

Delivered – Let Go. Let God. Let's Go!

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Exodus 17:8–16

Sunday AM

The Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim. Moses said to Joshua, "Choose some men and go out to fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill w/ the staff of God in my hands." So, Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill. As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered 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, one on the other – so that his hands remained steady till sunset. So, Joshua overcame the Amalekite army w/ the sword. Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered and make sure that Joshua hears it, b/c I will completely blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven." Moses built an altar and called it – The LORD is my Banner. He said, "B/c hands were lifted up against the throne of the Lord, the Lord will be at war against the Amalekites from generation to generation.

Exodus 17:8-16

Have you ever heard the phrase – **Let go and let God**. In many ways, this phrase is deeply biblical. After all, we can't save ourselves, control every outcome, or win a single spiritual battle in our own strength. We need God to show up and show out!

SEE – there comes a point in the Christian life where we must release control, surrender our striving, and trust in God's sovereign power. But here's the tension – **the Bible never teaches passive faith**. So, while we have to learn to let go and let God – at the same time, we're called to stand, fight, pray, resist, and persevere.

Meaning – the Christian life isn't passive surrender – as much as it is **active dependence**.

Active dependence is trusting God completely while obeying Him courageously. It's the posture of surrendering the outcome to God while faithfully doing the work He has called us to do.

Active dependence lives in the tension of **self-reliance** where we act as if everything depends on us – and **passivity** where we assume obedience doesn't matter b/c God will step in. It occurs when we pray knowing the victory belongs to God, while we step forward in obedience knowing faith requires action.

This is tension going on in **Exodus 17** – when Israel faced its first battle after leaving Egypt.

Up to this point – God had fought every battle for the Israelites. At the Passover. At the Red Sea. In raining down manna and bringing water from the rock. **But now something has changed**. For the first time since their deliverance... Israel has to learn the rhythm of – **Let go | Let God | and Let's Go**.

I LET GO — **SURRENDER** Control to God

Amalek came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim.

This was the first military conflict Israel had to face after the Exodus – and it was against their distant cousins and the descendants of Esau. The guy who traded his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of beans.

But this was no ordinary fight. Amalek was a cruel enemy who refused to fight fair. The Hebrew conveys a relentless enemy carrying out unprovoked attacks in a cowardly, despicable manner.

The account in **Deuteronomy 25** tells us they were attacking the weak, tired, and vulnerable who had no ability to defend themselves.

Isn't this how spiritual warfare works? The enemy doesn't wait for us to be strong/vigilant, he attacks when we're tired, discouraged, distracted, and drained.

Which makes the place of this attack interesting. The place – **Rephidim** – means *rest*. That is, when the Israelites had finally gotten to a place of rest, likely when their guard was down – the enemy attacked.

To make matters more challenging – the Israelites weren't a trained army, but a roaming clan of former slaves/brick makers w/ zero military experience.

Which means the 1st lesson God was teaching them is that they couldn't win this battle in their own strength – they had to learn to **LET GO** of self-reliance and put their trust in Him. Teaching us that the Christian life begins when we release our illusion of control to God.

Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. Psalm 20:7

It like the man trying to teach his young son to jump into a pool. The dad stood in the water w/ his arms open saying, “*Jump, I've got you.*” But the child stood frozen on the edge. He believed his father loved him and was capable of catching him but the boy struggled to **let go of the edge**. This was the moment of faith. The father was ready the whole time but the child had to release his grip before he could experience the security of the arms waiting for him.

In many ways, that's where some of us are today. We believe God is faithful. We believe God is good. We believe God is able. But we're still gripping the edge. Yet the Christian life begins when we finally **let go**.

Yet we don't just have to let go; we have to let God.

II LET GOD – **TRUST** God's Power

Moses tells Joshua – *Choose some men and go out to fight the Amalekites.*

SO – Joshua goes into the valley to fight while Moses goes to the top of the hill w/ the staff of God.

This is the same staff God had already used to – ¹ turn the Nile to blood, ² bring the plagues on Egypt, ³ part the Red Sea, and ⁴ bring water from the rock. And while on the hilltop, God once again moved in power w/ this staff and *something fascinating occurred*.

Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed; and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed.

Do you see it? The battle in the valley was directly connected to what occurred on the hill b/c the outcome didn't just depend on Joshua's men fighting – it also was dependent on Moses and his lifted staff.

I want every man to raise their hands and keep them up until I tell you to drop them. The Scriptures tell us that so long as Moses had the staff lifted up, Israel would succeed in battle; but the moment his arms grew weary and dropped – the battle turned.

This moment teaches (2) profound truths – the victory belongs to God and we each other to succeed in battle.

First – victory in spiritual warfare is never decided by our strength although we've put on the armor God to fight the good fight – it's decided by our faith in God.

For our struggle isn't 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. Ephesians 6:12

The real battle is always spiritual – and spiritual battles are won only thru *active dependence* on God. So, when Moses lifted the staff, he was declaring the victory isn't in what we possess, but in the God we trust.

Second – we need one another to succeed in the battle. Ladies, if you're sitting by a man whose arms are getting tired – would you help him hold them up.

It's no small thing Aaron/Hur were there to hold up Mo's arms. But notice, they didn't replace Moses or fight for Joshua – they simply strengthened a weary brother so he could keep doing what God had called him to do – and b/c they did, the battle turned.

Sometimes the greatest contribution we can make in spiritual warfare isn't fighting someone else's battle for them, but holding up their arms thru prayer and encouragement so they can keep fighting.

God never intended for us to live the Christian life alone. We need one another's strength, prayers, and encouragement. Stanley

That's why Scripture tells us to *bear one another's burdens* and to *encourage one another daily*.

There will be times when God will ask us to be a Moses – tired, weary, and struggling to keep our hands lifted. There will also be moments when God calls us to be an Aaron/Hur – to come alongside others to strengthen them, pray for them, and help them to keep going. In these moments when we do this for one another, the whole army of God becomes stronger.

But there's more. Yes, we're called to *let go* to *let God*, but in **active participation** we're also to say **Let's GO**.

III LET'S GO – **FIGHT** the Good Fight

While Moses prayed on the hill, Joshua was fighting in the valley. Truth is – God could've defeated Amalek instantly, but instead He chose to involve His people in the fight. Why? B/c spiritual maturity grows when we learn to trust God as we step forward in obedience.

DYK that thru-out the N.T., the Christian life is described w/ battle language. We're called to *fight the good fight*, *put on the armor of God*, *stand firm*, and *resist the devil* – just to name a few encouragements.

IOW – the Christian life isn't passive – it requires **active dependence**.

God supplies the power. But we still have to step into the battle. And when those two realities came together – prayerful dependence and obedient action – Israel prevailed. This is the rhythm of the Christian life.

We pray like the victory belongs to God while we move forward like obedience matters – b/c it does.

Thus, faith isn't laziness. It's obedient participation w/ God – stepping forward in trust while depending on God to accomplish what we can't. And when that happens, something beautiful occurs – God receives the glory and we experience the victory.

Let me share one last thought in closing

After the battle, to remind everyone that it was all about God, Moses built an altar and named it Jehovah-Nissi – **The Lord Is My Banner**. Moses did this b/c in ancient warfare; a banner was a flag lifted above an army to tell the soldiers who they belonged to.

So, when Moses declared – **The Lord is our Banner** – he was declaring to all Israel that the victory didn't come b/c of Israel's strength, or Joshua's sword, or his leadership – but that it belonged solely to the Lord who fought for them. God Himself was their leader, their defender, and their victory. And the banner reminded Israel that they were never fighting alone.

This truth becomes even more powerful when we see it thru the lens of the cross b/c the cross stands over every spiritual battle we face as the ultimate banner of God's victory and love over us. The cross reminds us not only of our need but of God's final solution – as the cross alone gives us victory over the enemy.

At the cross – sin was defeated, Satan was disarmed, and death was conquered. So, now – as followers of Jesus, we don't fight *for* victory – we fight *from* victory b/c His banner has already been raised over us.

What does this passage teach us? We learn that the Christian life is lived in the rhythm of – Let go. Let God – and Let's go – knowing the Lord is our Banner!

When I think about the truth that the Lord is MY Banner – I'm reminded of a church in south MS that was demolished by Katrina. Everything was destroyed except for one thing – the cross! Out of the rubble the cross stood tall. When people needed help, first responders would point to the cross and say – *If you need help, go to the cross.*

When the Lord is our banner – though defeat may appear to surround us, and the enemy may appear to have gotten the best of us – the cross reminds us that we can't be defeated b/c the victory has already been won as the cross stands as the single symbol of God's victory over all evil.