

## DAILY BIBLE ILLUSTRATIONS

by

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Seventeenth Week - Sunday

### THE UPLIFTED HANDS

*"And Moses said to Joshua, 'Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand.' So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword" (Exodus 17:9-13).*

The Sinai peninsula was not wholly uninhabited when the hosts of Israel came up into it out of the sea. There was a tribe of Amalekites, which had here its headquarters and seems to have led a life somewhat analogous to that of the Bedouins. Before this, from all that appears in history, we might suppose the Israelites alone in the wilderness. But we now see that their proceedings were closely watched by dangerous eyes, which did not behold with indifference the sudden inroads of so vast a host into these formerly quiet and secluded places.

The great wealth with which they were laden and their valuable possessions in flocks and herds must have excited the eager cupidity of this people, if they were at all like the modern Arabs of the desert. They knew that numbers did not constitute strength; and the construction of this host must have rendered it obvious that they were not likely to prove very formidable enemies in an encounter. One would have thought that the recent miracles worked by the hand of God in Israel's behalf would have been likely to deter them from any attempt to molest a people so protected and so favored. But after the examples we have seen in Egypt of the hardness of unbelief, we are not prepared to expect much forbearance on the part of the Amalekites. And, in fact, they did attack the Israelites on their march to, or halt at, Rephidim.

In Exodus it is simply stated, "Then came Amalek and fought with Israel at Rephidim." But in Deuteronomy 25:17-18 further particulars are given: "Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt, how he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks, all the stragglers at your rear, when you were tired and weary; and he did not fear God."

The last clause is emphatically added, because such an invasion of the chosen people under these circumstances was a virtual defiance of the power which had so lately destroyed the Egyptians. This treacherous and unmanly character of the first assault may account for the deep resentment which was afterward expressed against this people, and for the doom of eventual destruction which went forth against them. Upon the whole it would seem that there were two assaults, the first being upon the feeble rear ranks, the result of which encouraged the Amalekites to suppose themselves fully able to meet the strength of Israel. They therefore marched against them when encamped at Rephidim. Certainly the fact that the rear ranks of Israel were "smitten" might lead them to suppose the Israelites were not so invulnerable or so sovereignly protected as thought, thus encouraging them to more daring proceedings.

When the Amalekites appeared in force and manifested their intention to engage the Israelites, Moses directed Joshua to choose out a number of men from the general body and battle the enemy on the morrow. And what did Moses himself purpose to do? "I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand." And so it was done. Joshua led forth his men to the field and Moses mounted the hill accompanied by Aaron and Hur. Here Moses stood and held up his hand on high with the wonder-working rod in it. It was no doubt held up in the first instance as a kind of banner or signal to be seen by the warring host below, and designed to operate as a continual incentive to their valor and prowess while engaged in battle. The sight could not fail to nerve them with new vigor every time their eyes were turned toward it.

Moses was eminently an intercessor with God for the people committed to his charge. We have every reason to believe that the uplifting of the rod was merely an accompaniment of the earnest intercessions which breathed from the lips and hearts of the venerable men upon the hill. It was soon seen that while the hand of Moses was uplifted Israel prevailed over Amalek, but when the prophet's hand was no longer raised Amalek was the stronger. Perceiving that Moses could no longer maintain a standing posture, his friends took a stone and placed it under him for a seat. Aaron and Hur then placed themselves, one on each side, and sustained his hands in the upraised position until the victory of Israel was achieved. In performing this office we are not to suppose that both of Moses' hands were help up at the same time, for in that case the hands of Aaron and Hur would soon have become as weary as those of Moses had been. Instead, Moses shifted the rod from one hand to the other, and thus Aaron was relieved while Hur upheld the hand with the rod, and vice versa.

Let us take a practical lesson from this text. We may expect no manifestation of the Lord's power, no interference of his goodness, except as the result of his blessing our own zealous efforts in dealing with temptation. Prayer without active duty is mockery of God. He who entreats deliverance from the onset and power of evil, yet never makes an effort in his own behalf nor strives against the sin that wars within him, draws nigh to God with his lips but is wholly estranged from the fervor of that supplication that issues from the depths of the heart.

By this example of Moses we are most effectually taught that the uplifted hand of Moses contributed more to their safety than their own hands, his rod contributed more than their

weapons of war, and accordingly their success fluctuates as he raises up or lets down his hands. In like manner will the Christian warfare be attended with little success unless it be waged in the practice of unceasing earnest prayer. It will never be known on this side of the Lord's second coming how much his cause and the work of individual salvation have been advanced by the effectual fervent prayer of righteous men. And it is surely a cheering reflection in the heat and burden of the day of battle that while we are contending below faithful servants of God have ascended the hill of spiritual prayer and are imploring blessings upon our efforts.

Intercession is, we fear, a duty too much neglected or too languidly performed; it is a privilege not well understood or too seldom claimed. When our deathbed draws nigh, let it not be said that our greatest failure was in the duty of intercession for others. All duty has its reward, and there is none in which the reward is more delightful than this. There is scarcely anything that more enriches the Christian than the comfort of believing that while we are praying for our Christian friends we are also reaping the full benefit of their prayers for us.

In the Pentateuch we shall find that there was perhaps no man who felt the importance of this duty of intercession, or practiced it with more persevering and vehement energy, than Moses. And when we are at any time tempted to faint in the discharge of this duty, or if we find too little enjoyment in the exercise of this privilege, let us encourage ourselves with the assured knowledge that He who arrays his people for battle and fights on their behalf sustains another office equally important--He has ascended to the summit of the everlasting hills and is there employed in efficacious intercession for their success. Well may we be consoled with the assurance that a greater than Moses is mediating for us in the mount above, and his hand is never weary, his love never faint, and his voice never silent.