

August 9th, 2020
The LORD is my Banner
Exodus 17:8 – Ch. 18

BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

August 2 Isaiah 23-27	August 6 Isaiah 42-44
August 3 Isaiah 28-30	August 7 Isaiah 45-48
August 4 Isaiah 31-35	August 8 Isaiah 49-53
August 5 Isaiah 36-41	August 9 Isaiah 54-58

Lesson Introduction: Last week we saw how the Lord provided for His people in the wilderness after he brought them out of Egypt. This week, we find Israel under attack from a new enemy. We will also see how the Lord uses Moses' father-in-law to speak wisdom into the Moses' life in terms of how the nation should be led. We will see how the Lord delivers His people as the depend on Him, how He calls us to share the load of leadership with one another, and how Christ is our ultimate intercessor.

FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS:

- **Christ is our ultimate intercessor (17:8-16)**
- **The Lord calls us to share the load of ministry (Ch. 18)**

Read Exodus 17:8 – Ch. 18

Discussion Section 1: Depending on God (17:8-16)

-What is significant about Moses raising his hands during this battle?

-What does this battle teach us about the true nature of the battles we face as Christians?

-How does Moses' intercession for the people of Israel compare to Christ's intercession for us?

Excerpt from *Exalting Jesus in Exodus* by Tony Merida, pg. 172-174:

Moses' actions demonstrated that he was dependent on God for victory. The battle was the Lord's. Notice that it was not by physical force alone that the battle was won or lost.

Though some might argue that this was not really "prayer" (the text never says Moses was praying), there are two reasons we can indeed call this "intercession."

Moses lifted up his hand(s), appealing to God to show His power. When Moses lowered his hands, they began to lose the battle (v. 11). Aaron and Hur helped Moses by giving him a seat and holding up his hands (v. 12). The result was that they overwhelmed the enemy (v. 13). This action reminds me of a roller coaster ride. Why do people raise their hands? (Well, some of them. Others of us close our eyes and hold our breath!) They are saying in a sense, "It is out of my control, and I'm OK with that." Raising one's arms is a sign of dependent prayer elsewhere in the Bible. Remember Pharaoh asking Moses to pray for him?

Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron. "I have sinned this time," he said to them. "Yahweh is the Righteous One, and I and my people are the guilty ones. Make an appeal to Yahweh. There has been enough of God's thunder and hail. I will let you go; you don't need to stay any longer." Moses said to him, "When I have left the city, I will extend my hands to Yahweh. The thunder will cease, and there will be no more hail, so that you may know the earth belongs to Yahweh. (Exod 9:27-29)

Likewise, the psalmist spoke of uplifted hands, seeking God (Psalms 63:3-41; 41:2). In the New Testament, Paul commanded, "Therefore, I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or argument." (1 Tim 2:8)

The text might not say "prayer," but Moses was clearly depending on God for victory. We may fight like Joshua, but we must also cry out to God in prayer like Moses. The idea of prayer seems to be confirmed by the last verse: "Indeed, my hand is lifted up toward the Lord's throne" (Exod 17:16). This phrase is hard to translate, but I like the ESV's translation: "A hand upon the throne of the Lord!" Elsewhere, the Bible describes prayer as coming to the throne. We can come to the throne because of Jesus' work, and we are now invited to the "throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us at the proper time" (Heb 4:16). In our battles we must fight like Joshua, but we also must hold up our hands to God's throne and say, "It is out of my control." We must go to the throne of grace and say, "Help me!" We need courageous, Joshua-like warriors who will take the gospel to hard places, fight injustice, and serve the needy—but all of it must be done in a spirit of dependent prayer.

Consider your need for God's power. There is a battle between the children of light and the powers of darkness. The church's spiritual warfare with the powers

of darkness is noted in the New Testament in several places (e.g., **Eph 5:8-14; 6:12**). Jesus conquered our greatest enemies, but because a “mop up operation” still exists, we need God’s power. From reading **Ephesians 6:10-12** we know that our enemy is deceptive. He uses all kinds of tactics. He is aggressive. Do not be naïve. Do not forget that you are in a battle. Israel’s story is our story. They had been redeemed and were on their way to the promised land (like us), but on the way they faced enemies (so will we). Moses discovered that prayer is more powerful than the problem (cf. **Eph 3:20-21; 6:18-20**).

Also, consider how they got the power: a mediator. Moses interceded for them. On one hand, we can learn about seeking God from Moses, and on another, Moses points us to the ultimate intercessor, Jesus Christ. We have a greater mediator interceding for us. Many great intercessors stand out in the Old Testament—David, Solomon, Nehemiah—but none are like Jesus. How is Jesus a greater intercessor? Jesus is fully God and Man! He is the ultimate mediator. Jesus is the greater warrior than Joshua, defeating our ultimate enemies and making it possible for us to know God and commune with Him; and He is the greater Moses, praying for His people. But Jesus does not have to have His arms raised by anyone. He does not get tired of interceding! “Moses’ hands grew heavy” (**Exod 17:12**), but Jesus “always lives to intercede for [us]” (**Heb 7:25**). Jesus does exactly what Moses did. While we fight the good fight, He intercedes for us. Oh, the wonder of the interceding Son of God (**Rom 8:34**)! The Lord is our banner also, but in a way even Moses could hardly have imagined. Consider **Isaiah 11:10: On that day the root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples. The nations will seek Him, and His resting place will be glorious.**

Jesus Christ is the banner for God’s people, who rally to Him from every nation! Around His cross we are unified, encouraged, and instructed. It is through Jesus that we experience spiritual victories. Apart from His work and His intercession, we have no hope.”

Discussion Section 2: Sharing the Load (Ch. 18)

-How does Jethro assess the leadership setup of Israel? (**V. 17**)

-What types of characteristics did Jethro say the men should possess if they were going to be leaders? (**V. 21**)

-In what ways has the Lord equipped you to share the load of ministry amongst Christ’s Body?

Note: As we close out this lesson, may we consider how the shared leadership seen in chapter 18 might apply to the church today. Of course we know that the Lord has called certain qualified men to be elders (pastors) in the church, who lead the church spiritually, providing oversight for God’s flock (**Acts 20:17; 1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Pet 5:1-4**). In his commentary, Merida points out it is not just the pastors who are to do the work of the ministry, but that ministry is to be shared by all of God’s people...

Excerpt from *Exalting Jesus in Exodus* by Tony Merida, pg. 183:

...But the elders do not do everything. They oversee the ministry of the church. They equip God’s people to do the work of the ministry (**Eph 4:11-16**). Every member is to serve. Of course, Jesus Christ is the head, the chief Shepherd, and everyone must submit to Him. Under Him, He has appointed elders/pastors as under-shepherds to equip God’s people to do ministry together.

Therefore, healthy communities of faith practice shared ministry by having an “every-member ministry.” While some are appointed to leadership, every Christian has a part to play in the body of Christ. Every Christian is a “priest” (**Exod 19:6; 1 Pet 2:5-10**). You can pray for people. You can care for people. You can teach others. Every Christian has spiritual gifts to use for the good of the body (1 Pet 4:10). Healthy communities of faith have active members serving, loving, and praying. Generally, those who serve best do not care about being known or having a title. We should do this in the spirit of “[carrying] one another’s burdens; in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (**Gal 6:2**). In verses 24-26 we see that Moses listens. He demonstrates humility. He receives counsel—even from his father-in-law! Will you follow his example and follow the counsel of the wise?

As a community of faith, we need power; we need to speak the good news; and we need a shared ministry. As a community of faith, we—like Jethro and Moses and the elders—gather around one table. We also rally around the cross, our banner, and we enjoy fellowship with one another because of the work of our great mediator, Jesus Christ.”