Fighting Amalek

Exodus 17:8-13
8 Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim.
9 And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.
10 So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.
11 And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.
12 But Moses hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.
13 And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

Introduction
Exodus 17 marks several important benchmarks in Israel's journey through the wilderness to the Promised Land. The chapter starts with their arrival at Rephidim. The name of that place signifies, by it's meaning, that this was supposed to be a resting place. There is no doubt that the Israelites who have just left the Red Sea behind and have begun their long journey through the wilderness were looking forward to making camp at Rephidim and finding rest, refreshing and refuge there. However, what they found instead were dry springs and hard times. There was no rest at the place of rest. There was no refuge in this haven of refuge. There was only a restless thirst.

While I would like to preach a little further down in the chapter it is important to note that God was teaching Israel a lesson. In that place where they expected to find a natural source of strength and refreshing, they found nothing. The famous springs of Rephidim were dry and that much anticipated resting place was barren. It was there, in the first seven verses of chapter 17 that God demonstrated the only real hope of Israel was in the miraculous provision of God. This is that remarkable moment when God commands Moses to smite the rock with the Rod and God causes sweet refreshing water to flow from the rock. It was there that Israel began to learn that their only rest and only refreshing was in the Lord.

However, there are much bigger lessons being played out in this chapter. For we learn through the narrative of scripture that, in the grand scheme of God's great plan the rock was representative of Jesus Christ. Typology is a rich scriptural subject and there is much to be learned in the study of the representation of New Testament truths in Old Testament scripture and while there may be a variety of views and a variety of opinions regarding types, none is more settled than the fact that the rock was indeed typical of Christ Jesus. Moses would learn that lesson the hard way, later on in the wilderness journey. That smitten rock from which cool refreshing water flows is the rock Christ Jesus and the water that flows from that rock is typical of the
refreshing gift of the Holy Ghost, those rivers of living water that were loosed when he was nailed to an old rugged cross.

**A New Conflict**

Immediately on the heels of this powerful event we are introduced to a new conflict. Up to this time the Children of Israel haven’t had to fight any battles, they haven’t had to take up arms against an enemy but something changed when the water flowed from the rock. Amalek came forth to fight with Israel at Rephidim. Now this is important for a couple of reasons. First of all Amalek has ranged far abroad of their normal home to attack Israel at Rephidim. This isn’t just a coincidental battle where one roving band encounters another and decides to quarrel over access to the springs. Amalek has journeyed far to raise its arms against Israel. In order to understand the significance of this pitched battle we must understand who Amalek is. Amalek was the grandson of Esau. The Israelites are the descendants of Jacob. There is a familial connection there and, in that connection we find the impetus for the animosity. Esau was the firstborn. The birthright was his. HE should have inherited the blessings of God. Israel’s promise should have been Amalek’s promise. But God had other plans. Paul would later declare, in Romans 9:13, That God loved Jacob, but He hated Esau. That’s strong language. God hated Esau. In order to understand those strong sentiments on the part of God you have to look again at the typology of the Old Testament. Esau was a manly man. He was typical of the natural man, the carnal man, a man of flesh – Not spiritual, but earthly. While Jacob was pursuing the things of God, chasing after the blessing of God, Esau was pursuing the natural things, living to satisfy his flesh.

It is this understanding then that causes us to see why the Amalekites would go out of their way to attack the Israelites. However, and even more importantly for us tonight, the timing of the attack is significant. Israel fights no battles, encounters no enemies, has raise up no armies until that fateful day when god causes the water to flow from the rock. When that event occurs that is typical of the Holy Ghost outpouring, immediately, an enemy reveals itself and prepares to attack. It is significant that this enemy is Amalek, because Amelek and the Amalekites bear the heritage of Esau. They are typical of the flesh, typical of the natural man. And the lasting conflict that arises between Israel and the Amalekites is indicative of the continual struggle between the spiritual man and the natural man. Paul described it in Galatians 5:17 where he said, “The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other.” Amalek and Israel will always be at war. Amalek and Israel will always struggle with one another.

Amalek’s name means “warlike” and it is a fitting name for the nature of the flesh. Peter said, in 1 Peter 2:11 that the lusts of the flesh make war against out souls. That fleshly nature would seek to destroy us! They were a warring people. They were among the first to domesticate the camel and used it as a weapon of war. Their camel mounted soldiers, in ancient times, were, quite possibly, the world’s first cavalry. They were swift to ride into battle and quick to overtake an
unsuspecting foe. But they were shrewd and wise warriors, attacking by surprise and when they felt they had overwhelming numbers. Because of this, they were quite skilled in battle and more often than not they were victorious. The character of Amalek comes out plainly in the words of Moses who said of Amalek and the Amalekites, by extension, “He feared not God” (Deut. 25:17). —That’s our enemy, that nature within us that was made after the flesh that delights in warring against the spirit and that has no fear or reverence of God.

A New Nature

My friend, when you receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost, you receive a new nature. That spiritual man that was once dead within you is revived and spiritual life springs forth within you. However, the man you used to be, that old man of the flesh, he remains a part of you. This corruption will not put on incorruption; this mortal will not put on immortality until that final day when Christ returns. Likewise, this natural man doesn’t go away just because the spiritual man is revived within us. Instead, the infilling of the Holy Ghost awakens a whole new conflict within us. The old man wars against the new man. The natural man would seek to overthrow the spiritual man. The flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh! The two have nothing in common. They are diametrically opposed to each other. And only one of them can have the upper hand in your life. One will be the master and one will be the servant. One will have authority and one will be in submission. One inherits the things of God while the other inherits eternal judgment. Ladies and gentlemen there is a constant struggle between Israel and Amalek throughout the scriptures and there is a constant struggle between that which is flesh and that which is spirit in the life of every believer.

Amalek came against Israel only after Moses smote the rock and the waters were given. That which typified the Holy Ghost was given to Israel and immediately the warfare commenced! It is not until you are born again that the real battle with your flesh begins. Before, you were dead in your trespasses and sins. Before, you had no awareness of God’s call to a life of holiness and righteousness. Before, there was no spiritual conflict in your life. Until the Holy Ghost shed abroad the light of the glorious truth of God in your life, there was no realization of the need for a change. There was no conflict with the flesh nature before, because the flesh nature was all you had ever known! The old man was entirely under the dominion of the flesh, that old nature serves the lusts of the flesh and does the will of the flesh. But as soon as the Holy Ghost comes in, as soon as the dominion of that fleshly nature is broken, that’s when the battle begins.

Abraham’s Sons

These two natures in the life of a believer are illustrated in the life of Abraham. He had two sons: Ishmael and Isaac. Ishmael represents that which is “born of the flesh” while Isaac represents that which is “born of the Spirit.” Ishmael was born by natural means. His birth was the result of Abraham and Sarah’s ill-conceived plan to help God out. But Isaac was born as the result of a miracle. God supernaturally
quickened both Abraham and Sarah, when the one had passed the age of frutfulness and the other was too old to bear children. Paul tells us in Galatians 4:22 that Ishmael, born first, was born of “the bond-woman”. Isaac, born second was born of the “free-woman”. Ishmael was born after the flesh but Isaac was born by promise.

Here’s the key though, Ismael was born and lived in Abraham’s household for 14 full years without a conflict. But after Isaac was born, there was trouble in Abraham’s household. That natural man doesn’t pose a real problem until the spiritual man is born. Amalek doesn’t attack Israel until the water flows from the rock or, until the type of the infilling of the Holy Ghost is introduced in scripture. When Isaac was born into Abraham’s household the wheels of conflict and trouble were set into motion. All of a sudden the Hagar and Sarah couldn’t live in the same house anymore. Where there had once been peace, now there was conflict and trouble. Ishmael, no doubt, felt threatened by Isaac and, because of that, sought to antagonize the young lad but Sarah wasn’t going to allow any son of a bondwoman to lord over her free-born son of promise. That ancient conflict is important to us today because it speaks directly to the subject at hand. Paul said, in Galatians 4:28-29: “Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.” Just as Ishmael “persecuted” Isaac, so it is in our lives. Galatians 5:17 says: “the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”

Recognizing then that there is a natural man and a spiritual man, and that there is, within each of us, a nature that was born after the flesh and a nature that was born after the spirit of God. And recognizing that there exists a continual, ongoing conflict between these two. We cannot help but see that somehow, in our lives, the spiritual man must rule over the natural man. Somehow, by some spiritual means, the natural man must be brought into subjection to the spiritual man. Because we understand that 1 Corinthians 2:14 tells us that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him...” It is the spiritual man that becomes an heir to the promises of God. It is the spiritual man that receives the blessings of God. And it is the spiritual man that walks in the promises of God. Ultimately, if we want to make heaven our home, if we want to receive the things of God in our lives then we must recognize that there is a continual struggle between the natural man and the spiritual man and we must recognize that we have a vested interest in who wins that struggle. That which is flesh is flesh. It cannot please God and it cannot inherit the kingdom of God. But that which is spirit is spirit and not only can it walk pleasing to God but it is the heir of the kingdom of God. Our text tonight is important to us because it illustrates the only way that Amalek can be defeated.

**The Order of Battle**
When Moses set the order of the very first battle against Amalek in scripture he established that the battle would be fought on two fronts. The first was physical and
the second was spiritual. At this point in their history, the Israelites are only a few days, maybe weeks at the most, removed from their profession as slave laborers. They are not an army. It is likely that, since this is their very first battle, many of them probably are not armed and many of them probably have never been a part of any kind of armed conflict. This is the same group that just a few days ago cowered in fear with their backs to the Red Sea when Pharaohs’ mighty army came bearing down upon them. And now they are facing a staged battle against a very capable enemy. The Amalekites are skilled warriors. And the Israelites are, at best a rag-tag militia. But Moses turns to Joshua and gives him the task of selecting an army from the people of Israel, gathering together weapons and armor and going to meet the Amalekites in battle. But Moses, knowing that the battle must be fought with swords and spears but that victory must be won by the intervention of God, plans to go stand on the top of a hill with the rod of God in his hand. That same rod that God used to part the Red Sea, that same Rod that God just used to bring water from the rock, Moses says, I’ll go stand on yonder hill and I will lift up the rod.

#1 The Battle Belongs To The Lord
The first key to fighting Amalek is recognizing that the success of Israel did not depend on the bravery or the skill of its soldiers but, rather, on the uplifted hand of Moses. The battle was fought in the physical realm but the victory was won in the spiritual realm. The war was waged with swords and shield, with spears and bows, blood, sweat and tears stained that battlefield but the victory was one on that overlooking hillside where the man of God invoked the spirit of God! For all of their heroic effort, for all of there strength and might, it quickly became evident to the men of Israel that as long as Moses held up his hands, Israel prevailed in the battle. But when he let his hands down, when he grew weary and weak, Amalek prevailed!

The first key to fighting Amalek is to recognize that, “though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh. “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” (2 Cor. 10:3-5) If you are going to win the war with your flesh the first thing you have to learn is that this is a spiritual battle! This war isn’t won in the flesh! This battle isn’t won with swords and shields. We struggle against a spiritual foe and the weapons of our warfare were made for this kind of battle! They are mighty through God! The symbol of victory in the battle with Amalek is the uplifted hands of Moses! This battle is won through prayer, this victory is gained in the spirit!

#2 We All Get Weary In the Battle
But there is another thing to note here. Given time, Moses’ hands grew heavy. Given time, Moses found that it was struggle to keep himself in the posture of victory. With the passing of the hours, even though Moses noticed that when he lowered his hands the tide of battle turned, he found himself too weak to press on. Let me get down where the rubber meets the road. We all know how this battle against our
flesh is supposed to be fought. We all recognize that spiritual victories are won through spiritual efforts. But the truth is that sometimes we are weak, and sometimes our strength is nearly gone, sometimes we just can’t find the strength we need to overcome this old man of flesh. Sometimes we struggle to do what we know we need to do! But thank God, that Moses didn’t isolate himself on that hilltop. Thank God that, before he ever engaged in the battle he chose two good men to stand by his side. Thank God that when he grew weak, when he grew weary, his brothers in the Lord were right there by his side to lift up his hands again. When he was weak, they were strong. When he faltered, they saw the tide of battle turn and they stepped in. They brought him a rock to sit upon. Do you know why they had him to sit? Because what was such a struggle to Moses, became so easy for them once he was seated. Moses struggled because his hands were lifted above his head. But when he was seated what was above his head was now somewhere in their abdomen, in that comfortable zone where they could assist him without being stretched beyond their comfort zone!

On the one side Aaron represented the office of the high priest. He represents divine intervention. I’m so thankful that I don’t I don’t fight my battles with my flesh alone. I’m so thankful that I have high priest that has been touched by the feeling of my infirmities. He knows what its like to be weak and weary, he knows what its like to stumble under a heavy load. And he stands by my side. Paul said, I have learned that when I am weak, he is strong! When my weary soul can’t seem to carry on, he becomes my strength, he becomes my help, he upholds my hands in the battle!

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himsel maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rom. 8:26) My friend, you may be engaged in the battle of your life. This struggle against your flesh is life and death. But you don’t fight alone! On the one side, God becomes your strength when you are weary.

On the other side, Hur was nothing more than just a good man, a companion of Moses in the journey. Moses understood that, in the battle with Amalek, he couldn’t afford to isolate himself from the fellowship of the people of God! He understood that I draw strength and encouragement from my brothers and sisters in the Lord. There’s gonna be times when I am weak but they make me strong. There will times when stumble would fall but they catch my hand and lift me up. I need my brothers, I need my sisters, I can’t afford to forsake the assembly of the church because this is where I find my strength when strength is almost gone. This where I find my courage when courage has almost run out. This is where my help comes from!

#3 The Sword Matters

Another thing to learn about fighting Amalek is that, although the victory was not won in the flesh, the battle was fought in the flesh. Even thought there was a spiritual component and a spiritual victory the war was waged on two fronts and, as Moses lifted up the rod, Exodus17:13 tells us that “Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.” There is a very real and very powerful
spiritual component to this fight but the battle is not devoid of a physical reality. If you are going to overcome Amalek, spiritual realities are going to have to find their expression in the physical realm. The sword matters. Moses was on the hill lifting up the rod, but it was important that, at the same time, Joshua was in the valley with his sword fighting the enemy! Don’t tell me that you’ve overcome Amalek in the spirit when you’ve yet to lift your sword against him in the flesh!

Let me make it real plain: Jesus said in John 8:34, “Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.” Some folks want to claim spiritual liberty while they are wrapped up in carnal bondage. When Moses lifted up the rod on yonder hill, the evidence of spiritual victory was made plain in the battle that was being waged in the flesh. Don’t tell me you have this great walk with God when your flesh rules you. Don’t tell me that you’re a spiritual warrior when the evidence says quite the contrary. Moses was winning a spiritual victory, but the evidence was manifest in the fleshly battle that was being waged. When the spirit prevailed, Joshua discomfited Amalek with the sword. When the spirit faltered, Amalek turned the tide of battle and became the winning side. There is a simple principle here, that which is spiritual is by nature hidden, but that which is flesh, reflects the spiritual reality. You can’t live like the devil then claim to have spiritual victory. It doesn’t work that way.

#4 Amalek Was Not Destroyed

Another thing that is important to note here is the fact that Amalek was discomfited but not destroyed. As a matter of fact, God himself marked Amalek for total destruction but that command was never fully carried out much to the dismay of the people of God. I don’t have time to fully explore the role of the Amalekite in scripture but let me point out the fact that Saul rebelled against the command of God to completely wipe the Amalekites out only to later lose his life at the hand of an Amalekite! Amalek is marked for destruction. The promise of Numbers 24:20 is that, in the latter end, he will perish forever. But that day has not yet arrived. That will be the day that corruption puts on incorruption, when that which is mortal puts on immortality. But, until that time, the struggle against Amalek is an ongoing thing. It is a battle that is constantly with us and the only way to keep the upper hand is to learn to walk after the spirit rather than the flesh. Understand this, you don’t have any choice in the matter, if you want to make heaven your home, you must fight Amalek. If you want to be saved, the spiritual man must prevail over the natural man. I told the men, Wednesday night, the scripture is plain, “Flesh and blood will not inherit the kingdom of God!” The spiritual man is the heir to the promise of God. Only the spiritual man can reap the reward of heaven. You have both, a natural man and a spiritual man within you and only one of them can prevail. The natural man will inherit the wages of sin but the spiritual man will inherit the gift of God. It matter which one of them prevails in your life!

Romans 8:5-8; 12-13
5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.
6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.  
7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of 
    God, neither indeed can be.  
8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.  

...  
12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.  
13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the 
    deeds of the body, ye shall live.  

You must win the battle with Amalek, your soul depends on it!  

Close  
In closing I want to introduce another passage of scripture, Deuteronomy 25:17-18:  
"Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of 
    Egypt; How he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were 
    feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God."  

We’ve talked tonight about how to fight Amalek, but let’s close with some insight on 
how Amalek fights us. Amalek doesn’t attack the strong and he doesn’t attack the 
spiritually healthy, he attacks the hindmost in the church. The devil really is like a 
roaring lion. The lion doesn’t attack the pack, the lion doesn’t challenge the strong 
and healthy. The lion singles out the weak, the sick, the stragglers, those that are 
weary, those that are lagging behind, those that live on the fringes of the group. 
That’s where the lion attacks. Amalek, attacked the feeble, the faint and the weary.  

Sometimes we get tired, sometimes it’s a struggle to just keep going, but let me 
make you aware of the danger that exists in living on the fringes of the church. 
That’s Amalek’s favorite place to ambush the people of God. When you start to falter 
in your faithfulness to the house of God, when you start to slip in your personal 
devotion, when some tragedy comes out of nowhere and blindsides you and you 
find yourself struggling to pick up and carry on. That’s when your flesh rises up 
within you and begins to call in its sweet seductive voice, you might as well just give 
up. You might as well just throw in the towel. Nobody down there at that church 
loves you, nobody down there cares about you, you might as well stay home tonight. 
Your flesh is easily enticed with the things of this world, and it is when the spiritual 
man is weak that the flesh begins to prevail and you find yourself chasing comfort 
and fulfillment in things that are hollow and empty.  

Hear the words of this preacher tonight! Guard yourself. Amalek stalks the 
perimeter of the church. Amalek haunts those that lag behind. But you don’t have to 
fall prey to Amalek. The Lord has made you a promise in Isaiah 40:30-31: “He giveth 
power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. Even the 
youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail; But they that 
wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as 
eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.”
You don’t have to succumb to Amalek! Your strength is in the Lord! Your refreshing is in His presence. And, without a doubt, He is here, in this place tonight!