believers live in a hostile world but must not respond to it in fear or hostility (Ex. 17:8).
2. Effective leaders identify and mentor the next generation of leaders so the work of God's people continues (vs. 9).
3. Effective leaders model dependence on God's power and authority for those who follow (vss. 10-11).
4. As a family of faith, Christians should support and encourage one another in times of fatigue and burnout (vs. 12).
5. God works through His people, but the ultimate victory belongs to Him (vss. 13-14).
6. We can trust that God is with us in every battle and test (vss. 15-16).

—Cheryl YPowell.

RESEARCH DISCUSSION

1. In what ways can Christian leaders and workers respond when they experience an unprovoked attack? What encouragement does this passage offer?
2. What attributes of God does the rod represent in Scripture (Ex. 17:9; cf. 4:2-3; 7:8-13; Ps. 23:4; I Cor. 4:21)?

3. What warnings do you see in this passage that are particularly important for those who lead God's people?
4. Why do you think God commanded Moses to keep a record of this battle? Why would the recounting of this story be particularly important for Joshua to hear?

—Cheryl Y. Powell.

ILLUSTRATED HIGH POINTS

Then came Amalek (Ex. 17:8)

The sack of Rome by the Visigoths i.A.D. 410 was especially shocking since Rome had not been invaded by an enemy in centuries. The city of Rome overrun, but the biggest surprise was not that it had been attacked, but that it actually fell. It was the beginning of the end for an empire that had controlled so much of the world for so long.

Believers today must stay vigilant against Satan's attacks.

Moses said unto Joshua (vs. 9)

S. D. Gordon (1859-1936) was Christian layman who wrote more than twenty-five books and traveled and spoke widely as an evangelist.

He said, "The greatest thing anyone can do for God and man is pray. It is not the only thing, but it is the chief thing." He also said, "You can do more than pray after you have prayed, but you cannot do

more than pray until you have prayed."

Amalek threatened Israel. Moses got busy with the important work of interceding in prayer.

Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands (vs. 12)

A New England couple went to Mexico to translate the New Testament: into one of the Native American tribal languages. After completing that task and earning their PhDs in linguistics, they now serve as consultants to help other translation teams do the hard work of translating the Word of God into the heart language of the people.

Despite their expertise, they always begin their prayer letters, "Dear Aaron and Hur," indicating they are as dependent on their team of prayer supporters as Moses was.

—David A. Hamburg-

