

## “WINNING A SPIRITUAL WARFARE?”

Text: Exodus 17:8-16

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### INTRODUCTION:

1) Spiritual journey in the O. T.: Many Bible teachers loved to compare the journey of the Israelites in the Old Testament to the journey of Christians in the New Testament. This comparison is not just biblical but also practical. Let's see the stages of the people in the OT and their struggle to be the people God wanted them to be. Their stages may be listed as following:

- a) They were kept slaves to the Egyptians
- b) God sent them a liberator: Moses
- c) The journey out of the land of slavery
- d) Their wondering in the wilderness for 40 years
- e) Their final entrance to the Promised Land.

2) Spiritual journey in the N. T.: The journey and its struggles of Christians in the NT is so much liken that of the Israelites in the OT:

- a) We were kept sinners by the power of Satan
- b) God sent us a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ
- c) The journey out of the old life to the new life in Jesus
- d) Spiritual warfare throughout our entire life
- e) Our final destination in heaven with our Lord

By studying this passage from Exodus 17, let us find some strategies to help us winning this spiritual warfare, so we won't be left behind.

The following are some tested and proven strategies to win a spiritual battle.

### CHRISTIAN LIVING IS A SPIRITUAL WARFARE: (17:8)

1) The battles with the Amalekites: “The Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim.” (17:8) This is a real battle between the Israelites and one of the fearful enemies on their way to Canaan. The route to the Promised Land wasn't a highway with roses on both sides but rugged territories with formidable enemies. Some may ask why didn't God destroy or wipe out all their enemies before they traveled to Canaan, but God didn't do that for good reason or reasons beyond our wisdom. The Amalekites were in that land for hundreds of years, they were fearful warriors. In Deut. 25:18, when Moses reiterated that story to a new generation Israelites, he told them the dangers their forefathers faced: “When you were weary and worn out, they met you

on your journey and cut off all who were lagging behind.” (Deut 25:18) This is true in all warfare: the destruction of the weak and weary and those who are lagging behind. In all warfare, both physical and spiritual, there is no chance for the weak and the weary to survive.

2) The battles with the evil powers: Paul gave a stern warning to God's people that our life on earth is a spiritual warfare: “For our warfare 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.” (Eph. 6:12) Many Christians just don't pay attention to the real danger of spiritual battle waged by the forces of evil in our daily life. Particularly the weak, the weary and those who are lagging behind need to be very careful or they will fall as victims to the cruel power of the devil.

### FACING THE WARFARE WITHOUT FEAR: (17:9)

1) A historic moment of defeat: How many of you still remember video clips from war reporters during the 1991 Desert Storm war against the invading forces of the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein? At the height of the bombing, the Iraqi army soldiers were so frightened that they were looking for anyone to surrender: some of them even surrendered to reporters. Many of us made fun of these useless scumbags. But in reality, many Christians did exactly the same thing: Surrender to the devil at the first sight of temptation. These are the weak, the weary and the lagging behind who can only surrender at war.

2) A strategy moment of victory: When facing the attacks by the Amalekites, Moses wasn't afraid, didn't retreat but took a strong step to face the challenge. Here is what he did: “Moses told Joshua: Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites.” Taking a spiritual warfare head on is the only way to win, not by retreat, not by fear and not by running away from it. James encouraged us to fight back the evil forces: “Submit yourself to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you.” (James 4:7) To resist means to fight back. When face with the evil power of temptation, we need to submit to God and fight back with the devil.

### DON'T GO TO WAR WITHOUT GOD: (17:9-11)

1) This is what Moses did: After giving order to Joshua to choose men to face their enemy, Moses gave him an important assurance: “Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand.” (17:9b) This is the staff God had empowered to perform miracles when He called Moses. (Ex 4:1-5) It is same staff Moses performed more miracles to force the Egyptian

Pharaoh to allow the Israelites to leave the land of slavery. This is same staff that parted the deep waters of the River Jordan so the Israelites may walk on dry land to cross the river. That's why Moses called it “the staff of God.” This staff represents the presence and power of the Almighty God that was with Moses and his people. Moses didn't go to war on his own power nor the power of his people. He went to face his enemies with the power of God.

2) This is what we need to do: In facing the warfare of the evil power, Paul gives us some important and effective advice: “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's scheme.” (Eph 6:10) We must be “in the Lord” to be strong to fight a winning battle. Without the power of God we can't defeat the schemes of the devil. There are three things we can do to be in the Lord: a) In his will—do things within his will. b) in his word—follow his teaching in making decisions, and c) In his way—the path we take must be his path, his way. Never look to the right or the left, but follow God's way.

#### YOU CAN'T WIN A WAR BY YOURSELF: (17:12)

1) Moses was never a superman: “As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lower his hands, the Amalekites were winning. 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 and one on the other—so his hands remained steady till sunset.” (17:11-12) In Bible history, Moses was recognized as the most revered, most powerful and most faithful servant of God. But in the battle with the formidable enemy the Amalekites, he grew weak and his weakness affected the battle ground situation. Fortunately, Moses had two most faithful supporters to help him so his hands could continue to hold up and the Israelites could win the war.

2) It takes more than one to win: Throughout the 2,000 plus years of church history, no single glorious story of victory was won by a single man. We may never understand why didn't God created some Supermen, but he didn't. In all areas of God's work, be it in a class, a church, an association, a denomination or global outreach, it takes lot more than just one person to do the great job. Whenever we count the great names who had done tremendous work for the Lord, there are countless less-famous names around him to make things happened that way. So, leaders need to know you are not all powerful to do all things by yourself. Helpers need to know there is always a need of one more pair of hands to get things done better, more and faster. Both leaders and helpers are important in fighting God's war and win. Today, we need

leaders who are willing to take the lead. We also need helpers to help the leader to get things done to win over the evil powers. Can God count on you?

### NEVER FORGET WHAT GOD HAD DONE: (17:14-15)

1) Teaching others history of victory: “The the Lord said to Moses: write this on a scroll as something to be remembered and make sure that Joshua hears it.” (17:14) “Hear” means read here. This is a story of victory, and God wants everyone, starting from Joshua, to know. Past experience of victory serves well to encourage others on their struggle of spiritual warfare. God loves to see that we always remember what God had done for us, and give testimonies to others to encourage their own spiritual journey. God particularly wanted Joshua to read this because God had a plan to raise him up to be the leader of the Israelites after Moses. Our spiritual struggles and victories can serve as stepping stones for others who come after us to fight for God.

2) Bringing glory of victory to God: “Moses built an altar and called it The Lord is My Banner.” (17:15) A banner is a flag, the symbol victory. An altar is a symbol of worship. Putting two things together, Moses brought all glory of the victory to the Lord. This is something all of us need to do: winning a spiritual battle or warfare, be it personal or for the body of Christ, the church, no one should claim any credit from the victory. It is always true and right to bring all glory and honor to God who gives us all the power to stand firm and all the helpers to make it possible to win. It is a serious temptation to claim credit or glory in any and all victories God won on our behalf.

### THINGS WE MUST DO:

1) Be watchful and pray at all times: “Watch and pray so you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing but the body is weak.” (Matt 26:41) These are the words of Jesus on his disciples, they fell slumber at the most intent moment when they need to be waken with Jesus, but they fell into sleep. How often we are like that when the Lord needs us to stand firm and be strong but we are so naive and weak and fall into the scheme of Satan.

2) We supportive to one another: Winning a spiritual warfare is more than a personal victory, it is a victory for all people around us. No matter if you are a leader or a helper, we need each other to fight and win the spiritual battle for the glory of God. No one Christian may desert the position God assigned him to hold. We need to look out for one another and be strong to support one another to win over temptation and evil schemes. We need to be good soldiers of the Lord.

