

Victorious Power

Bible Reading:
Exodus 17: 8-16
Luke 10: 1-21

PREPARED BY
KEN GEHRELS
PASTOR
CALVIN CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH OF OTTAWA
ONTARIO, CANADA

We just read the words:

So Joshua fought with Amalek....

And Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the sword.

A few short words that describe what was not a long encounter - just one day, a battle between two nomadic desert tribes. The swords flashed. Soldiers clashed.

What is key, though, is **not** what happened down on the battlefield.

Instead, the main focus of the Word of God is on another battlefield
at another plain
on the hilltop.

We are witness to the drama of hands in a posture of prayer.

And we realize that the success of Israel's army was not first of all the good weaponry they had - it wasn't very good.

They realize that it wasn't a well-trained army. They weren't.

It wasn't even the leadership of mighty general Joshua.

Rather it was the power of prayer at work, and the flowing of the power of God from heaven to earth and onto the battlefield through that prayer.

THAT'S

what made it all a success.

The power of prayer, symbolized through the raised hands of Moses.

Prayer is often spoken about in this way -

symbolized through the raising of human hands to heaven,
the way a young child raises his hands to reach up towards mother or father in anticipation and
dependance.

*Ps 28:2 Hear my cry for mercy as I call to you for help,
as I lift up my hands toward your Most Holy Place.*

Prayer - where an ordinary human being reaches up in dependance to an extraordinary, invincible, omnipotent God.

Prayer becomes a channel for the power of God to flow into life.

Prayer, and prayer alone, allowed Israel to defeat their enemies.

Moses, Joshua and the soldiers realize this, and so they gather round an alter called "*the LORD is my banner.*"

Banners were flags flown for ancient armies. They were raised as rallying points around which the troops could gather as they prepared to head out in battle against the enemy.

It could have been easily so that after this victory, the soldiers would have been inspired by Joshua's generalship, or the great leadership of Moses. They would rallied around and gathered under the guidance of these men.

But no - The LORD is my banner - that is the rallying cry!

The power of God - **THAT** allowed them to stand against the enemy!

In this case Amalek.

Amalekites, throughout bible history, try to confront, oppose and destroy God's people. They often did it through rear attacks, sneak tactics, picking on the weak and vulnerable.

Who are these people, these Amalekites?

They are nation that symbolizes and embodies all opposition to the work of God and the people of God.

When you see Amalek in the Bible, think enemy of God.

And when you see Amalek, be reminded that behind them and their human opposition to God and believers in God lies

the great adversary of God,

the adversary of all God's people all through the ages,

Satan.

His name very literally means, in Hebrew, "The Adversary."

It is he, Satan, who stands behind the persecutions of the church.

It is he who sows doubt into the minds of people.

It is he who brings temptation into our hearts, and presses the matter as far as he can.

It is he who causes rifts in the church, wanderings from truth in the faith.

And yes, it is he who through his demons can influence people's souls and minds - oppressing and possessing so that they become sick or deluded.

Understand that, people of God. Understand that well.

Recognize what the apostle Paul said:

Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. [Eph 6.12]

Our Lord Jesus understood that better than anyone on earth ever did. So it is that as he sends his 70 followers into the countryside to proclaim the good news to the people that God loves them and wants a relationship with them, Jesus warns:

Go! I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. (v.3)

And when they return, he makes very clear to them who the leader of the wolf pack is.

The 70 returned with joy and said,

"Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us."

He replied, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning..."

(v.17, 18)

Fellow believers, I want you to understand that the battle which Israel fought with Amalek around 1500 B.C., was the same battle that the 70 followers fought in Palestine around 30 A.D.

It was part of an ongoing war which Satan is fighting against heaven.

Notice I said **IS**.

For that battle continues even today.

You and I continue in the same tradition of warfare that occupied Joshua and Moses, and that occupied the 70 followers of Jesus.

It is a war that manifests itself in different physical ways at different times of history. But behind those different physical manifestations is one constant spiritual reality. It is the dark reality of the enemy of the Kingdom of God.

Notice, then, how Joshua and Moses succeeded in their battle.

And notice how Jesus guided his followers to success in theirs.

From these lessons we can then go forward into battle against the evil one in our day and age.

Jesus said, "I watched Satan fall....."(v.18).

The Greek word used for fall indicates a completed act.

Satan has fallen.

His overthrow was guaranteed.

That defeat began the moment the Son of God came to earth, the moment Jesus was born. It was sealed with Christ's resurrection.

And then the next words of Jesus:

"I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

The authority, and the power for victory comes not from human strength, but straight from the throne of God. It is the authority of God himself, and his son Jesus that pushes back the forces of Satan.

So it is that when we face the attacks of Satan in temptation, or oppression or possession or roadblocks or attempted divisions or whatever, that we had better face them as Israel did through Moses, - with our hands stretched firmly upward to heaven in prayer, reaching as a child to his Heavenly Father, seeking his help and his power to work.

Try and engage in the work of God without such a strong, ongoing prayer connection is to guarantee defeat. Engage in the work of God WITH a strong and vital prayer link to heaven, and you will see success.

That is why the apostle Paul, in Ephesians 6, tells believers to put on the spiritual armour which God provides, and to get ready to do battle against the enemy. He describes the armour that is to be put on in vv.14-17. And then, after the armour is put on, the soldier goes to war.

And how does he do that? Listen to v.18:

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints....

I am also reminded of words from the book of James:

"Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." [Jas 4.7]

Notice the two-part work here:

1. submit to God: in the case of the Amalekites that is Moses standing on the Mountainside with hands raised in prayer.
2. resist the devil: that is Joshua fighting with his troops.

I say all this, brothers and sisters, because we today need, as much as ever, to be equipped to do battle for the Lord. We today, as much as ever, face the opposition of Satan. We face it as individual believers. We face it as a congregation. We face it as a Christian community in Ottawa and throughout Canada.

There are all manner of ways he works.

But however he works, we can, we must and we will stand against that. Not just defensively. But on the offensive. Moving forward for the Kingdom of God. Seeking to push back the forces of darkness. And doing that through the great weapon of prayer.

So often in history it has been shown that when the people of God pray, pray hard, pray often, pray united, keep on praying, keep on raising their hands and hearts and minds to heaven,

keep on seeking the authority and power of the Lord...

When the people of God pray,
miracles happen,
the Church grows,
the Kingdom of God expands,
lives are changed,
people come to know Jesus Christ.

When the people of God don't pray,
when they work,
no matter how sincerely,
when they fight Satan,
no matter how intensely,

but do it without prayer,
there will be stagnation, and discouragement, and certain defeat.

So it is for us at Calvin.

We strive as a church to raise our children in the fear of the Lord. But it will all amount to nothing except we bathe that in prayer.

We strive as a church to worship the Lord twice a week. That worship will be weak and anemic, unless it be surrounded by prayer.

We seek to grow in fellowship and service. There, too, we need prayer.

Bringing the claims of the gospel to our community - it is fruitless if it is prayer-less.

Prayer - seeking the power and work of God in our lives and in our world.

It is the secret weapon of spiritual warfare.

Let it continually remain the secret weapon of this church.