

INTRODUCTION

It is cool to be a boss. Some of you used to, or still, have your own business. Some other people among us are managers at work. Your subordinates address you as “boss.” You say a word and things will get done. Everything is under your control. With technological advancement, engineers use the same concept to make our lives more convenient. You can ask your cellphone or tablet what the weather will look like. You sit in your car and tell the GPS to take you to a certain address. At your home, you say to a device which song to play or what grocery to order. Some of you may think: “Duh! I don’t need any of those gadgets. I have been using voice command all along. I tell my wife, ‘Honey, fetch me some water’ and it will be delivered instantly. Or when I raise my voice, ‘Kids, time for bed!’ No one would dare to utter a word.” But God beats all of us. He is the pioneer for voice-activation technology. God’s words are full of power. When He says it, then it will be done. God loves us so much that He shares such privilege with us. It is called prayer. Now, do not think for a moment that we can manipulate God with our words. He is God, and we are not! Through prayer, we express our burdens and needs to Him. But we do not just go down our shopping list. We also spend time listening to God in our prayer. Prayer is a means for us to work with God.

The Israelites had to learn how to talk to God in the right way. Grumbling is not the correct approach. In today’s passage, Moses showed them the power of prayer. Soon after God gave His people water from a rock, the Israelites had to engage in their very first battle. God taught them an important lesson that the key to victory is to rely on His power. Let us see what we can learn from this incident.

EXPLANATION

The Israelites faced yet another crisis. This time the trouble was not caused by internal conflict. It was from the outside. The Amalekites were about to attack them. Why were they there? The Amalekites were nomadic fighters. They made a living by robbing people. Genesis 36 tells us that the Amalekites were descendants of Esau. Israel, whose another name was Jacob, was the twin brother of Esau. Therefore, the Amalekites and Israelites were distant relatives. But after a few hundred years they did not know each other anymore. Now these gangsters preyed over the Israelites. It should be easy to take care of a group of slaves who left Egypt not too long ago! They did not have any weapon, horse or military skill. But the Amalekites were actually bringing trouble to themselves. God was with His people! How did the Israelites prepare to go to war? There were three groups of people in this passage working together with God to gain a victory.

Let us read the first half of **verse 9** again: Moses said to Joshua, “Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites...” Here, we see Joshua’s name in the Bible for the first time. After Moses passed away Joshua became the successor to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land. Now Joshua played the role of a commander to lead his people to war. I called Joshua and the soldiers **the OPERATIVES 執行**. They carried out the military campaign. They would engage in a hand-to-hand combat with the Amalekites. That was a monumental task. The

Israelites were never soldier before. They only had limited resources. There was no strategy book to look up. Moses told Joshua to find some men to fight. If I were Joshua, I would have replied Moses: “Yeah, right, choose some men! The only skill they know all their lives is making bricks.” But there was no argument. These operatives submitted to Moses’ command. On they went to the battlefield. For the first time the Israelites did not grumble when they met a problem. We may wonder why. We can see a clue in [Deuteronomy 25:17-18](#) when Joshua recalled the incident: 17 “Remember what the Amalekites did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt. 18 When you were weary and worn out, they met you on your journey and cut off all who were lagging behind; they had no fear of God.” The Amalekites were not noble army officers. They were merciless thugs. They did not care about the older people, the little ones and the women. Therefore, naturally the Israel men would stand up to defend for their families. They united together with one heart to fight against the enemies. We need operatives like them in the church. They identify the common good for God’s family. They are willing to take risk. They sacrifice their own interests as secondary. They obey their leaders. They faithfully follow through their duties.

While Joshua led the troop to war Moses had a different responsibility. He told Joshua in the second half of [verse 9](#): “...Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands.” Moses had an important role in the battle too. I call him **the DIRECTIVE 策劃**. He did not only give out order to Joshua he also received direct instructions from the Lord. What was Moses doing on the mountain top? Though the passage does not explicitly say so, it was quite evident that Moses was praying for the army. He did so by lifting up the staff with both hands. We see quite an interesting scene in [verse 11](#): As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. It was as if Moses were holding a remote control. Hands up, his people would prevail; hands down, his people would fall behind. A close analogy I can think of is “beating up the little man.” A person draws someone on a sheet of paper, then he/she puts a photo or name on it. Next some magic words are mumbled, hoping that the opponent will somehow encounter bad luck. The whole thing is just superstition. Do not try it at home! Here, Moses was not hurling curses on the Amalekites. Rather, Moses was asking the Lord to help His people. He was holding “the staff of God” when he prayed. The rod symbolizes God’s presence. God bestowed His power through the staff. Moses lifted the staff and plagues came down to judge the Egyptians. He also lifted the staff to divide the water in the Red Sea. Moses’ posture displays humility while paying reverence to God. Raising one’s arms also represents committing the needs to God. Moses fully understood that the battle belonged to God. Since God defeated the Egyptian army, He would take care of the Amalekites too. What the Israelites involved in were not only physical battles, but also spiritual ones. In the ancient world, people believed that there were deities protecting their countries. Whoever prevailed in a war indicated that their gods were superior. God intended to show every nation that He was the Lord of lords. Spiritual battles can only be won by the power of the Almighty God. Paul told us in [Ephesians 6:11-12](#) to: 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Even today, we involve in a spiritual warfare. What the church fights against is not just the social problems when people ask for their so-called rights to indulge in sinful lifestyle. What the church fights against is not just political problems when some ungodly legislators want to legalize immorality. What the church

fighters against is the power of Satan that tries to intimidate us. We should use non-violent means to express our objection when the government proposes a policy that violates God's law. But first and foremost, we fight with our prayer. Do we pray for our civil leaders that they will have a fearful heart to the Lord in their work? I confess that I have not prayed enough; have you? Do we even pray often in the church? Do we spend time to pray before we implement a new plan or participate in ministries? If our leaders do not pray, then we may lead the church like a YMCA. When we run into a challenge all we think of are money, resources and manpower. We are doing ministries, not projects. We should not merely be satisfied with getting things done. We need to ask if brothers and sisters are growing in their relationship with the Lord. I encourage my fellow leaders that we should not be just doers, but "prayers" too.

Going back to the story. Joshua and the men were the operatives, whereas Moses was handling the directive part. A new problem soon arose. Moses could not keep raising the staff with his arms. Aaron and Hur came to Moses' assistance. Read **verse 12**: 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. The two men played a **SUPPORTIVE 扶助** role to Moses. A Bible commentator helps us visualize the scene. Aaron and Hur grabbed a stone for Moses to sit on. His arms were still lifted up with the staff. Aaron and Hur were standing beside Moses. They held Moses' elbows or upper-arms with their hands at a comfortable height. Without their help, Moses would not be able to keep his arms in an upright position. As we read earlier, if Moses lowered the staff the Israelites would be losing in the battle. Aaron and Hur provided help to Moses when he was physically weak. But they could not brag about their work, saying: "We won the battle because both of us were holding Moses arms." Moses could not take credit because he prayed for the soldiers. Ultimately, it was God who put each person in a specific position for them to work together to achieve a success. Another observation: were the Israelites aware of what Aaron and Hur were doing? Probably not, because they were busy fighting the enemies. However, the contribution of those two men would be obvious when the soldiers were beaten up by the Amalekites. Sometimes we take the effort of some people for granted until they are absent. A guy had a stay-home wife with two little kids. One day when he arrived home from work he was shocked to see that the house was in complete chaos. There was unfinished breakfast and lunch on kitchen table. Dirty dishes piled up in the sink. The floor was wet and sticky because of spilled milk and juice. He had to tip-toe to walk across the living room because there were toys everywhere. He was greeted by two smelly kids when he walked up the stairs. "Welcome home, daddy!" They were still in their pajamas and their hair was like birds' nests. Before he could further explore the horrific scenes in the bathrooms and bedrooms his wife appeared. "Are you okay, honey?" he asked anxiously, "Did someone break into our house?" "No," she replied calmly, "Every time you come home you ask me what I did the whole day. Well, I didn't do it today." Guys, do not overlook the contribution of your lady in the house. By the same token we should never ignore those brothers and sisters who are in the supportive roles in our church. Soon after I came to this church I realized that we do not have any secretary or janitor. Who picks up the mail, and who takes care of the trash and many other duties? People take turn to wash dishes, vacuum the floor and clean the bathrooms. But many time brothers and sisters who see the needs take actions without being asked. If not because of them, our church will look like a slump. Newcomers may turn away when they see weeds grow like a forest in our lawn areas. There will be filthy carpet and stinky bathroom. You get the idea. Coworkers in the supportive roles ensure that our church functions properly. You

can be one of them too. I mentioned quite a few areas you can participate already. We often assume that someone will do the job but it ends up no one doing it. Lunch will be served after the service. Can you help clean up, fold the tables and chairs even though you are not assigned any duty? You can put the trash and dishes away for our senior folks or moms with little kids. If you see food or paper on the floor, pick it up. If you notice someone forget to turn the light off, flip the button. Little things add up.

CONCLUSION

The key to victory is to rely on God's power. The Israelites defeated the Amalekites. God intervened and rescued His people. But He invited men to participate in the battle. They all contributed with their hands. Moses played the directive role. He lifted up the staff of God in prayer. Aaron and Hur were in their supportive roles. They sustained Moses by their hands when he was tired. Joshua and the fighters were the operatives. They wrestled with the enemies with their weapons and bare hands.

We often mistakenly think that God needs us. The truth is, we need God all the more. A young man named Ken was confused about God's calling. He had been busy with ministries, but he did not feel any joy. Someone suggested him to sign up for a prayer ministry at a certain church. There it was Ken meeting with a pastor he had never met. Pastor Derek was a kind and grandfather-like figure. After talking for some time, the Pastor prayed for Ken. A few minutes into his prayer, Pastor Derek said softly: "Ken, I can imagine that you are like walking into a room carrying a few big boxes in your hands. Each one has label of the things you are doing for God. Jesus is standing before you with a smile. He is very proud of you because you work hard at the things that He also cares about. But for now, He is asking you to put those boxes down and give Him a hug." On hearing that, Ken broke down in tears. He thought he was doing something for God, but he was not working with God. He put too much pressure on himself to get the job done. Ken knew that he had to put his relationship with the Lord at the top priority. A friend reminded Ken by saying: "you can't build the kingdom without the king." Ken admitted that he was unprepared, fearful and insecure when facing life's battles. He had to let Jesus be the King. What battle are you fighting now? Perhaps you too have to put down the boxes and give the King a hug. All you need is perhaps a simple and humble prayer: "God, I need your help now."