



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

What We Need When We Need It

October 12, 2025

Exodus 17:8-16

Clint Pressley

⁸ Then Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim. ⁹ So Moses said to Joshua, "Choose for us men, and go out and fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand." ¹⁰ So Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought with Amalek, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. ¹¹ Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. ¹² But Moses' hands grew weary, so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it, while Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side. So his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. ¹³ And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword.

¹⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven." ¹⁵ And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, The LORD Is My Banner, ¹⁶ saying, "A hand upon the throne of the LORD! The LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

(Pastor Prays)

Sometimes it feels as if things go from bad to worse. Sometimes, it feels like you can't get a break. Oftentimes when Kyler and I are somewhere for the Southern Baptist Convention, I'll introduce myself and then say, this is Kyler Smith. And they'll shake hands, and the person invariably says, Skyler, nice to meet you. Which, of course, feels like a gift from the Lord to me. I never correct them. Sometimes it can feel like things go from bad to worse. It can happen at the worst time. Sometimes you can have an argument on the way to church. It is a terrible time to have an argument. Sometimes during the school week, you're pressed for time, everybody got up late, and sometimes the argument or the discussion between mom and dad turns into an argument in front of the children before school. Sometimes the air conditioning unit goes

out at your house right after you made the car payment, and there's not enough in the account. Sometimes the odds are stacked against us. That's sort of where you find Israel in verse 8. If you were to flip back the page and see them in verse 7, in verse 7, they have failed a test from God. They have complained. They have fought against Moses. And it felt as if you got through it, and it's finally going to be settled. Then in verse 8, they're attacked. Why is this story here? Why is this here for us? Why are you here to hear this story? What I'm hoping is that you'll see today that God gives us, if you like to write things down, this is the theme of the sermon.

God Gives Us What We Need When We Need It

Our good God, he'll give us what we need when he sees that we need it. Let me tell you what we'll do. Let's go back through the passage. Let's start in verse 8 and walk through it. I'll point out a couple of things, sort of like a tour guide. I'll just say, look at that, and then we will come back and try to make some application after studying it a little bit. Join me there in verse 8. Then Amalek came and fought with Israel. Remember now, they've just come off a bad time. It is the worst time to have a fight. It feels as if they're finally going to get things together, and then comes Amalek.

Who is Amalek? It's the Amalekites. We're not told why, and we're not told where this enemy came from. If you read the rest of the Bible, you find out that the Amalekites are an ancient enemy of Israel. They are mentioned in Numbers, in Deuteronomy, and in fact, you find them in 1 Samuel. Remember that in 1 Samuel, the first king of Israel is Saul. Saul turned out to be a terrible king. He didn't do what Samuel told him to do. He didn't kill all the Amalekites. Samuel shows up, and he chops up the king of the Amalekites. It's a terrible story, go read it sometime. But don't read it for bedtime stories for your children. But in 1 Samuel 15, you find the Amalekites. Who are they? Well, if you go the other way of the Bible, to Genesis, you have Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Isaac was the father of Jacob. Jacob is the one who will become Israel. Jacob had a brother named Esau. Esau would symbolize evil, and the Amalekites came from Esau. They are the perpetual enemies of Israel. Now they have attacked; it is a terrible time. In verse 9, this is the first time Joshua's name shows up in the Bible, but it is written as if we're supposed to know who Joshua is. He must have been very familiar to the people around, as this is written for the first audience. If you go and read Numbers, we find out that Joshua has

been the assistant to Moses since he was a child. And we're told here that Joshua is going to get some instructions. Here, it is at least implied that Joshua will be the successor to Moses.

That name Joshua is important. The name Joshua means Yahweh saves. That name is a reminder to us that there is one coming, a greater Joshua, Yeshua, Jesus, who will live perfectly, die on the cross, be raised from the dead, and provide the means by which you can be saved. Every time you see the name Joshua, you should be reminded of Jesus.

So Moses says to Joshua, choose for us men, to go down and fight. Okay, so that's another word I'm going to put into the sermon. Go down and fight with Amalek tomorrow. I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand. So Joshua's well-known, and we've got him going down there to fight. Here's what I'm going to do. I'll stand up on the hill with the staff. Remember, that staff has been used all throughout Exodus. It is the picture of God's presence. All through the plagues, it was used to part the Red Sea, and it would be used with the rock where the water would come from. And now for the very first time, in verse 9, for the first time, God didn't tell Moses to go pick up the staff; he just did it. He just took the initiative and said, look, we know we need the presence of God. You go down there and fight.

So, in verse 10, Joshua did as Moses told him to do and fought with Amalek, while Moses and Aaron, we've already met those two, and Hur. This is the first time we meet Hur. We're not sure exactly who he is. Josephus seems to think that he is Miriam's husband. He could have been, we don't know. Either way, Aaron and Hur go with Moses on the hill. Joshua is down there fighting. Everybody has a job to do in verse 10. So notice the crux of it. You get the point of the passage in verses 11 and 12. Be careful with this. Oftentimes, this passage is used to talk about Moses and leadership, and his hands being heavy, and how hard it is. You need people around you. Those things are true. I'm going to probably point to that in the sermon. But the point here is not Moses. The point is the staff. Let me show it to you. Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed. And whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. So you understand, raising or lowering the staff of God, that would symbolize the presence of God. It would indicate whether or not Israel would win or lose. If the presence of God was held high, then Israel won. If the presence of God dropped, then Amalek won.

So now comes a problem. If you ever had to keep your hands up above your head, you know Moses had a problem. Don't forget, he's 80 years old. So here we are in verse 12, and Moses' hands grew weary. It's hard to do. So we have Aaron and Hur. They're with him, and they tell Moses to have a seat here on this rock. Sit down. They took a stone, put it under him, and he sat on it while Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and one on the other side, so his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. You see now that the whole purpose of this passage is to point us to do whatever it takes to keep that banner, it's going to be called a banner, the staff of God, to keep it as high as possible. And the Christian church will adopt this stance and say, the cross is our banner that we must keep high.

So, in verse 13, we find out that they did this all day long, and God provided. In verse 13, Joshua defeated the Amalekites. And then in verse 14, it is the first time anybody's asked to write anything down in the whole Bible. This is the first time we have it recorded. The Ten Commandments will be written down. We'll get to Habakkuk; it's written down. We'll find out that the Holy Spirit inspired writers. Paul tells us in Timothy to write it down. This is a reminder that we are people of a book, that a preacher should not stand up and just talk about things he wants to talk about, that his sermon should come from the Bible. Here, for the very first time, we are told, in verse 14, the Lord said to Moses, write this as a memorial in a book.

Why is it there? So that Joshua can save it for the next generation. It's part of why we pour so much time and attention and effort into our student ministry and into our children's ministry. Because part of the obligation that we have as Christians is to make sure that we take what we have learned, the faith once and for all delivered to the saints and pass it down. So here it is given to Joshua because he's going to be the next leader, and he needs to remember the mighty acts of God. And you need them written down. This is discipleship right there.

Verse 14 leads us to verse 15. There, you find worship. Moses built an altar. This is the first altar built in the book of Exodus. There are others in Genesis. Those altars are built to remember what God has done. This is the first time anybody in Exodus has been asked or told to build an altar. So we build the altar there, and it was given a name. Notice the name. The Lord is my banner. Some of you from the old days, you've heard it, Jehovah Nissi. That's what you heard. That is a translation from Aramaic to Latin to English. The Lord is my battle.

So what does that mean? Think about it here at Hickory Grove. When we want to do something out on the edge of our property, we might put a banner up so people can see it. We advertise, we want you to come. That's not what this means. This is not an airplane flying down the coast at Myrtle Beach pulling a banner behind it. That's not what this means. This has overtones of the military. Think of the battle. It's the idea of a standard, a flag, that is held inside a regiment that leads them to attack another army. And you follow the banner. You stay close to the banner. It is a rallying point. So the idea here is that the Lord, we're going to call this altar, the Lord is my banner. It's where I run to. For the Christian church, the cross will be the banner. The cross is what we run to. The Lord is my banner.

Not only that, in verse 16, it's an unusual verse. Verse 16 has us reaching out to the throne of God. ¹⁶ *saying, "A hand upon the throne of the LORD!* That leaves us there, after the victory, with the idea of worship, reminding us that God gives us what we need when we need it. Okay, so that's a little bit of a running commentary, so when you walk out of here today, you know the passage. How then might you apply this? There are several ways to do that. I'll give you just a few. Here's the first one. I'll use the word need throughout. Here's the first one, number one.

We need to be prepared

We need to be prepared for what is out there in front of us tomorrow morning. I find that in verse 8. The reason I say we need to be prepared is because out of nowhere, the Amalekites attacked Israel. It was the worst possible time. That's when you're going to be attacked, when you are at your worst. That's when you're going to be tempted. Brothers, those of you who struggle with looking at pornography, you probably are not tempted in the morning after you have spent time with God. It's in the evening when you're tired. You're tempted at the very worst possible time. A great tool of Satan is to make you feel overwhelmed. What did Peter say in 1 Peter 4:12? You should go read 1 Peter sometime. In 1 Peter 4:12, Peter says, ¹² *Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.* Don't be surprised. How are you not surprised? Because you're prepared for it. You know that it's coming. What did he say in 1 Peter 5:8-9? Peter says, ⁸ *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.* ⁹ *Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.* You resist him by standing firm in

the faith because you know that there's a family of believers throughout the world who are going through the same thing.

So, how are you prepared? You breathe deep, trust God, you pray and ask him to help, and you keep walking. How are you prepared for what you've got to look at and face on Monday? I think the first step for preparation is for you to trust in Christ alone. To trust in the perfect life of Jesus, his death on the cross, his resurrection, and that alone will save you. Not you or your religion or your church, you are going to, but Christ will save you to trust Him.

Not only that, for those of you that are already Christians, you catalog and think through your own sinful life and confess the sin to the Lord. Confession means to agree with God that it is something that is ugly and unholy and is displeasing to Him. You confess your need for grace. There's something else you can do to be prepared. One simple, practical act is just to avoid where you know you're going to fall. Another act is to get into fellowship. You need to be in fellowship with the church, more than just coming to church on Sunday. I'm very glad you do that, but you need to be a part of a small group that knows your name, and that can walk with you through hard times, and there you're going to grow. We need to be prepared. That's one thing you might learn from this passage. What else might you learn? I'm going to give you a second thing to consider, number two.

We need to fight

Now be careful with that. I don't mean we need to fight with one another. We'll probably do enough of that. Let me show you where I get it down in verse 9. We need to jump into the struggle. So Moses is going to do the spiritual thing up on the hill. He's going to do that, but there are some practical things that have to happen. Joshua's down below, and somebody has got to get in the middle of it. You need to jump into the struggle spiritually and fight. It's disconcerting to hear a young man say he's struggling with pornography when there's no struggle at all. He's just losing. The word struggle implies you actually are fighting against it. I get that from verse 9. Moses tells Joshua, you go and fight. But not only that, it's not just something practical, it's the Lord here too. I'm going up on the hill with the staff here that symbolizes God's presence, and I'm going to hold it up high while you're down there fighting.

You understand the difference between salvation and sanctification. So salvation is all of grace. It is all of God. It is all on what Christ has done for us. His perfect life, his death on the cross, his resurrection, it's all Christ. If you are saved, it is all God. You just looked to Christ and said, he did that for me. That's all Christ. But sanctification is something different. Sanctification is God working in you and you working out your salvation. Sanctification is a battle. If salvation is a surrender, receiving Christ, sanctification is a battle. It's a genuine fight that is actually you struggling to do something. Some of you have been working on parts of Colossians. When I started to memorize the book of Colossians, I got the first chapter down, then I wanted to get through the Bible, so I slowed down on my memorization. So now I'm trying to get back on it before the end of the year, because some of you will ask me, and I want to have it. And at the end of chapter one of Colossians, when Paul is talking, warning everyone, and teaching everyone, that he might be mature in Christ. This is what he says, Colossians 1:29. *²⁹ For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.* It is God working through you. So what am I saying to you? Get in the fight and fight against your own sin. Learn to hate it, make your sin your enemy, and then fight your enemy. Look, fight for your family, for your marriage. Fight for your children. Satan is prowling around like a roaring lion for your children. Fight for this church, for our gospel witness, trusting that God will work and is taking action. We need to be prepared. We also need to fight. Now, a third thing to consider, number three.

We need to do the obvious

We need to actually do what's obvious. I'm going to show you where I get that. It's over in verse 9. At the end of verse 9, for the very first time, Moses is not told by God to go pick up the staff and then go do something. Moses just does it. Right there at the end of verse 9, Moses says, I'm going to stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand. It's the first time Moses is not told to do that. I'll take the staff of God, hold it high, because the staff of God symbolizes the presence of God. He did not have to be told what to do. Brothers and sisters, there are some things in the Christian life that you don't have to be told to do. There are some very simple means of being close to God that God has given us, that every Christian knows are just part of being a Christian. For instance, you don't have to be told to come to church. If you're a Christian, it's just part of what we do. It is the simple means that God gives us to be sanctified and grow in the Lord. Come to church.

You don't have to be told that if you read the Bible, it's going to be good for your soul. You don't have to be told you should spend time in prayer. That's just an obvious thing. You don't have to be told that you should serve somewhere. One of the greatest comebacks you have for people that are in the Christian church, and not just from a Baptist perspective, it's part of what we do, when we are asked to do something, the response oftentimes is, let me pray about it. If you call me on the phone and say, hey, pastor, would you do this? I might say to you, let me pray about it. You know what I'm doing? I'm buying time.

Well, there are some things, when you're asked to serve, that you don't have to pray about. There are some obvious things to do. Moses didn't have to pray about whether this was the right thing to do; stand up on top of the hill there with the rod of God. He didn't have to pray about that. It was an obvious thing to do. There are some obvious things that God has called you to do. Look, here are some obvious things. Find a spouse. Look, young ladies, find a man you can stand to look at. If he loves his mom and has a job and comes to church, marry the guy. Get married, have some children. Young men, let me just say to you young men, you need to learn to ask the question, learn the phrase. Would you like to go to dinner with me? Just say it. Just do it. And if she says no, do not pester her; find somebody else. One day it's going to work. You don't have to be told that. It's an obvious thing to do. Man, go find someone, get married, have some children, get involved in the church, and you become our church growth program. There are simple things that God has given us to do that he will bless. Be prepared, get in the fight, do the obvious. Number four.

We need the Lord

Let's be careful that we don't make it a legalistic thing. You need to do these eight things, and you'll be right with the Lord. Let's make sure we keep our attention on the fact that we actually need God to do it. That's what verse 9 is about. You have the rod of God held high, but also down in verses 11 and 12, look how the battle ebbs and flows. We're told in verses 11 and 12 that the battle victory went according to whether or not the staff was held high. Do you see that? Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed. Whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. It's a reminder. There are those that interpret that to mean that is a sign of prayer with their hands held high. I'll accept that. The more they prayed, the more God worked, and they won. Maybe that is the truth. It's good for us to remember, though, this is not a

works-based salvation, but one of grace. We need God to intervene. You need God to save you, God to sustain you, God to protect you, and God to heal you. You need God to strengthen you. You need God to give you hope. This passage reminds us that we not only need to do the obvious, but we also need the Lord. Let me press further into that. That's four. Let me give you a fifth point, number five.

We need each other

We actually do need one another. You'll find that in verses 11 and 12 as well. You see the four men there, right? It's Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Hur. Everybody had their own job to do. Everybody wasn't Moses; everybody wasn't Joshua. Aaron and Hur, their job was just as important. It might not have been just as hard. Joshua was down on the ground fighting with the Amalekites. Moses is up on the hill with the staff of God, holding it high. And there are two guys on either side making sure that his hands are held up. Now, make sure you don't get lost in the point of Moses' hands being heavy. Yes, they're heavy. Yes, he needed help. But it was all of them working together for one thing, to get that staff in the air, up high, so that we can have victory. That's what this is about. It's not about the individuals. They are included, and they need to participate. But it's about those guys helping one another for a mission. Joshua fought, Moses sat on a rock and Aaron and Hur held up his hands.

You and I, we actually do need one another. You're not going to meet one person today that would not benefit from you encouraging them to put some strength into them. Remember what Jesus told Peter at the end of Luke. Jesus told Peter, look, you're going to fall, like you're going to blow it. When you return, come back and strengthen your brothers. When the Apostle Paul went on his second and then third missionary journeys, he did that to strengthen the disciples. What did Paul say in Romans chapter 1, his magnum opus theologically? Go and read Romans. You have all this great New Testament theology in Romans. Paul says on the front end of Romans chapter 1, I long to see you that I might impart some spiritual gift to you and strengthen you. If you want to put yourself in the Bible, like if you're reading the Bible and you think, okay, maybe I'm that character. We all know the story of David and Goliath. In the story, I want to be David, and all my problems are Goliath. It's really not a great way to read the Bible. For one, you certainly are not King David. But if you have to, if you want to put yourself in this Bible, in this passage, you say, okay, I want to be Moses here. We can be Moses. But here's the

Moses we are. I can't keep my hands up. That's the Moses we are. And we need the brothers and sisters that God has put in our lives to put strength back into us. God has created the church to worship and honor Jesus, to win the world to Christ, and to take care of one another. That's five. Let me give you a sixth one. We need each other, number six.

We need to endure

Endure. I'm going to run by this one, but it's in verses 11 and 12. What you find out at the end of verse 12 is that this battle went on until the sun went down. That means it happened all day long. It took forever. The Lord was in it. Sometimes when that staff was dropped, it felt like the Israelites were losing. Sometimes when it got up high, it felt like we were winning. And sometimes when you're in the battle, it ebbs and flows, and you feel like you're not going to make it. Your soul is weary, and you're running on empty. Let's not forget God is there. You can keep going, by God's grace. How are you strengthened? You are strengthened by the Word. Get into the Word. You're strengthened by the people of the church. You're strengthened when you spend time in prayer. Look, I'm strengthened when I think of history and look at providence, and all God has done with people and the struggles they've walked through. I can read the Bible and find Elijah and God feeding him. God is feeding him, giving him something to drink, and telling him to sleep a little bit. Sometimes we need to just rest, but we also need to endure. Now let's turn more spiritual. That's six. Let me give you a seventh, number seven.

We need the Gospel

We need the gospel preached to our souls. So join me there in verses 11 and 12. There you see the staff held high, and it's the whole issue. That staff will represent an altar. An altar will be named; The Lord is my Banner. The Lord is my Rallying Point. Remember that word banner is the flag that will be in front of a regiment. You know where and how to fight with the banner there over you. For the Christian, our banner is the cross of Christ. Some of you are old enough to remember that song, Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus. Stand Up! Stand Up for Jesus! Stand up! Stand up for Jesus! Ye soldiers of the cross; Lift high His royal banner, It must not suffer loss. The cross of Jesus is not just where we're saved. The cross of Christ is where we go. We

trust in the gospel of substitution. That's the gospel that Jesus Christ does what Adam lost for us. Adam had fellowship with God and lost it in sin. We are descendants of Adam. Jesus comes, and he is the second Adam. He does what Adam couldn't do. He lives perfectly, fulfilling all of God's law. He keeps perfect fellowship. That is the representative man for us. He did that for us. And at the cross, the cross is where God will judge all of sin. At the cross, God pours out the full wrath, and his hatred for sin is poured out on Jesus. He is treated like an enemy in our place. God then will raise him. He's going to die and then be put in a tomb. God raised him from the dead. He ascended into heaven. And that is the gospel presented to you. You have to do something with it. What do you do with it? Live right? No. Act right, come to church, be nice to your mom? No. You believe Jesus did that for you. It's by faith you are saved. There is the gospel, and the cross is the centerpiece for us. It is the banner held high over the church. It is what we run to. It's where we rally when we have battles. We rally to the cross. When you're tempted, think of Jesus on the cross. When you have guilt, go to the cross and see that's where your guilt has been atoned for. When you are overwhelmed, be reminded of Christ on the cross. When you feel like an orphan, when you feel like a slave to your sin, you go there and know, through the cross, God has adopted you as his child. When you need to be saved, go to the cross. Look, we need the gospel. We need it preached to our souls every single Sunday. But not only that, there's an eighth thing, number eight.

We need discipleship

We need to grow in Christ. For the very first time in verse 14, I tried to point it out when we read it, for the first time, you hear the phrase, write this down. And that is written down for Joshua, who will be the next leader. It's for the next generation to read it, see what it says. Read it to him, in the ears of Joshua, so he will hear it, to remember, to rehearse the great works of God. It's the gospel. We need to be careful, too. I think this is a danger of some churches that believe the Bible, Conservative, theologically conservative churches, sometimes assume the gospel and never actually get to it. And we've got to be careful. If you assume the gospel, you lose the gospel. That's why we must always explicitly talk about what is the gospel, how does that apply, and what good is that for us? We need the gospel. We need discipleship. We need to know this God that we hear about. One last point, number nine.

We need worship

We actually need worship. We, our souls, need to gather with the body and worship. You find that in verses 15 and 16. You'll notice that in verse 15, Moses built an altar, the first one in Exodus. There are lots of them back in Genesis. And that altar is for worship. It is for remembrance. It is for calling on the power of God. You'll notice that in verse 16, there's an odd phrase there, a hand upon the throne of the Lord. So, what is worship to be? What is worship to be like in the New Testament church? Worship should be substitutionary, that is, through Christ. So, we worship because of what Christ has done for us as the God-man. It should be celebratory, like it's right for us to be joyous in worship, to sing songs that make our hearts rejoice, to be glad and happy in worship. Our worship should be throne-centered and not man-centered. It says in verse 16, a hand on the throne of God, that we look to the throne of God, that we think of Revelation 20, 21, and 22, when the heavens are open, and there we see the consummation of all God has given us from the very beginning. And where is all of this headed? It is headed to worship around the throne. And every Sunday we practice for that. We absolutely need worship. It's a good thing that our God is so good. Why? Because our God knows just what we need when we need it. And this morning, as we get ready to close in a moment of prayer and get ready to sing another song, I'd like you to join me with your heads bowed to think with me just for a moment. What did you come in with? What did you come in this morning needing? Do you need comfort? Do you need forgiveness? Do you need to join the church? Do you need to repent in some way? Do you need to receive Jesus Christ, the Savior? Do you need to be strengthened in the Lord? In a moment we're going to sing, and as we do, I'm just going to invite any of you that would like to pray with a pastor and ask for help to come forward. Our pastors are here, down near the front. They are glad to talk with you. If, for some reason, that sounds strange to you, if you would prefer, our pastors will be in the lobby after church. When everything's done, let's have this conversation and get your needs on the table and take them to the Lord.

(Pastor prays)