

Wilderness Gleanings 6 - Rephidim – War with Amalek

Christ as our High Priest and Advocate

Exodus 17:8-16: “Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah Nissi: For he said, Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.”

1. The redeemed people are now embroiled in warfare initiated by Amalek.
2. The Amalekites were the posterity of Amalek, the son of Esau, Jacob's contentious brother (Gen 36:15, 16).
3. The attack comes immediately after God miraculously provided water from the rock, typifying the provision of the Spirit of God to us in Christ.
4. It was a dishonourable and subtle attack in that Amalek came suddenly and from behind, smiting the hindmost of the people, even all that were feeble and faint (Deut 25:18).
5. To meet the enemy a warrior comes to the fore – Joshua. Again the rod of judgment and redemption was needed, but now accompanied by the sword of conquest.
6. As long as the rod of Moses was raised, Joshua's army prevailed. In order to ensure victory, Aaron and Hur propped up the hands of Moses.

Practical application:

1. *Amalek* typifies the arm of the flesh that seeks to strike a response in the flesh within us when we find ourselves in the wilderness.

“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do [may not do] the things that ye would” (Gal 5:17).
2. It is the *flesh* in us that is exposed and exploited by the Amaleks of the world to rise and lust against the Spirit. “Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim” (Ex 17:8).
3. Notably, it is the *particular* weakness of the flesh that is sought out and attacked, especially when we are off our guard – i.e., during times of physical and spiritual trial.
4. There are three things that come together to defeat Amalek.
 - a. *The judicial rod of Moses*, the Mediator:
 - i. It speaks of divine righteousness. As long as it was raised, Israel prevailed – for “righteousness exalteth a nation” (Pr 14:34).
 - ii. The arm of the flesh is opposed to all righteousness – this is a truth that we must lay hold of in the battle against the flesh.
 - iii. Paul gives us the practical exhortation.

“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin [the flesh]: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Rom 6:13).

- b. *The victorious sword of Joshua:*
This speaks of the Word of God.

“The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb 4:12).

- c. *The upholding arms of Aaron and Hur:*

i. The flesh is in us! It is a fact acknowledged by God in His grace by providing His Son as our Great High Priest and Advocate in the war with Amalek, His work typified in Aaron and Hur respectively.

ii. As long as they upheld the rod-bearing arms of Moses, Israel, led by the sword of Joshua prevailed against Amalek.

- As our *Great High Priest*, Christ’s ministry is to sustain the *new man* through spiritual trials.

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15).

“He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake” (Ps 23:3).

- As our *Advocate* He serves to restore our fellowship with the Father, should the flesh within rise up and cause us to sin and lose that fellowship.

“If we sin we have an Advocate with the Father – Jesus Christ the righteous.”

➤ In His advocacy the Lord applies the Word of God to us through His Spirit and we are brought again to Calvary and to what took place there for us.¹

➤ We are reminded that as a new creation (man) in Christ we are dead to sin and have died to sins – our new standing and state.

“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 6:11).

➤ Observe that it is not a “feeling” or an “understanding” that we are dead to sin (and alive to God). The expression *reckon* conveys a matter of fact – a matter of our *standing* in Christ and not our spiritual state. It is a truth vital to the victorious life which the flesh seeks to erode. It did so with Israel who lost sight of the emancipation of the Passover and the elimination at the Red Sea.

➤ Sin cannot touch a dead person. And with this positional truth before us we are encouraged and equipped to walk in the newness of life (Rom 6:4).²

➤ When writing to the believers in the wilderness, Peter reiterates this positional truth and presents a corresponding practical exhortation.

“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins [having died to sins], should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” (1 Pet 2:24).

Our responsibility in the light of God’s provision

We have foreshadowed in God’s provision to Israel a threefold cord with which to bind and defeat Amalek, the arm of the flesh. Each cord answers respectively to the rod of Moses, the sword of Joshua and the upholding arms of Hur and Aaron.

¹ We have in Scripture the *water* of the Word for my cleansing *morally*; the *shed blood* for my cleansing *judicially*; and the Spirit of God to apply this to my mind *practically*.

² The expression “I die daily” refers to physical death associated with the daily hazards Paul faced in a world of hatred (1 Cor 15:31). It is not a moral dying each day – a belief that has led some to propose that our practical sanctification contributes to the putting away of our sins.

Recognising the strength of the flesh and the provision of God to overcome it, we ought to:

- **EMBRACE** the PRINCIPLE of *righteousness* (which the flesh would have us *desert*). “But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness” (1 Tim 6:11), cf 1 Peter 2:24.
- **ENLIST** the POWER of the *Word of God* (which the flesh would have us *discard*). “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15).
- **ENGAGE** with the Lord in His PRIESTLY and PRESERVING *ministries* (which the flesh would have us *disengage*). “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16).

Neglect any one of these practical imperatives and we will succumb to the flesh and give Amalek the victory. We will not slip into bondage as under Pharaoh, but we will descend into a withering state of soul and fail in testimony.