

# Spiritual Warfare

**Text:** Exodus 17:1-13

## Introduction:

1. Context: The children of Israel have left Egypt and are traveling to the promised land. The battle with Amalek recorded in this passage took place approx. 2 months after the Exodus (Butler).
2. Amalekites = were descendants of Amalek, the grandson of Esau (Gen. 30:12, 16). They were the most powerful nomadic tribe in the Sinai Peninsula. Balam spoke of them as “the first of the nations” (Num. 24:20).
3. We will note three aspects to this battle:

## I. The Timing of the Attack (Vs. 1-7)

### A. When They were in Enemy Territory (Vs. 1, 8)

1. Butler: “The attack occurred approx. 2 months after the Exodus towards the end of May or early June, when the Bedouins leave the lower plains in order to find pasture for their flocks in the cooler heights. The approach of the Israelites would attract notice. Good pastures were in this area. This is confirmed by the fact that Moses was shepherding his flock in this area when God called him at the burning bush.”
2. The enemy’s fury is aroused by the presence of God’s people upon contested ground. So long as God’s people stay out of the enemy’s territory, they can expect little conflict.

### B. When They were Engaged in Carnality (Vs. 2-4)

1. Murmuring and complaining gives the enemy a foothold for an assault against God’s people.
2. If the army is in disarray, the enemy will exploit that weakness to his advantage.

### C. When They were Experiencing Victory (Vs. 5-7)

1. Mountain top experiences are often followed by battles in the valley.
2. Illustration: The disciples experience on the Mount of Transfiguration. As they came back down from the mountain top, they were confronted with a demon possessed boy.
3. Often immediately after great victories and blessings, we are vulnerable to attack from the enemy.

## II. The Tactics in the Attack (Vs. 8, Deut. 25:17-18)

### A. Subtilty (Vs. 18a)

1. ‘hindmost’ = nearest the rear, furthest behind

2. Stealth and subtility has been Satan's weapon from the beginning. Gen. 3:1 *"Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made..."*
3. Be careful about being a back-row Christian! You will make easy pickings for the devil. Illustration: Peter followed Christ afar off – *"And Peter followed him afar off..."* (Mark 14:54) Note: Butler says that in his experience, Christians that consistently sit up the back of church are usually the carnal and slack ones (with the exception of those who have a need like parents with young children)

#### **B. Vulnerability (Vs. 18b)**

1. The Weak
  - a. Satan is a cruel and a coward.
  - b. The enemy often makes use of our weaknesses to gain the mastery over us.
  - c. By attacking the weak, the progress of the people of God as a whole would be brought to a halt.
2. The Weary
  1. The children of Israel were tired from their journeyings
  2. Illustration: The disciples were weary and slept in the garden of Gethsemane and in so doing, missed one of the most crucial moments in the lead up to Christ's crucifixion (Matt. 26:40-46)

### **III. The Triumph over the Attack (Vs. 9-13)**

The outcome of the battle was decided in the place of intercession. Note the key elements of Moses' intercession.

#### **A. The Position of Intercession (Vs. 9-10)**

1. A position of Altitude
  - a. Moses & his companions went to "the top of the hill"
  - b. Moses was seated (Vs. 12)
  - c. The believer's position in the heavenly places
    - i. Christ is seated in victory (Eph. 1:15-23)
    - ii. Believers are seated with Christ in victory (Eph. 2:6)
    - iii. We pray from a position of spiritual advantage over the enemy.
2. A position of Access
  - a. Heb. 4:15-16 *"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. Let us therefore come **boldly unto the throne of grace**, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."*
  - b. Heb. 10:19-22 *"Having therefore, brethren, **boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus**, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is*

*to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”*

## **B. The Persistence of Intercession (Vs. 11-12)**

1. The labour of prayer (Vs. 11-12a)
  - a. Moses grew weary, an indicator of the labour involved.
  - b. Epaphras – *“Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always **labouring fervently** for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.”* (Col. 4:12)
  - c. F.B. Meyer – “Prayer is labour! Without doubt prayer of the right kind means strenuous and exhausting labour. It is the most exhausting exercise that the soul can possibly sustain.”
  - d. Matthew Henry: “We do not find that Joshua's hands were heavy in fighting, but Moses's hands were heavy in praying. The more spiritual any service is the more apt we are to fail and flag in it. Praying work, if done with due intensesness of mind and vigour of affection, will be found hard work, and, though *the spirit be willing, the flesh will be weak.*”
2. The length of prayer (Vs. 12b)
  - e. The battle began in the morning and continued all day
  - f. Moses had to pray until the victory was secured. The old timers called this “praying through”
  - g. Illustration: Daniel (10:2, 12-13)
  - h. Illustration: Battle of Jericho – 7 days of marching around the walls until the final victory shout
  - i. Warfare praying claims the contested ground, piece by piece, and declares that Satan has no right to hold the souls of men and women, boys and girls, nations and families under his illegal sway. As we claim the ground, Satan has to give up, usually little by little, centre meter by centre meter his hold on a soul, a family, a nation, an unlawful situation.

## **C. The Partnership of Intercession (Vs. 12)**

1. Aaron and Hur were able to partner with Moses and help him in the battle
2. The Apostle Paul desired that the people of God would strive with him in prayer: Romans 15:30 *“Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;”*
3. There is power in agreed praying: Matt. 18:19-20 *“Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in*

*heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”*

4. This is why church prayer meetings are so vital
5. Illustration: The united prayers of the early church
  - a. United in prayer as they waited for the coming of the Spirit (Acts 1:14, 2:1)
  - b. United in prayer for boldness in the face of opposition (Acts 4:23-31)

#### **D. The Posture of Intercession (Vs. 11-12)**

1. The Rod of God
  - a. Symbol of the power of God (remember the use of the rod prior to this in the history of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt). See also Vs. 5.
  - b. Moses action was highly symbolic. The outstretched rod was a plea for God to bring victory for His people, as He had in the past. It was an act of faith.
2. Uplifted hands
  - a. Symbol of dependence upon God.
  - b. Symbol of a life of purity (1 Timothy 2:8)
3. Seated = position of rest in the finished work of Christ

#### **E. The Power of Intercession (Vs. 13)**

1. “When men work men work, but when men pray, God works”
2. Where was the outcome of the battle determined? With Joshua in the valley or with Moses on the hill top? The battle in the valley (activities) is important but the most important part of the war is waged on the hill top.
3. Spurgeon: “The narrative points out to us that effort alone is not enough. Three men are seen wending their way up the steep sides of the hill, solemnly walking along, as if they had most weighty business on hand. They are seeking a point of advantage, from which to gall the foe with the artillery of prayer. So mighty was the prayer of Moses that all depended upon it. The petitions of Moses discomfited the enemy more than the fighting of Joshua. The edge of Moses’ prayer was more powerful than the edge of Joshua’s sword. It matters not how loudly Joshua shouts to his men, unless Moses fervently cries to his God. The young soldier would soon have left the field if the old commander had left the closet. Force and fervour, decision and devotion, valour and vehemence must join their forces, and all will be well.”
4. The sword is powerful in the battle but it is most effective when wielded with the backing of prayer
6. Illustration: Christ’s conflict with the devil in Matthew 4. Christ defeated Satan three times with the words “it is written”. But let us not forget that it was within the context of 40 days of fasting and prayer.
7. Remember that the “praying always” of Ephesians 6:18 comes straight after the “sword of the spirit” is mentioned in Vs. 17

8. Even Satan quotes the Bible (Matt. 4)! It is the sword coupled with faithful intercession that deals deadly blows to the armies of hell.
9. Preaching on its own can also be powerless even if it is sound and biblical. This is why Paul exhorted the Thessalonian Christians to pray that the Word of God would have free course (2 Thess. 3:1-2)

**Conclusion:** How much emphasis do we place upon prayer? Are we spending time in the place of intercession personally? Are we involved in seasons of corporate intercession?