

Chris Lewis. 22nd February 2009. Exodus 17:8-16

The Attack of the Amalekites

Things go from bad...(1-7)

- *You've taken the plunge. You have done what God said. You're looking forward to what he promised you. But the going is hard. People around you are wondering what you're doing, why you're doing it. Secretly you might be wondering yourself. Sound familiar? You're just like Moses.*
- Moses has just had a trying time with his tribe at Rephidim. It's been one thing after another. He brings his people out of Egypt as God said, they moan. They're provided with food God provided, they moan. He appears to believe God when no one else does. "Why do you put the Lord to the test?" he asks in exasperation.
- Striking the water from the rock so that the Israelites can drink happens in front of the Israelite leaders. He knows who needs to see the Lord's provision. It's faith-building for him and them. If the Israelite leaders can see God's provision, Moses is in with a chance!
- Where this happens Moses names "Massah"- testing, and "Meribah"- rebellion. "Is the Lord with us or not?" was the cry of the Israelites as they quarrelled.
- Something was about to happen which would be sure to raise this question once again.

...to worse. (8)

- NOW the Amalekites come! This tribe have a dubious reputation. Exodus 17:8 refers to an attack. Moses at the end of his life refers to this episode to the assembled Israelites...

(Deut 25:17-19) “When you were weary and worn out, they met you on your journey, and cut off all who were lagging behind; they had no fear of God.”

These Amalekites were pillagers, scavengers, feeding off the weak and weary.

- Is it any wonder whether the Israelites thought, where is God?
- The Israelites were still new to this idea of freedom from Egypt in order to live the way God wanted. Could it be that leaving Egypt was a mistake? At least they had food and water there! At least things were being provided for them, rather than what little they had being taken away. At least they knew what to expect every day!
- *BUT all this wasn't their destiny! God had better things for them in store, like he has for us!*
- Looking ahead the vision of the Promised Land seemed so far away. Was it about to be snatched from them just as soon as they begin? They were stuck in an unfulfilled promise. A desert in more ways than one!
- BUT if the Israelites were to be God's people had a lot of growing up to do. They might have despised their Egyptian masters, but had relied on them nonetheless. Now deprived of this, they had to learn how to rely on God. A new way of life is never easy!
- *Learning to rely on him more and more is a crucial part of this "desert" experience. The old ways may have been comfortable to an extent, but God brings us into a new and better way of living. It's hard getting rid of the old though!*

The staff of God... Plan of attack...(9)

- Moses knew and trusted God. He knew the situation demanded action, but also needed God to act as well to avoid being

slaughtered! All the work God had done previously was not to be in vain.

- Moses knew Joshua and trusted him. He had even renamed him in Num 13:16. “Hoshea” meant salvation. “Joshua” means “The Lord saves”. Jesus means the same thing.
- In Egypt the Israelites may have been seeking salvation. Moses knew he wouldn’t find it without the Lord. This was being taught to Joshua and the army he led by his change of name, and to the Israelites as a result.
- Moses would oversee with his “staff of God”. (Was a shepherd’s crook at the beginning of Exodus!). This staff had been around a bit. This staff had become a snake, had eaten other magician’s snakes! This had healed Moses’ leprous hand. It had struck the Nile and it had become blood. He had just struck the rock at Horeb with it. God promised Moses that he would be able to perform miraculous signs in Exodus 4:17.
- Faith must be kicking in at this point. How many times had God saved them before? This wasn’t just a magic stick, this was a sign that God was with them. God had given them a task; he was going to make sure they had the tools to succeed!
- *God reminded people of past glories throughout the Bible. He may have reminded you of past glories in your life. Let these build your faith. The situation you find yourself in may well become another reminder of God’s glory in the future.*

Hands Outstretched as the battle goes on...(10-13)

- Aaron and Hur accompanied Moses. These were people Moses trusted. Aaron, often Moses’ mouthpiece. Hur appears to be the grandfather of Bezalel who helped to build the tabernacle.
- Joshua fought the battle; faithfully doing what had been asked of him was critical to the Israelites’ success. The credit for winning

partly goes to him. “Joshua overcame the Amalekite army...” This was great training for what he would be doing in the future. While Joshua was busy...

- Moses prayed the battle! ‘Arms in the air’ was an acknowledged sign of asking God. Relying on his power. It’s in your hands, God!
- When Moses’ hands were down, Amalekites were winning. Yes, the battle was in God’s hands. Moses needed to know that! They had live according to what God wanted. They were his now. Not their own, not the Egyptians.
- Moses had held out his hands before. Hail had fallen on Egypt. Day had become night, the sea had parted. God was on the move again.
- Moses hands may have been tired, but he knew the importance of keeping on asking for God. Could Joshua’s army have seen Moses on the hill with his arms in the air?
- *Action and prayer went hand in hand here, as it does for us. Moses didn’t try on his own. Are we seriously suggesting that Aaron and Hur didn’t pray as well? Who is helping us when we get tired? Moses didn’t tell the whole world but he trusted a few to help out.*

The promise and the memory...(14-16)

- God wanted Moses to write this all down. Joshua HAD to be told. He did not know at the time, but it would be he, not Moses that would finally lead the people of Israel into the Promised Land. This would become another story of how God overcame an impossible obstacle.
- Moses called the altar there “The Lord is my banner”. There would be no mistaking Moses’ banner. This goes in front of him, stating intention. These things were huge!

- This was just the beginning of a forty year adventure in the desert. BUT Moses and Joshua had clearly learned that God was serious about his promises.
- God did not move the Israelites from slavery to slavery, or to die in the desert. The Amalekites would be destroyed. God was on the case!
- *It's the same with us. Has God brought us this far to leave us for dead? If it is tempting to go back to the way things were, or to stay where we are, we are tempted to miss out on what God wants for us.*
- *Think of what God has done already. He WILL do more!! He wants us to succeed. What we are building in the Crown is his idea. His ideas come to fruition.*