

THE FIRST ENEMY

“The Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim.”
—EXODUS 17:8

The first enemy the Israelites faced were the Amalekites, and this is significant because the Amalekites were different from any other foe. They were first cousins of the Israelites.

Abraham fathered Isaac and Isaac had twin sons, Jacob and Esau. As the first born, Esau was entitled to his father’s birthright, but had no interest in it. For a plate of stew, he sold it to Jacob who deceived his father into giving him the blessing. Esau had a son, Eliphaz, and Eliphaz’s first born son was Amalek, from whom the Amalekite tribe descended. If the normal course of events had taken place, the Amalekites should have been among the chosen people of God, but instead they rebelled against Him.

The first enemy the Israelites meet on their journey is not an external one, but one that came from within their own family. In the 19th century, Bible scholars were involved in what they call ‘typology’, which is identifying different symbols, pictures and events in Old Testament scripture that were a foreshadowing of New Testament truth. One scholar writes that the Amalekites are a picture of the old nature, the flesh, which is our natural self apart from God.

This is a valid picture as the first enemy we are all going to face is not out in the world somewhere, but inside us. We can build protection against external enemies, while ignoring our biggest one, which is our old nature. James 1:14 says, “Each one is tempted when, by his own evil

desire, he is dragged away and enticed.” If the devil were to die tonight, we would still sin tomorrow, because, as James says, it comes from within us.

Throughout the Old Testament, wherever the Amalekites or their descendants appear, they are fighting against the purposes of God. And that is indicative of our sinful nature, because inside every Christian there is a civil war going on where the flesh fights against the Spirit. Paul writes in Galatians 5:17, “For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.”

We will never lose our sinful natures, but just as it was God who defeated the Amalekites, it is God who defeats our sin. The only prerequisite is coming to Jesus, acknowledging that we are sinners and asking Him into our lives. That, alone, puts us on the side of victory, but with His indwelling Spirit working to replace our sin with His righteousness, we are also brought into ever increasing glory.

PRAYER: Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for your incredible gift of Jesus. I ask that His Spirit in me grow deeper and stronger to bring me into an ever-increasing likeness to Him.

TO REFLECT UPON: When tempted to follow the ways of the flesh, am I drawing on the Spirit of Jesus for His strength?