

BUMC Weekly Bible and Sermon Study

Sermon: “The Support of a Leader” (from the “Deliverance” sermon series)

Scripture: Exodus 17:8-16 (Amalek Attacks Israel)

Key take-aways from the Scripture

- In this section of Exodus, the Israelites are continuing to wander from their departure from Egypt. Now, they are in an area known as Rephidim, which is an area located in the south-central part of the Sinai Peninsula and north of Mt. Horab (aka Mt. Sinai).
- Here, the Israelites are attacked by the Amalekites, which were a group of nomads native to the area south of Canaan (see 1 Sam 15:7; 27:8). They were the descendants of Esau through the line of Eliphaz (Gen 36:12).
- Verse 9 introduces us to Joshua, whom Moses orders to gather some of the men and fight the attacking Amalekites. During this battle, Moses picks up the staff of God (refer back to Exodus 4:20) and holds it above his head. As we see in this section of Exodus, when the staff is lowered, it symbolizes a lack of dependence on God which in turn gave the Amalekites an edge in the battle. When it remains lifted, the Israelites achieve victory.
- In verse 13, Joshua defeats Amalek and his people with his sword. As we see in the Old Testament, they are a persistent enemy to the Israelites (Numbers 14:45; Judges 6:33; 1 Samuel 14:48; 15:7; 27:8) until they are finally defeated and wiped out by King David in 1 Samuel 30. See also 1 Chronicles 4:42-43.
- In verse 14, God instructs Moses to “Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered....” This most likely was recorded upon a scroll made from reeds of the papyrus plant. The reeds of this plant were also used to create baskets, similar to what Moses was placed in as a baby to be rescued in the Nile River.
- In verse 15, Moses commemorates this victory by building an altar which is names “The LORD is my Banner.” Following the actions Moses took in lifting his staff to God during the battle with the Amalekites in vv. 8-13, the banner in this battle represents the uplifting of the staff to God to achieve victory over the enemy. The purpose of this altar is not to just commemorate their victory, but to remind them that they are God’s people who will always have God with them no matter the crisis or challenge.

Key take-aways from the Sermon

- Exodus 17 is a transitional phase in the life of Israel. In this liminal space, the wilderness season, the Hebrew children are moving from a place where their leader does everything for them to one in which their leader empowers them to care for themselves. God is empowering His people to engage in battle. He is not working *for* them but working *through* them!
- In this section of Exodus, there is nothing magical about Moses' hands or the staff, he is simply interceding for his people and pointing to the source of their strength.
- The Amalekites: direct descendants of Esau and a violent and abusive tribe. They were known for attacking the most vulnerable of their enemies. They were the epidemic of evil.
- There are times when spiritual leadership grow weary. Consider Moses in today's verses and the story in Luke when a woman sought healing and touched Jesus' robe. He felt not only her touching his garment but also a depletion in the sense of taking on her pain as if they were His own.
- When our arms get weary, we need an "Aaron" and "Hur" to lift us up. Everybody needs someone to lift them up: this is what the church, small groups, Sunday School classes, etc. are for...they keep us steady in dark times. The only thing better than receiving that support is giving it to someone else.
- Critics vs. prophets: a critic stands outside of a system and mock it. Prophets remain clear-eyed and conscientious inside a sinful system and love it anyway. A prophet does not simply see something (like the church) as it is, but what it *can* be!
- Sometimes we as Christians operate from the "Goldilocks" theology: looking for something *just right*. We look for something just right ...when we are not just right!
- One of the purposes of the church (and community) is to lift others up (that may not even be here) and to help someone else look up by our words, deeds and demeanor.
- It is evident when we have been with Jesus and when we haven't (refer to Acts 4:13).
- One of the most important tasks of a leader (and a disciple!) is to lift the spirit of the room/team (Daniel Goleman, author *Emotional Intelligence*).
- The leader must give the team confidence...even in their own grief (refer to 2 Sam 19).
- The greatest non-verbal que in the history of the world was when another King came down and died for our sins. Our purpose is to mirror our King, in word, deed and demeanor. Weary hands become steady until sunset and beyond.

Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion

- What were your key take-aways from the sermon? How can you apply this to your everyday life?
- What is the significance of Moses raising his staff to God to achieve victory over the Amalekites? How can we take this story and apply it to our lives? Who helps lift you up when you grow weary in your faith?
- When have you caught yourself falling into the “Goldilocks theology” and searching for something to be “just right”? How do we overcome this?
- Read Deuteronomy 25:17-19. Compare how this differs from the story in Exodus regarding the Amalekites.



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