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Teaching Notes

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Spiritual Beggars Go to War

Exodus 17:8-16

I. Trials in the Wilderness

A. The “Painful Purpose of the Wilderness”: Testing and Strengthening Israel’s Faith

Deuteronomy 8:2 Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.

1. To test you
2. To know what was in your heart
3. Whether or not you would keep His commands

John Calvin, *Institutes*: “Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.”

In the desert, Israel learned much about both God and themselves. Most of the best teaching times came through extreme trials... here, they learn to go to war

4. God did not shelter them from Amalek... he taught them how to fight in total reliance on Him

B. Learning How to Go to War

1. The Promised Land would not be given to Israel... they would have to fight for it
2. God providentially orchestrated a number of enemies on the east side of the Jordan River, to prepare them to go to war in total reliance on Him

Joshua 11:20 For it was the LORD himself who hardened their hearts to wage war against Israel, so that he might destroy them totally, exterminating them without mercy, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Later God would orchestrate that some enemies would remain in the Promised Land to teach them warfare:

Judges 3:1-2 These are the nations the LORD left to test all those Israelites who had not experienced any of the wars in Canaan 2 (he did this only to teach warfare to the descendants of the Israelites who had not had previous battle experience)

3. Earlier, God had desired to lead them by a longer route so that they would NOT face war too soon

Exodus 13:17 When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said, "If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt."

4. Now they were ready for the spiritual lessons of war

C. What Lessons? Humble Reliance on God Resulting in Fearless Battle Against the Enemy

Clearly displayed in Moses' constant and humble intercession for his people in the face of battle

II. Amalek's Aggression: The Context for the Lesson (vs. 8)

vs. 8 The Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim.

- A. Who Were the Amalekites?: Descendants of Esau (Genesis 36:12)
- B. Why Did they Attack Israel? Cold hearted hatred
- C. Place of Battle: Rephidim (17:1, place with no water)

III. Moses's Leadership... and Joshua's (vs. 9-10)

vs. 9-10 Moses said to Joshua, "Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands." 10 So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill.

- A. Chain of Command: God to Moses, Moses to Joshua, Joshua to Israel
- B. No Specific Mention of God's Commands Here at All
- C. Human Leadership is Essential

1. Yes, God carries us as a father carries His son

Deuteronomy 1:31 in the desert... you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place."

2. BUT God also wants us active, courageous and bold in the process
3. Moses shows initiative in leadership here
4. At the front of Moses' mind: I will beseech the Lord for you!!

NOTE: Combination of prayer and action... this is effective in advancing God's causes

William Gurnall: "We must join our endeavor in the use of all means with our prayers, whether they be put up for spiritual or temporal blessings.... We must pray with our hand at the pump, or the ship will sink in sight of our prayers. Is it temporal subsistence thou prayest for? Pray and work or pray and starve. Dost thou think to set God at work while thou sittest with thy hand in thy bosom?"

D. Joshua's Leadership

1. Choosing an army
2. Leading them out in battle
3. Question: where did they get the weapons? possibly from Pharaoh's drowned army?

Exodus 14:30 That day the LORD saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore.

IV. The Central Lesson: Total Reliance on God (vs. 11)

vs. 11 As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning.

A. Lesson Here is Consistently Taught: "Apart from me, you can do nothing"

B. God HATES Human Arrogance... Especially Military

1. God did seemingly bizarre things to teach Israel that all their military victories came from HIM
2. Joshua vs. the Northern Kings of Canaan

Joshua 11:4-6 They came out with all their troops and a large number of horses and chariots-- a huge army, as numerous as the sand on the seashore. 5 All these kings joined forces and made camp together at the Waters of Merom, to fight against Israel. 6 The LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid of them, because by this time tomorrow I will hand all of them over to Israel, slain. You are to hamstring their horses and burn their chariots."

Why hamstringing the horses and burn the chariots? So that they would not take God's place in the hearts of the Israelites... so they would not rely on the strength of their weaponry for their protection

3. Gideon vs. the Midianites

4. Jehoshaphat's musical army

Illus. United States Government spends 50% more than all the other nations in the world's list of top twenty spenders in military budget: add together the United Kingdom, Russia, France, Germany, Saudi Arabia, India, China, South Korea, Taiwan, Iran, and ten other countries, and it adds up to 208 billion dollars in annual military budget. The US spent 379 billion on military in 2003. In fact, our increase in military budget from 2002 to 2003 was 48 billion... more than any other nation in the world spent on military

Military Budget - Countries

\$ 379 billion (2003) - United States
\$48 billion - increase from Fiscal 2002 to 2003

\$ 34.8 billion (2001) - United Kingdom

\$ 29 billion (2000) - Russia

\$ 27 billion (2000) - France

\$ 23.1 billion (2001) - Germany

\$ 18.7 billion (2000) - Saudi Arabia

\$ 15.9 billion (2000) - India

\$ 14.5 billion (2000) - China

\$ 12.8 billion (2000) - South Korea

\$ 12.8 billion (2000) - Taiwan

\$ 7.5 billion (2000) - Iran

\$ 3.3 billion (2000) - Pakistan

\$ 1.8 billion (2000) - Syria

\$ 1.4 billion (1999) - Iraq

\$ 1.3 billion (2000) - North Korea

\$ 1.3 billion (2000) - Yugoslavia

\$ 1.2 billion (2000) - Libya

\$ 425 million (2000) - Sudan

\$ 31 million (2000) - Cuba

Source: The International Institute for Strategic Studies

C. Moses' Work: Knowledgeable, Fervent, Effective, Sacrificial, Prevailing Prayer

"The work of praying is prerequisite to all other work in the Kingdom of God. It is by prayer that we couple the powers of heaven to our helplessness ... and make the impossible possible." - **O. Hallesby**

Hallesby wrote a little book on prayer, and in it he included a chapter entitled "Prayer as work"... "We often speak of praying for the work of the Kingdom; but prayer IS the work of the kingdom."

“We take for granted that prayer is preparation for work, whereas prayer is the work.” – Oswald Chambers

It seems that this account teaches us that Moses’ prayers had a greater effect on the battlefield than Joshua’s sword

But not just any prayer: Knowledgeable, Fervent, Effective, Sacrificial, Prevailing Prayer

1. Knowledgeable

- a. up on the mountain, Moses could see moment-by-moment the progress of the battle
- b. we pray better when we know more personally the needs
- c. Moses linked his prayer with the immediate needs of his people
- d. a good picture also of Christ’s intercessory life for us

Hebrews 7:25 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

Notice also how life experience teaches Moses the need for prevailing in prayer... undoubtedly he did not realize the connection between his upraised arms and Israel’s success on the battlefield until he observed the effect himself

2. Fervent

E. M. Bounds: *Man of Prayer*: "Desire gives fervor to prayer. The soul cannot be listless when some great desire fixes and inflames it . . . Strong desires make strong prayers . . . The neglect of prayer is the fearful token of dead spiritual desires . . . There can be no true praying without desire."

- a. God providentially brings about overwhelming circumstances in part to bring us to fervent prayer
- b. our natural state is to be detached, unmoved, uncaring, aloof, unconcerned... and our listless prayer lives demonstrate that clearly
- c. fervency more important than the right or flowery words:

Samuel Rutherford: “Words are but the body, the garment, the outside of prayer; sighs are nearer the heart work. A mute beggar gets alms at Christ’s gates, even by making signs when his tongue cannot plead for him; and even more because he is mute! Tears have a tongue, and grammar, and language, that our Father knoweth. Babies have no prayer for the breast, but weeping; **BUT** the mother can read hunger in the weeping.”

Thomas Brooks: “Cold prayers always freeze before they reach heaven.”

3. Effective

James 5:16 *The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.* (Greek = **energew**)

- a. Moses' prayers were in concert with the will of God... God desired Israel to be victorious
- b. the final outcome could not really have been in doubt, since God had promised to bring Israel into the promised land
- c. however, that doesn't mean that Moses sat back and simply relied on the sovereignty of God
- d. Moses' prayers made a difference... they brought about an effect on the battlefield

4. Sacrificial

- a. Moses' arms hurt him as they became heavy
- b. it became a burden for Moses to keep lifting them up to God

Illus. Putting up a new floodlight, my arms became as heavy as lead after just a few minutes

- c. the prayer became a sacrifice difficult to bear
- d. sacrifice in prayer is a mark of fervent love and commitment

5. Prevailing (vs. 11)

vs. 11 *As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning.*

- a. prevailing = persevering, remaining, keeping at it
- b. great tendency to give up in prayer

Luke 18:1-6 *Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. 3 And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' 4 "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!'" 6 And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says.*

- c. every time Moses gave up, Israel began losing the battle

This is a great weakness of mine... I can pray for something once or twice... but to keep on praying until God answers it is a mark of great spiritual maturity

Illus. George Mueller

"I am now, in 1864, waiting upon God for certain blessings, for which I have daily besought Him for 19 years and 6 months, without one day's intermission. Still the full answer is not yet given, concerning the conversion of certain individuals. In the meantime, I have received many thousands of answers to prayer. I have also prayed daily, without intermission, for the conversion of other individuals for about ten years, for others about six or seven years, for others four, three, and two years, for others about eighteen months; still the answer is not yet granted, concerning these persons.... Yet I am daily continuing in prayer and expecting the answer.... Be encouraged, dear Christian reader, with fresh earnestness to give yourself to prayer, if you can only be sure that you ask for things which are for the glory of God."

V. Secondary Lesson: Human Determination and Cooperation in Seeking God (vs. 12-13)

vs. 12-13 *When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up-- one on one side, one on the other-- so that his hands remained steady till sunset. 13 So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.*

A. Determination: "To Him Who Overcomes..." "More than conquerors..."

Christian Life a Battle... God tests us that we might not easily give up

B. Moses NEEDED Aaron and Hur

1 Corinthians 12:21 *The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!"*

Illus. The memory of Charles Haddon Spurgeon has been cherished among evangelical Christians for over the past 100 years. Many Christian leaders consider him to be the greatest preacher England ever produced. He is commonly hailed as the "Prince of Preachers". Over 63 volumes of published sermons still bear witness to the richness and success of C. H. Spurgeon's ministry. Though known as a great preacher, it was not preaching that made Spurgeon great. Mr. Spurgeon repeatedly acknowledged his success as the direct result of his congregation's faithful prayers. "It has often been remarked that the whole church helped produce Spurgeon." When visitors would come to Spurgeon's church he would take them to the basement prayer-room where people were always on their knees interceding. Then Spurgeon would declare, "Here is the powerhouse of this church."

VI. Remembering the Lessons (vs. 14-16)

vs. 14-16 *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered and make sure that Joshua hears it, because I will completely blot out the memory of Amalek from under*

heaven." 15 Moses built an altar and called it The LORD is my Banner. 16 He said, "For hands were lifted up to the throne of the LORD. The LORD will be at war against the Amalekites from generation to generation."

A. Written = Remembered

B. Amalek Will Be Annihilated

1. Prophesied (here and Numbers 24)

Numbers 24:20 Then Balaam saw Amalek and uttered his oracle: "Amalek was first among the nations, but he will come to ruin at last."

2. Commanded (Deuteronomy)

Deuteronomy 25:19 When the LORD your God gives you rest from all the enemies around you in the land he is giving you to possess as an inheritance, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget!

3. Fulfilled: partially, then totally (1 Samuel)

1 Samuel 15:1 Samuel said to Saul, "I am the one the LORD sent to anoint you king over his people Israel; so listen now to the message from the LORD.

2 This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt.

3 Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.'"

4 So Saul summoned the men and mustered them at Telaim-- two hundred thousand foot soldiers and ten thousand men from Judah.

Saul went to the city of **Amalek** and set an ambush in the ravine.

6 Then he said to the Kenites, "Go away, leave the Amalekites so that I do not destroy you along with them; for you showed kindness to all the Israelites when they came up out of Egypt." So the Kenites moved away from the Amalekites.

7 Then Saul attacked the Amalekites all the way from Havilah to Shur, to the east of Egypt.

8 He took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and all his people he totally destroyed with the sword.

9 But Saul and the army spared Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs-- everything that was good. These they were unwilling to destroy completely, but everything that was despised and weak they totally destroyed.

10 Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel:

11 "I am grieved that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions." Samuel was troubled, and he cried out to the LORD all that night.

12 Early in the morning Samuel got up and went to meet Saul, but he was told, "Saul has gone to Carmel. There he has set up a monument in his own honor and has turned and gone on down to Gilgal."

13 When Samuel reached him, Saul said, "The LORD bless you! I have carried out the LORD's instructions."

14 But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle that I hear?"

15 Saul answered, "The soldiers brought them from the Amalekites; they spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the LORD your God, but we totally destroyed the rest."

16 "Stop!" Samuel said to Saul. "Let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night." "Tell me," Saul replied.

17 Samuel said, "Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king over Israel.

18 And he sent you on a mission, saying, 'Go and completely destroy those wicked people, the Amalekites; make war on them until you have wiped them out.'

19 Why did you not obey the LORD? Why did you pounce on the plunder and do evil in the eyes of the LORD?"

20 "But I did obey the LORD," Saul said. "I went on the mission the LORD assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king.

21 The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the LORD your God at Gilgal."

22 But Samuel replied: "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.

23 For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king."

24 Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned. I violated the LORD's command and your instructions. I was afraid of the people and so I gave in to them.

25 Now I beg you, forgive my sin and come back with me, so that I may worship the LORD."

26 But Samuel said to him, "I will not go back with you. You have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you as king over Israel!"

27 As Samuel turned to leave, Saul caught hold of the hem of his robe, and it tore.

28 Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to one of your neighbors-- to one better than you.

29 He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a man, that he should change his mind."

30 Saul replied, "I have sinned. But please honor me before the elders of my people and before Israel; come back with me, so that I may worship the LORD your God."

31 So Samuel went back with Saul, and Saul worshiped the LORD.

32 Then Samuel said, "Bring me Agag king of the Amalekites." Agag came to him confidently, thinking, "Surely the bitterness of death is past."

33 But Samuel said, "As your sword has made women childless, so will your mother be childless among women." And Samuel put Agag to death before the LORD at Gilgal.

34 Then Samuel left for Ramah, but Saul went up to his home in Gibeah of Saul.

35 Until the day Samuel died, he did not go to see Saul again, though Samuel mourned for him. And the LORD was grieved that he had made Saul king over Israel.

VII. Applications

Pray like this: Knowledgeable, Fervent, Effective, Sacrificial, Prevailing Prayer

FOCUS:

Prevailing Prayer

Ephesians 6:18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Pray for each other, ask each other to pray for us... RELY ON EACH OTHER, as Joshua relied on Moses' prayers and Moses relied on Aaron and Hur

Application: Landis's prayer ministry