

Session 3

March 18, 2018

OUR BANNER

Exodus 17:8-16

Upon leaving Egypt, life for Moses and the children of Israel soon fell into a predictable pattern. The people had a need...they complained...God provided. When they complained of thirst, God miraculously provided water. When they needed food, God sent them manna. And always in the middle, was Moses, the faithful intercessor who stood between the people and their God.

As they traveled toward Sinai, the nation passed through the region of Rephidim, a territory claimed by the descendants of Esau known as the Amalekites. Unhappy with the host of intruders, the Amalekites planned an attack. Now the people faced yet another challenge.

The battle with Amalek at Rephidim was significant for a variety of reasons. It is the first time the Amalekites are mentioned as a nation, and the first time that Joshua is mentioned as well. More importantly, it is the first battle that Israel faced upon their escape from Egypt, and their first victory. For this reason, the event was memorialized by an altar and a name appropriate for the One who gave them the victory. The story is exciting in and of itself, but there are some notable lessons about the Lord's victory for us today.

The victory is mobilized (vv. 8-13). The Lord gave Moses and the children of Israel victory over their enemies, but he utilized His servants to do so. There are several key actors in this drama, and each had an important part to play. Moses was clearly in charge. He had "God's staff" in his hand, and the Lord calling the shots. Joshua had the responsibility of selecting the fighting men, and then leading them into battle. Aaron and Hur were literally "support personnel;" as Moses grew weary, they supported him by first providing a rock to sit upon and then by supporting his arms—one on the right, one on the left—with the unwavering strength needed to keep the staff aloft, and thus assuring their victory. In short, Moses prayed, Aaron and Hur stayed, and Joshua slayed!

God's word is clear that everyone has a role to play in His kingdom's work, and the spiritual giftedness to accomplish it. Paul told the church at Corinth, "Now there are different gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different ministries, but the same Lord. And there are different activities, but the same God activates each gift in each person...to produce what is beneficial" (1 Cor. 12:4-7). Not everybody is a Moses with outstretched arms, or a Joshua with drawn sword. But God equips His people, then places them in His service to accomplish His task, just as He sees fit.

The victory is memorialized (vv. 14-16). Once the victory was won, the Lord instructed Moses to memorialize the event as both an encouragement to Joshua and a warning to God's enemies. There are three parts to Moses' task. First, he was told to *write it*. The Lord revealed His word, and by His inspiration, they were recorded by His servant. This ensured the preservation of Israel's history—as well as God's dealings with His people—for those unaware, and for future generations. Second, he was told to *recite it*. The significance of this victory was not simply as a great lesson for Moses, but for Israel in general and Joshua specifically (v. 14). Moses was instructed to recite the events of the battle and God's promise to annihilate this enemy who attacked Israel first, and from the rear. Joshua was there. He would not only give witness to the truth of what happened but take courage in the promises God made when he later became Israel's captain. Third, Moses was to *remember*. The altar was built in honor of the One who gave both the victory as well as the promises. He is the Lord, under whom the host of Israel rallied. As our Banner, He is the One who calls us together and leads us to victory as well.