

## Victorious

Exodus 17:8-16

8/24/08

### Intro

As we come to Exodus chapter 17, we find Israel in the desert. They have been set free from the slavery of Egypt; they have crossed the Red Sea, have seen the defeat of the Egyptian army, and have come to bitter waters where they learned that God is Jehovah Rapha, the God who heals. He took that which was bitter and made it sweet.

They then came to Elim where there were twelve springs and seventy date palms where they camped for some time. After they left Elim, they traveled to the wilderness of Sin. There they grumbled against the Lord because they had no meat, there was not enough food. But God told Moses that He would rain down bread from heaven, but that He would test them to see if they would walk in the instruction of the Lord.

Israel then traveled to Rephidim and again there was no water to drink and they grumbled against the Lord again there. But again God provided miraculously. He had Moses strike the rock of Horeb and water came out of it that they might drink. Again we see the picture of Christ through each of these places. Jesus said, "I am the Bread of Life, coming down out of heaven." He also said, "I am the Living Water, come unto Me all who are thirsty."

But at Rephidim, the Amalekites came and attacked them there. Here at Rephidim Israel has the first actual battle.

There is so much application for us here because this battle becomes a picture of the believer's life.

<b>I. Our Greatest Battle is Within</b>
---

- God did not take Israel directly into Palestine because he knew they were not ready.

- There was a transformation that was needed within them. They had been brought out of Egypt where they had lived as slaves and did not know how to live as free men before God.
- There is much transformation in our lives as well. Their journey through the wilderness was like a school of discipleship. God is also bringing us through a school of discipleship.

A. The flesh has many desires

- The battle with the Amalekites appears to be completely unprovoked. Yet we can understand the Amalekites' concern as more than 2 million people crossed the desert, drinking the water.
- Thirst is a very powerful desire. In fact, the only way to survive in the desert is to master the water. The Amalekites, like other desert people, would have developed cisterns, many secretly hidden.
- Then the Israelites appear at Elim where there are 12 springs. When they move to Rephlim, fresh water gushes forth from the rock of Horeb.

**Illus- Water is more valuable than oil. It's amazing how expensive a simple bottle of water can be. In fact, in one airport I was in, water was more expensive than grapefruit juice.**

- The flesh desires water powerfully. It craves after food desperately. It has great sexual desire.
- But the flesh has no righteousness, it has no morality, it has no discernment. It simply wants.

**Romans 7:18, For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.**

**Illus – The Amalekites were descendents of Esau and Esau was a picture of the simple and base desires of the flesh. When he came from the fields desperately hungry, he was willing to trade his birthright for a bowl of stew.**

- It's also important to remember that the flesh resists any attempt to control it.

**Illus – This can easily be seen in a young child. Before they can discern what is right or wrong, they simply want what they want, and they want it now. And if you try to resist them, you will have a battle on your hands.**

**Romans 8:7, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so,**

B. God gives us a new nature

- God was transforming Israel and teaching them to trust in the Lord to give them what they needed in every way.
- When they grumbled against the Lord because they had no food, God gave them manna, but just enough for each day that they would learn to walk in the instruction of the Lord.
- When they lacked water, God had Moses strike the rock of Horeb with his staff that they might know that it is the Lord who provides.

- Clearly, the rock of Horeb is a picture of the death of Christ.

**App –It is absolutely critical that we understand that on the hill of Calvary, Christ dies in our behalf. The rock was struck! But that there is also to be another death, when we are in Christ, we are to die with him, so that we might also live with him.**

**From the rock come waters of new life.**

**Galatians 2:20, I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.**

**Galatians 5:16-17, But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.**

- This flesh is just a tent to dwell in temporarily, but while we live in this tent, we are to master over it.

**C. Know when you're weak**

- The Amalekites used a despicable method of troubling the Hebrews. They would circle around behind and destroy those who were weak.
- This is made clear to us in the book of Deuteronomy...

**Deuteronomy 25:17-18, Remember what Amalek did to you along the way when you came out from Egypt, how he met you along the way and attacked among you**

**all the stragglers at your rear when you were faint and weary; and he did not fear God.**

- We are most vulnerable when we are spiritually weakest.

**Illus – many people struggle with their flesh when they're driving. But I notice that when I am stressed because I'm late, that my flesh is most vulnerable. Instead of being in the Spirit, I'm convinced there is a "traffic conspiracy" against me.**

**But I remember taking Jacob to the airport and we were having a very pleasant conversation spiritually. Then, when someone tried to cut me off, it didn't trouble me at all.**

- The wilderness is a school of discipleship. Israel needed to grow in their relationship to God and to learn to trust him for their every need.
- We also must grow spiritually, to gain strength in our relationship to God so that we master the desires of the flesh.

**Illus – At a conference in Africa, I asked several pastors what would be their response if someone said they were struggling with lustful thoughts; would they believe that this person was filled with a demon? Indeed, they did.**

**But it is not a demon that causes the person to have sexual desires, just like it is not a demon that causes us to desire chocolate cake. What we need is more discipleship, to grow spiritually in the Lord, so that the Spirit within us controls.**

**II Corinthians 5:14, for the love of Christ compels us,**

## II. Know How to be Victorious

- Moses instructed Joshua to choose some men and go out and fight against the enemy.
- But what happens next in this story is absolutely critical to understand for our own spiritual victory. Notice that there are two aspects of this victory; there is what is happening on the battlefield, and what is happening with Moses standing at the top of a hill with his arms lifted up and the staff of God in his hands.

### A. Our part is diligence

- Without a question we have a part to play in our relationship to God and our spiritual victory.
- God was the provider of their daily manna, but they had to walk in the instruction of the Lord. And on the Sabbath they were to trust the Lord by not going out after manna.
- There is a powerful aspect of faith in doing what God is asking us to do.

**Illus – Many years after this when Israel had settled into Palestine, they had a king named Saul who was instructed to destroy the Amalekites. Yet when the prophet Samuel came after the battle, he asked if Saul had done what he had been asked to do. “Yes,” Saul answered, “I have carried out the command of the Lord.”**

**“What then is this bleating of sheep that I hear with my ears?” Saul then said, “These were taken to sacrifice to the Lord.”**

**I Samuel 15:22, “Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.”**

- There is faithfulness in doing what God has asked us to do, and we should do it with all our might...

**Ecclesiastes 9:10, Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.**

**Illus – I was so impressed with a runner of the 400 meters at the Olympics who finished third by diving across the finish line and collapsing on the ground.**

- The sword in Joshua’s hand is a symbol also of the word of God and the importance in our lives of rightly dividing the Word of Truth.

**Hebrews 4:12, For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.**

**II Timothy 2:15, Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.**

**B. God’s part – He is our banner**

- Here Israel learned a new name for God – He is Jehovah Nissi; He is our banner.
- Joshua’s diligent battle plan was not enough.

- Moses went to the top of the hill and lifted up his hands to God. But his hands grew weary, but whenever his hands fell, the Hebrews began to lose in battle. When he listed his hands again, the Hebrews gained ground against the enemy.
- So Aaron and Hur came alongside of Moses and lifted up his hands while Moses sat on a rock between them. And the Hebrews saw a great victory against the Amalekites that day.
- There are so many practical lessons for us from this part of the story.
- The hands lifted up are a picture of surrender, of giving glory and honor to God, to trust in him in prayer.

**Illus – When we lift our hands in worship we say the same.**

- Learn to encourage others. We need people in our lives that will lift up our hands when we are discouraged, when we grow weary. But we also need to be willing to be an Aaron or Hur in someone else's life as well.
- Live a surrendered life. The staff was a picture of Moses failure, but became a symbol of God's power. Our humility, our faith trusts in God.

**Illus – Jehovah Nissi, our Banner, can be seen in the importance of the US flag to many people. It represents the power and valor of our nation... the land of the free and the home of the brave.**

**When we see the flag and hear the anthem, it brings tears to our eyes, even more is God our banner and our allegiance is with Him.**