

Intercession – Exodus 17:8-13

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Read The Text

8 Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. **9** And Moses said to Joshua, “Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand.” **10** So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. **11** And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. **12** But Moses’ hands *became* heavy; so they took a stone and put *it* under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. **13** So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. ^[1]

B. Background

1. This took place as the children of Israel were on their way to Mt. Sinai.
2. They’d left their bondage in Egypt not long before, had passed through the Red Sea, and were now drawing near the place where God would reveal Himself to them in majesty, giving them the Law and forging a covenant with them to be His special people.
3. As they camped in a place called *Rephidim*, a nomadic tribe called the *Amalekites* ambushed them.
4. Deut. 25 gives us some details on *how* the Amalekites attacked the camp of Israel. In recounting the ambush some 40 years later, Moses said -

17 “Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt, **18** how he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks, all the stragglers at your rear, when you *were* tired and weary; and he did not fear

God. [2]

5. The Amalekites were a nomadic people who lived throughout that region, trying to eek out a living by leading their flocks across the nearly barren wilderness.
 - a. it was no way to get rich, so they frequently harassed the trade caravans that passed through their territory.
 - b. they would have loved to ambush the children of Israel, but they were way to massive and powerful a group to attack outright
 - c. so they nibbled at the rear and the stragglers who had fallen behind along the road to Sinai.
 - d. when Israel finally stopped to camp at Rephidim, they attacked the outlying edges of the camp and those families who for whatever reason had set up their tents *away* from the main body of the nation.

II. INTERCESSION

A. *Dealing With Amalek*

1. These attacks were demoralizing & had to stop. The only way to end them was by taking direct action against the raiders,
2. So Moses told Joshua to gather an army and go out and fight the Amalekites.
3. But Moses knew that physical battle alone was not enough.
 - a. he'd come to see that as it pertains to the people of God, every *physical* challenge & contest has a spiritual dimension to it.
 - b. so he told Joshua when he went out on the plain to battle the raiders, he would go up on the hill that overlooked the plain with the rod of God in his hand.
4. That rod was the symbol of Moses' divine calling to lead the people.
 - a. he spoke *to the people* the words of God,
 - b. and *spoke to God* of the needs of the people.
 - c. that's what God's leader does – and that rod was the scepter, the symbol of his calling by God to be the leader of Israel.
5. Joshua knew what Moses would do on that mountain top was *pray*.
6. And indeed, that's what he did.
 - a. it says in v. 11 he lifted up his hands; this was the posture of

- prayer.
- b. today, the standard posture of prayer is to bow our heads and close our eyes
 - c. but in the ancient world, prayer was offered standing, with your hands up and your eyes open, looking to the heavens.
7. When Moses prayed on the mountain top, Joshua and the army of Israel beat *back* the Amalekites.
 8. But when Moses *stopped* praying, the tide turned and the *Amalekites* gained ground.
 9. Imagine this scene, [act it out]
 10. So the question is, why didn't Moses just keep praying and so end the thing quicker with a victory?
 11. Verse 12 tells us, he grew *weary*; his hands got *heavy*.
 - a. he couldn't hold them up and so, thinking they had to be up to pray, he lowered them and took a break.
 - b. that's when the Amalekites would rally and beat back Joshua's forces.
 12. Aaron and Hur, who'd gone up on the hill with Moses, saw what was happening and rolled a boulder over to where Moses stood and told him to sit down.
 - a. then they stood on each side of him and held his hands up.
 - b. now, with the additional support and strength of Aaron and Hur, Moses was able to *persevere* in prayer, and Joshua won the day.

B. A Picture Of Intercession

1. This is a fantastic picture of the power and importance of *intercessory prayer*.
2. Intercession is prayer that prays for someone or something else.
 - a. it's not a request for personal needs or for one's self – (petition)
 - b. it's prayer for others.
3. We find the command to intercede in the Lord's prayer when Jesus taught us to pray, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."
4. When we pray for others, *what* we pray is that God's will would be accomplished; that just as heaven is the realm in which God's presence, purpose, and power is perfectly manifest, so some place on earth would become a reflection of heaven.

5. We pray, “Lord, let Your kingdom, Your rule, Your perfect will and purpose be done in this specific situation, right now, as it is being perfectly manifest in heaven.”
6. That’s what Moses was doing as he stood on that hill and looked out on the battle below.
 - a. he prayed that *just as* God is sovereign over all things in the *spiritual* realm
 - b. so that sovereignty and victory would be manifest in a *visible* way on field of battle there at Rephidim.
7. Moses’ example here teaches us the truth that when it comes to the battles and trials of life, victory is wrought on the hill of prayer, not on the field of battle.
8. The battle always swings in the direction steered in prayer.

C. Perseverance

1. But why did Moses have to *keep praying*? Why wasn’t *one* prayer, *one* request to God *enough*?
2. Why would Joshua’s victory hinge on Moses’ *persevering* intercession?
3. The answer to that is simple – God doesn’t want our prayers to become nothing more than formulas that “work” the wheels of divine power.
 - a. He doesn’t want us to think of prayer as some kind of *magic rite* which flips some switch and sends spiritual current through the wires of result.
 - b. prayer is not a porter’s bell we ring to bid God carry the bag of our desires to some yonder room.
4. Prayer is nothing less than holy conversation with the King and Sovereign of the Universe.
 - a. it’s an invitation to *partner* with God in His eternal plan to bring redemption to this fallen and sin-sick world.
 - b. God wants us to understand that prayer is not us getting our will done in heaven or *by* heaven,
 - c. but that it’s the means He’s chosen to get His will done on Earth.
 - d. *why* God has chosen to use us and our prayers is a mystery, but it is no less true for it being a mystery.
 - e. as has been well said, “God does nothing but what He does in

- answer to the prayers of His people.”
5. In prayer, the goal is not to get our will done, but God’s, and that is why it can’t be lightly entered into or flippantly tossed up to God.
 6. Look at Moses here – he is *fully engaged!*
 - a. he is intense, so intense in fact that he grew weary!
 - b. this was no less work than what Joshua and his comrades were doing on the battlefield.
 - c. yes, make no mistake, Moses was *fighting too*; he was wrestling in prayer.
 - d. he wrestled with his own weakness and desire to quit.
 - e. he wrestled with his own ideas about how the battle ought to be fought and won.
 - f. he struggled to sort out the difference between his own desires for the contest and what God’s desire was.
 - g. he wrestled with what his calling meant and how crucial it was to the life and death of the children of Israel – how could he not, he was holding the rod of God in those very hands he lifted to the heavens.
 7. What would happen if God answered our prayers and intercessions the very first time we uttered them?
 - a. why, we’d treat prayer as nothing more than a *mechanism*, a machine for manufacturing results.
 - b. it’d become a spiritual slot machine that paid off a jackpot with every pull of the lever.
 8. God intends prayer to be far more than just the means of getting results.
 - a. prayer is communication with Him;
 - b. and the kind of communication He longs and looks for is deep, intimate communication.
 - c. He aims to accomplish more in prayer than just the changes we pray for, He wants to change US!
 - d. prayer is the medium of exchange between God and man,
 - e. and the man or woman who spends time in prayer *is changed by it*, by God working *through* it.
 9. The longest prayer recorded in scripture was when Moses spent time on another mountain top – Mt. Sinai.
 - a. he spent 40 days and nights in the manifest presence of God.
 - b. during this time, the two conversed,

- 1) God gave Moses the Law,
- 2) and Moses spoke to the Lord about the needs of the people and himself.
- c. when Moses returned to the camp of Israel after that 40 days, not only did He come with the word for word revelation of God, his own face radiated with the light of God's glory.
10. Some of us here today have been praying for something for a long time.
 - a. we've been interceding for a loved one's salvation for months, or years even.
 - b. we know of someone who's sick and needs healing, and have prayed again and again, but they are not restored.
 - c. some of us are praying fervently for troubled marriages or children who are living in the world and we've grown weary while waiting for the Lord to answer.
 - d. friend, don't give up - keep praying!
 - e. for the change God is working, He begins, not in what you're praying for, but in YOU!
 - f. the key to victory in the needs of earth finally turns when God does what He intends to do in the *intercessor first*.

D. Aaron & Hur

1. That's what we see here with Moses.
2. He grew weary, trying to fulfill his call as the spiritual leader of the people *all by himself*.
3. But the burden was more than he alone could carry. God wanted him to have help, but for whatever reason, Moses was slow to ask for help.
 - a. maybe it was his pride, or maybe it was his reluctance to burden others.
 - b. whatever the reason, God wanted to give Moses some practical support and assistance, but Moses was slow in yielding to what God wanted to do.
4. So his hands grew weary of holding up the rod of the Lord, and they drooped, and when they did, his leadership wilted as well, and the Amalekites rallied and surged back upon Joshua.
5. Aaron and Hur saw Moses needed help, and if he wouldn't ask for it, they would go ahead and provide it.

- a. they set up the stone for Moses to sit on and then held up his hands
 - b. and at moment the battle swung permanently in the favor of Israel.
6. You see, this was about more than beating back an attack on the camp of Israel; God just *used* that trial, that challenge to teach Moses that leadership was too big a task for him to do alone; he needed loyal and wise assistants who stand by his side and *literally* support him.
 7. Once Moses learned and accepted this lesson, then the battle below was all but over.
 8. Christian do you see the point? Maybe the reason you haven't seen the answer to that thing you're praying about yet is because what God wants to teach you *first* you haven't learned.
 9. The quickest way to see the answer to your intercession is not to quit praying, but to continue steadfastly in it, asking the Lord to help you see if *you're* standing in the way of the very thing you're praying for.
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10. There's another application to the example of Aaron and Hur supporting Moses.
 - a. do you have a couple of really loyal friends who can encourage and lift you up when you're weary?
 - b. we all need this and I think the Lord intends this passage to teach us the importance of having two close friends who can keeps tab on us and support us when they see we're down -
 - c. a couple of prayer-partners who will stand by our side and lift our hands up, encouraging us not to give up but to keep going.
 - d. Aaron and Hur didn't wait for Moses to ask for help; they could see he wasn't going to.
 - e. so they stepped in and did what they could so Moses could do what he needed to do.
 11. If you don't have two such loyal friends, then let me encourage you to prayerfully secure some.

III. CONCLUSION

A. *The Sword*

1. As we end, there's one last thing we need to take note of here. It's

found in v. 13.

So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.^[3]

2. Joshua's sword was made effective by what? *Prayer*.
3. What is the sword symbolic of in scripture? The Word of God.
4. Just as Joshua's victory with the sword was made possible by the prevailing intercessory prayer of Moses on the hill top – so the effectiveness of the ministry of the Word from this pulpit is directly related to the prevailing intercessory prayer of each of you!
5. Just as Aaron and Hur supported Moses, so you support the work of this ministry with your prayers.
6. Make no mistake – what happens on Sundays, Saturdays, Wednesdays, Tuesday nights with the high school, Thursday nights with the college group – is directly proportional to YOUR PRAYERS of intercession!
7. If the Sword of the Spirit is to do its work and beat back the powers of darkness, then it must be wielded by holy and anointed men and women.
8. Realize please, that ***you are a part*** of the pulpit ministry, the preaching and the teaching of the Word of God here at CC.

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[1] *The New King James Version*. 1996, c1982. Thomas Nelson: Nashville

[2] *ibid*

[3] *ibid*