

# Prayer and Work

△ Exod 17:8-15

## Intro

We are continuing following Joshua

Last week we saw Joshua's relationship with Moses and God

And how he spend as much time with God as he could

As preperation for him to be the leader of Israel after Moses

This time we have the first mention of Joshua in the Bible

But we cannot learn much about him

Except that he was already in a leadership position

That Moses trusted Joshua to do this

And that the people respected him enough to follow him

And there is already an expectation that he would lead Israel in the future

But more about that later

## The situation

The people were still travelling through the desert

But this is before the giving of the law

And the rebellion with the Golden Calf

After which God instructed the people  
to wander for 40 years in the desert

They had camped at Rephidim,  
but there was not water.

And at this time God instructed Moses  
to strike the rock and water came out

As a result they were just  
recovering from their ordeal

And the Amalekites attacked

So it was crisis upon crisis

A little more background is given  
in Deut 25:17-18:

17 Remember what Amalek did to you  
on your journey out of Egypt, 18 how  
he attacked you on the way, when you  
were faint and weary, and struck down  
all who lagged behind you; he did not  
fear God.

So Amalek attacked Israel when  
they were weak

They were also the first people  
that attacked Israel on their  
journey

## The Plan

There is this time not a dialogue

between God and Moses

At least not as we are made aware

But Moses instructs Joshua to  
some men to fight Amalek the  
next day

We do not know how many men  
Amalek had

We also do not know how many men  
Joshua had - we just read some men

That does not sound very much

The focus is then also on what  
Moses does, and not what Joshua  
does

Moses is going to stand on the hill  
overlooking the battle field with his staff  
in his hand

This is the same staff through which  
God had done the miracles with Pharaoh

And made the water come out of the  
rock

## The Reality

The reality may be a little different  
then what Moses expected

He is on the hill with his staff, but  
unless he lifts his staff Israel was  
winning

If he lowered the staff Amalek was  
winning

So first he has to use both hands  
to lift the staff

And when he tires from that Aaron  
and Hur support him by lifting his  
arms, while seated

And in that way Joshua and he  
men are winning

## Joshua wins

It is however only at the end of the  
day that Joshua wins

We can assume that they would have  
started the fighting early in the day

So you can imagine how long the battle  
lasted

We also do not see Joshua and  
his men in battle

No Strategy

No Story about what happened

No heroics from the men who fought

It is clear that it was not Joshua  
who won the battle

It was Moses, together with Aaron and  
Hur

who beseeched God to win the battle  
for them

They did not use words in their prayer

Their prayer was to hold the staff up to

## Thoughts

### 1. God curse on Amalek

This is what we as Western Christians find difficult

Why did God put a curse on Amalek to destroy them?

And even asked Moses to write it down and for Joshua to remember it

Some may be to do with the cowardly attack of Amalek on Israel

It may also be to ensure that all the peoples/nations around Israel are aware that these are God's people and that he will protect them

**It was as much the reputation of Israel and God that helped the conquering of Canaan**

Did Jesus not say to turn the other cheek when someone hits you?

But God often uses power and conquering in the course of history

Without violence the people of Israel would not have been able to conquer Canaan

But that does not mean that violence can be justified in us establishing the Kingdom of God

And often that was the case and often still is the case

But Jesus never told his followers to fight the people for the establishment of the Kingdom of God

## 2. Spiritual Warfare

However there is still a fight going on for the Kindom of God

And this is a spiritual fight

12 For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

△ Eph 3:12

And the only weapon in our arsenal for that is Prayer

18 Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints

△ Eph 3:18

## 3. Keeping on praying

And this is what Moses needed to do here

The battle was not one of people first, but it was a spiritual battle too

And it was only that Moses inteceded with God by holding up his staff that the battle was one

It was hard work for Moses and Aaron and Hur

They would have been just as tired as the fighters were

Prayer is hard work

Some of us all called to lead in that hard work of prayer

But all of us can take part

And God can prompt us to pray, but are we willing to listen

Or you may say, this is not for me... but how do you know?

Is it because it is too hard?

Because I believe God all wants us to pray

That is how we are in relationship with him - to talk to him

#### 4. The Lord is my banner

This story ends by Moses building an altar and calling it: The Lord is my banner

The translation is a flag, or just a pole, a stake in the ground

Moses could not leave the staff, but perhaps he would have used that

To symbolise, that we have to gather around God and under God

It not just saying that God will save and support us

It also means that we do not want to leave from under his protection

We need to stay close to him and not wander off

In our thoughts, words and deeds

in our thoughts, words and deeds

As then we remove ourselves from his  
banner

Amen