

If You Must Fight

⁸ Then Amalek came and fought against Israel at Rephidim. ⁹ So Moses said to Joshua, "Choose men for us and go out, fight against Amalek. Tomorrow I will station myself on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand." (Exod. 17:8-9)

As you already know God has brought Israel up out of the land of Egypt into the wilderness.

A few weeks back, Mark took us through the first of this chapter ...

... the Israelites were without water and thirsty AND they complained

... God, in His mercy, tells Moses to strike a rock with a wooden rod and when Moses did, water came out and the thirst of the nation was quenched.

What a day to shout! What a day to praise God! What a day to be excited!

... but then came Amalek.

Then, as now, there were nomadic tribes who wandered through out the desert looking for somewhere to get water and graze their cattle.

This wandering Amalekites happened upon the Israelites ...

... the Amalekites discovered this multitude of non-military, largely unorganized people

... and they saw the opportunity of being able to pillage and take spoils for themselves

... Amalek attacked Israel, grabbed stuff and ran away

... it was the original smash and grab

Apparently, this was so successful ...

... they emboldened by the success of the first raid so Amalek decided to attack Israel again and get more stuff.

Best estimates tell us that the Israelites numbered somewhere between 2 and 3 million people at that time.

... History tells us that Moses, before the age of 40, had led at least one successful military campaign ...

... He was the son of Pharaoh's daughter, educated in the ways of Egypt, politics, and warfare ...

... Moses understood how the world worked ...

... one successful attack meant another one was probably coming. So

Moses said to Joshua, "Choose men for us and go out, fight against Amalek

This is the first time that Israel has ever gone into battle ...

... Moses is preparing for the inevitable.

... He tells Joshua to get the people ready for war ...

... this is quite different from what happened at the Red Sea.

Here God wants the people to play an active role in their defense.

If you remember, at the Red Sea they were told to "stand still and see the salvation of the Lord"
...

... BUT here at Rephidim they are to become an army to defend themselves and fight.

There are times God says "let me handle it" BUT there are other times when God says, "Put on the whole armor of God and earnestly contend for the faith."

... with God there is always this balance between **depending on God** and **acting in accordance with God's commands**

I want to be very clear here ... I love history (a lot) but the story of this battle is not recorded here to satisfy our historical curiosity.

Everything in the Word of God is written for our **edification** ... for our **profit** ... to **teach us** something important ... to **reveal the Glory** of God and the coming work of Jesus Christ.

In fact, we see in the text that the Lord (Himself) commands Moses to write the details of this event down

... this is something we need **to learn** ... to **remember**.

This story is more than just a general metaphor to tell us that life is a battle, and we need to fight ...

... this is something more specific.

Amalek was the son of Esau ... and throughout scripture is a symbol of the enemy of God's people.

When Winston Churchill was asked by Franklin D. Roosevelt what he would call WW2 he replied, "The Unnecessary War."

Churchill said that there had never been a war more easily to avoid than WW2.

His reasoning was that the Treaty of Versailles that was signed after WW1 failed in 2 areas.

First, it did not ensure the continuous disarmament of Germany, second it vindictively demanded that Germany alone pay all the reparations to the other European nations that had been drawn into the first World War.

Churchill believed this second provision set the stage for so much nationalistic anger and bitterness in Germany toward all the surrounding nations.

... it was this feeling of anger and bitterness that Hitler and his henchmen used to manipulate the German people.

I only mention this because of the parallel between WW2 and the Spiritual war that you and I are involved in.

We are at war with the devil who has already been defeated

... but like Germany Satan is bitter about the defeat

Every day we face this foe who has already been vanquished but continually feels the bitterness of that defeat at Calvary...

... he the church daily from every direction

... Amalek is a picture of the unavoidable warfare that we as believers face

Right now, there is a battle being waged against God people and God's truth

1. The War Must Be Holy

The war we are in is not a war against flesh and blood ... it is a war against Satan, and error.

... it is against sin, evil, hatred, false doctrine, heresy ...

... BUT WE MUST REMEMBER ... those who are promoting that sin, evil, hatred, and heresy ...

... those people we love

... we don't hate the heretic ... we pray for his very soul's salvation.

... we don't detest the immoral person ... we plead for their reconciliation to God

Jesus said plainly and clearly, *"Love your enemies and do good to those who hate you."*

Don't forget that!

People forget that ...

Some people involved in apologetics and the defense of the gospel sometimes speak with tones of anger, arrogance, hatred and sarcasm ...

... they are, in their defense of the gospel are violating the very teachings of Christ!

... the war for truth is not a war of flesh and blood.

We are not fighting against people ... ultimately our defense of truth is fighting FOR people.

We are not walking about looking for an argument ...

... we are to be those who weep for those who do not know the truth.

... During the early part of the reformation this was what distinguished the reformers from the Roman Catholic Church

... The church in Rome used force and tried to make the Reformers to return to the Roman church and agree with the Pope ...

Hus, Wycliff, Lattimer, Ridley ... to mention a few ...

... many of them were nailed to the stake, cast into prison, burned in the public square ...

... some spots in Europe were turned into fields of blood.

... ironically in time some of the reformers began to do the very same thing to those who disagreed with them.

... In the first five years of John Calvin's rule of Geneva, 58 people were executed and 76 exiled for their religious beliefs.

That was a mistake! Wrong!

We must earnestly (not angrily/hatefully/with malice) contend for the faith ...

The battle for truth is for the very souls and salvation of those people who deny that truth.

... therefore our fight must be a holy war in every sense.

... the war it is against sin and error, NOT people.

When our military men and women go out to battle, they are fighting for their homes, families, nation ... for democracy and freedom ...

... they go to defeat, destroy, and conquer ...

... **it is about stuff:** land, things, oil, politics, and ideals ...

Certainly much of our liberty, freedom, and comforts in America have to do with the faith of our forefathers

... if it had not been for the predominance of Christianity in America, I don't know where we would be as a nation right now...

... But the battle for Christ and His truth is much, much more ... it is about precious souls and their eternal destiny.

... If the gospel is silenced

... If the teaching of the bible is outlawed

... If preachers cease to preach ... God help us!!!

“If the foundations of the truth of Christ be destroyed, what shall the righteous do?”

And make no mistake about it the greatest danger is not about this church or that church siding with the enemy and falling ...

... the real danger is the lukewarmness and coldness in your heart and mine ...

... it's like this ...the truth of God is proclaimed, and we respond, "*eh, OK, whatever.*"

Spiritual Decline does not begin in the liberal seminary ...

... it begins in the pew when the heart is so apathetic it becomes more concerned about when the sermon is going to end than what the sermon is actually about.

... decline is inevitable when believers are indifferent, and obedience becomes optional.

2. Our Weapons Are Godly

So, Amalek attacks Israel ...

God could have sent large hailstones and beaten them down

God could have caused them to turn on each another and fight among themselves (as God did with the Midianites in Gideon's day.)

But He didn't ... instead God gave them two weapons to fight the enemy.

"Choose men for us and go out, fight against Amalek Tomorrow I will station myself on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand."

God could have defeated Midian himself, but instead God said, "choose men to fight and I'll go up on the hill and pray."

... In other words, God is saying, "***I am going to use human effort but in such a way that God receives all the glory.***"

The work of God is accomplished through our personal effort **AND** total dependency upon God.

... these are the two weapons God gives us ... and **BOTH** are necessary.

- The farmer can pray for a harvest until his voice is gone ... but unless he plants some seeds ...
- The soldier can pray for victory in battle but unless he gets out of the barracks

Here is what is so interesting about this particular account ... none of these Israelites were trained or prepared for battle ... and yet they **WON!**

They routed the enemy!!!

DO YOU SEE IT?

This teaches us that all of us can fight against the enemy ... sow the seed ...

... the source of victory is not in our skills or talents but in God being glorified!

It doesn't matter if you give out a tract with a trembling hand or share your faith with a trembling voice ...

... the source of victory is God's glory, not our ability!

... all of us should do what we can and we should do it passionately.

... don't be discouraged by the smallness of your ability

... don't become depressed over the lack of visible success ... **GO ON!**

Maybe you can't get out of your home ... you can write a note or make a phone call!

Maybe you can't prayer walk ... but you can pray from your bed of sickness!

If you can only do little ... **THEN DO LITTLE BUT DO IT FOR CHRIST!**

C. H. MacIntosh once said, "Let us bear in mind that where the Holy Ghost is working, one instrument is as good and as efficient as seventy; and where He is not working, seventy are of no more value than one."

Everything in God's family serves a purpose and glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ.

God created none of us to be zeroes or blanks ...

God has made you with a purpose in mind ... find your purpose in God and fill it!

The Amalekites were military predators ... and the Israelites were nothing more than a rag tag band of former slaves ...

... they had never handled a sword or a spear

... they didn't have a chance

... they were cowards ... at least that is how they acted when they saw Pharaoh's army coming after them at the Red Sea.

"But Nathan, I just don't have the ability to witness to someone about Jesus."

That's the point!

Maybe you know little or nothing about the strategy of war ...

... your enemies may annihilate your logic and be better at talking ...

... it doesn't matter. If you are God's child, the ONE who is with you **more than makes up** the difference.

... Go forward with faith in God, and you will be victorious.

HOW CAN WE BE SURE?

Joshua and the Israelites fought ... and they would have absolutely lost ... if it had not been for Moses on the hill.

Let me set the scene.

Amalek and Israel are engaged in war and for a while Israel is pushing Amalek back,

... but then Amalek rallies and begins to regain lost territory and gain new ground

... but then suddenly Israel gets a rush of energy, and the Amalekites began to fall

... but then Israel loses momentum ... back and forth, back and forth

... what in the world is happening?

There on the brow of the hill stands Moses!

And when his arms are lifted toward heaven God's people are victorious ...

... but Moses is an old man and when he becomes tired his hands drop, and when they drop the enemy advances.

... so, Aaron and Hur hold up one of Moses' arms and when they do Israel presses toward victory.

... they sit Moses on a stone.

... With the help of Aaron and Hur, Moses arms remain lifted to the heavens and God's people win the victory.

These are the 2 weapons of our warfare **prayer AND effort.**

Work ... put in all the effort you can BUT remember, there will be no eternal success apart from prayer.

3. Our Intercessor is Better

Moses arms got weary, and Israel began to lose momentum.

Moses body got tired, and Aaron and Hur had to sit the old man on a rock.

... as long as Moses could intercede victory was certain.

I am thankful for an intercessor like Moses ... but someone greater than Moses has come!

... and His Name is Jesus!

... Jesus never tires interceding for us.

... He does not become weary when the days of trial and difficulty become long!

Moses was good, but Jesus is better!

²⁴ but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. ²⁵ Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. (Heb. 7:24-25)

What a glorious truth.

Who is Christ making intercession for? Those who draw near to God by Christ.

You can rest assured that if you are a follower of Jesus Christ ... He is praying for you!

... This is one of the many reasons why you should become a follower of Jesus Christ.

In John 17:9 Jesus says, *“I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me.”*

There is both safety and victory in the Lord Jesus Christ!

Everyone is in a battle ... but not everyone is on the winning side.

... Jesus is the winning side.

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”