

Title: **A WAR TO WHICH
GOD HAS SWORN HIMSELF**

Text: Exodus 17:8-16
Subject: *Amalek Assaults Israel in Rephidim*
Date: Tuesday Evening — June 24, 2008
Tape: Exodus #74
Readings: *Rex Bartley and Larry Brown*
Introduction:

The title of my message tonight is **A WAR TO WHICH GOD HAS SWORN HIMSELF**. Our text will be Exodus 17:8-16. The Book of Exodus, this second Book of the Bible, gives us wonderful and wide variety of spiritual instructions. Always read the Book of God with great care, asking God the Holy Spirit to open it to you. Even the smallest details of the most obscure sections have profound significance.

- Moses typified Christ our Savior.
- Pharaoh represented Satan.
- Egypt was typical of the world.
- Israel groaning in bondage pictures the sinner in his native misery.
- Israel delivered from their cruel task-masters speaks of our redemption by power and by blood.
- Their journey through the wilderness points to our life of faith in this world, with its many trials and temptations.

In Exodus 17:8-16 we see Israel assaulted by and prevailing over Amalek.

(Exodus 17:8-16) “Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. (9) And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. (10) So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. (11) And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. (12) But Moses’ hands *were* heavy; and they took a stone, and put *it* under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. (13) And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. (14) And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this *for* a memorial in a book, and rehearse *it* in the

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ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. (15) And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovahnissi: (16) For he said, Because the LORD hath sworn *that* the LORD *will have* war with Amalek from generation to generation.”

Proposition: This portion of Scripture, this assault of Amalek upon God’s Israel and the triumph of Israel over Amalek by the prevailing intercession of Moses, with Aaron and Hur upholding his hands, is intended to teach us, by vivid picture, that as long as we are in this world we will be engaged in a war, a war from generation to generation, but a war we are sure to win. — It is the war that takes place continually in the heart of every heaven-born soul, the war of our two natures, the raging, relentless conflict between flesh and spirit.

In the first seven verses of this chapter we saw the rock smitten by the rod of Moses. A stream of water flowed out of that smitten rock to the chosen people; and they all drank the water that flowed from the rock. Moses smiting the rock typified the smiting of our blessed Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, by the hand of divine justice. The water that flowed from the rock typified God the Holy Spirit who comes to redeemed sinners in saving grace because they have been redeemed by that great act of divine justice, the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ in our room and stead (Galatians 3:13-14).

(Galatians 3:13-14) “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree: (14) That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

But after the Holy Spirit comes in saving grace, after he comes to take up his abode within us, after a new and holy nature of his creating has been implanted, a strange conflict is experienced, something altogether unknown before. — “*The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other*” (Galatians 5:17). That is the picture we have before us in Exodus 17:8-16.

A DIVINE NATURE CREATED

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The teaching of Holy Scripture in this regard is of tremendous practical importance. Ignorance of what the Word of God teaches about the two natures of the believer has caused untold distress in many souls. How many have thought, and countless multitudes have been taught, that when a sinner is born again and receives Christ as his Savior, God changes his heart and sin will be vanquished in him forever. But “a change of heart” is nowhere spoken of in Scripture. God never changes anything about fallen man. The old nature, called “*the old man*,” “*flesh*,” and “*sin*” is neither destroyed, nor set aside, nor altered in any way.

In the new birth something altogether new is created in us. And the imparting of something new to him, the creation of that which is righteous, holy and divine in us by God’s omnipotent grace. The Christian is a person who has been “*born again*.” And the new birth is the reception of a new nature: “*that which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit*” (John 3:6). And, being born of God, we have been made “*partakers of the divine nature*” (2 Peter 1:4).

In the new birth a spiritual, divine nature is created in and communicated to us. This new nature is created by God the Holy Spirit. He plants the “*seed*” of the Word of God in us (1 Peter 1:23) and forms Christ in us by almighty grace (2 Corinthians 5:17; Colossians 1:27; 1 John 3:9).

- In justification righteousness is imputed to us. — We are declared righteous.
- In sanctification righteousness is imparted to us. — We are made righteous.

But when the new nature is communicated by God to the one born again, though Christ is formed in us, though that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord is created in us, the old sinful nature remains and remains unchanged until we leave this world.

In every heaven-born soul there are two natures: one sinful, the other sinless; one born of the flesh the other born of God; one carnal and beastly, one spiritual and holy. These two natures differ from each other in origin, in character, in disposition and in the deed. They have nothing in common. They are opposed to each other.

The two natures in the Christian are illustrated in the life of Abraham.

He had two sons: Ishmael and Isaac. Ishmael represents that which is “*born*

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of the flesh.” Isaac typifies that which is “*born of the Spirit.*” Ishmael was born according to the common order of nature. Isaac was not. Isaac was born as the result of a miracle. God supernaturally quickened both Abraham and Sarah, when they were both too old to have children. Ishmael, born first, was of “*the bond-woman.*” Isaac was born of the “*free-woman.*” (Galatians 4:22). But after Isaac was born a bitter conflict erupted. Ishmael assaulted Isaac (Genesis 21:9). That is what God the Holy Spirit tells us about Abraham’s two sons and their mothers in Galatians 4:22-29. And he assures us that the warfare between them was representative of the same warfare today. — “*But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit even so it is now.*”

These two natures in us, the flesh and the spirit, also illustrated in the life of Isaac’s son, Jacob. Jacob had two names: one he received from his earthly parents, and one he received from God. The Lord called him “*Israel*” (Genesis 32:28). From that point on his life was a series of paradoxes. He exhibited a dual personality, two distinct natures. At one minute we see him trusting God with implicit confidence, the next he gives way to an evil heart of unbelief. Throughout the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit refers to the patriarch in one place as “*Jacob*” and in the next place as “*Israel.*” Whenever God tells us of something evil he did, he calls him “*Jacob.*” When he refers to his faith or obedience, he calls him “*Israel.*”

- When Joseph’s brethren returned to their father from Egypt and told him that his favorite son was yet alive and was now governor over all the land of Egypt, we are told, “*And Jacob’s heart fainted for he believed them not*” (Genesis 45:26).
- But “*They told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them; and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived: And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive*” (Genesis 45:48).
- Then we read, “*When Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the spirit... and the physicians embalmed Israel*” (Genesis 49:33; 50:2). “*Jacob*” died. “*Israel*” was embalmed. At death only the new nature will be preserved!

THE WARFARE

Throughout every believer’s life on this earth there is a conflict between the flesh and the spirit, a raging warfare within. Just as Ishmael “*persecuted*” Isaac, “*the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh;*

and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Galatians 5:17). Sometimes we act like Jacob. Sometimes we act like Israel. Usually, we act like both.

This is exactly what Paul tells us he experienced (Romans 7:18-21). "*I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing...The evil which I would not, that I do...When I would do good, evil is present with me.*" — Why? Why am I in this condition? Why is sin so prominent in my nature? Why is evil always present with me? Why is there a constant warfare in my soul? These are questions that I am frequently asked by concerned souls who honestly acknowledge their sin. And these are questions I frequently ask myself.

The Word of God alone supplies us with the answer to them. — "*That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*" (John 3:6). It is as simple and as profound as that. All true believers are people with two natures — "*Flesh*" and "*Spirit*." Those two natures are constantly at war with one another. The spirit will never surrender to the flesh and the flesh will never bow to the spirit. We do not live after the flesh or walk in the flesh. We live after the Spirit and walk in the Spirit. And those who walk in the Spirit do not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Yet, we never escape those lusts. We will never be free from "*the body of this death*" until we have dropped this body in death.

Painful as this condition is, it is best for us, while we live in this world, that we live in this condition for three reasons:

1. We must never forget that the only thing that distinguishes us from other people is the distinguishing grace of God (1 Corinthians 4:7).
2. We must never forget that our only ground of acceptance with God is the blood and righteousness of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:30).
3. We must never become content with our existence in this world (2 Corinthians 5:1-9).

AMALEK – THE FLESH

"*Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim*" (17:8). — The possession of water (wells, etc.) was a common bone of contention among the ancients (Genesis 21:25; 26:19-20; Exodus 2:17; Numbers 20:19; Judges 5:11). The camp of Israel had a river of water gushing out of a rock; and the Amalekites were determined to take it. So they attacked Israel.

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- The name “*Amalek*,” we are told, implies “Warlike.” Our Amalek, our flesh, ever lusts against our soul, making war (1 Peter 2:11).
- Amalek was the grandson of Esau (Genesis 36:12), — “*Who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright, and when he would have inherited the blessing was rejected.*” That is our flesh!
- Amalek was Israel’s first enemy, just as the flesh is ours; but Amalek was conquered by Joshua. And just as Christ has prevailed over sin, Satan, death and hell, our flesh shall perish forever (Numbers 24:15-20).

(Numbers 24:15-20) “And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said: (16) He hath said, which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the most High, *which* saw the vision of the Almighty, falling *into a trance*, but having his eyes open: (17) I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. (18) And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly. (19) Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city. (20) And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable, and said, Amalek *was* the first of the nations; but his latter end *shall be* that he perish for ever.”

THE TIME

Be sure you take note of the time when this warfare began. It was after the rock was smitten and the water flowed out of it. — “*Then came Amalek and fought with Israel.*” The Holy Spirit calls our attention to this for a reason. It was when Moses smote the rock and the waters were given that Amalek made war on Israel. Then, for the first time, Israel was called upon to do some fighting (Compare Exodus 13:17). They had done no fighting in the house of bondage. They were not allowed to fight the Egyptians at the Red Sea. But now that that which typified the Holy Spirit had been given, water flowed out of the Rock, and their warfare began.

“It was that which typified the Holy Spirit that caused the Amalekites to attack Israel! Wonderfully accurate is the type.” —
A. W. Pink

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It is not until the chosen, redeemed sinner is born of God, made partaker of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), that the inward conflict begins. Before that he is dead in trespass and sins, and utterly insensible to the claims of God's holiness. Until the Holy Spirit begins to shed abroad his light upon our wicked hearts, we do not realize the depths and power of the evil within us. When the new born soul is made to know the plague of his own heart, the plague yet remaining in him, he is astounded by the discovery of the evil remaining in him, evil he never knew was there before.

- The religious professor knows nothing of this conflict between the two natures.
- The religionists knows nothing of his inward corruption and heart depravity. The unregenerate man is entirely under the dominion of the flesh, serving its lusts and doing its will.
- The "*flesh*" does not make war with its subjects. It rules over them. But as soon as Christ comes in the conflict begins.

Notice this, too: — **It was not Israel who attacked Amalek, but Amalek that attacked Israel.** The new nature in the believer delights to feed upon the Word, to commune with God, and be engaged with spiritual things. But the flesh will not let him live in peace. The Devil delights to rob the believer of his joy, and works upon the flesh to accomplish his fiendish designs. — "*The flesh lusteth against the spirit.*" Yet, the spirit will not yield. It is written, "*and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other*" (Galatians 5:17).

JOSHUA DEFEATS AMALEK

Next, we are told that Israel prevailed. But it was Joshua who discomfited Amalek. It was Joshua who whipped the enemy (vv. 9-13).

(Exodus 17:9-13) "And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. (10) So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. (11) And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. (12) But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put *it* under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until

the going down of the sun. (13) And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.”

There is a great variety of opinion about the typical significance of the four men named in these verses and the things they did. But there is no reason to limit the typical teaching. — **Certainly, we see here a picture of the believer prevailing over his enemy, Satan and indwelling sin, by prayer.** Israel’s prevailed over Amalek by the uplifted hand of Moses. — “*And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand Amalek prevailed*” (v. 11).

The uplifted hand suggests prayer, supplication before the throne of God. — “*Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto Thee, when I lift up my hands toward Thy holy oracle*” (Psalm 28:2). — “*I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting*”. (1Ti 2:8)

Then “Moses’ hands grew heavy.” — How soon we grow weary in prayer! — “*Men ought always to pray and not to faint*” (Luke 18:1), our Savior tells us. But how miserably we fail! How quickly our hearts get “heavy”!

But, blessed be God, Moses was not left to himself! Aaron and Hur were with him, and “*stayed up his hands, the one on one side and the other on the other side.*”

- Moses represents the demands of God’s law, satisfaction, justice, truth and holiness.
- His drooping hands represent the law’s inability to save (Romans 8:3-4).
- Aaron was represented Israel’s priesthood, God’s sacrifice.
- Hur means “light.” He is the emblem of divine holiness, and so points to the Holy Spirit of God.

How do we prevail over sin and Satan? We prevail by blood and by the grace of God given to us and working in us. Supported on either side, both the earthly and the heavenly.

- The Lord Jesus Christ, the Angel of God’s Presence, the Messenger of the Covenant, stands “*at the altar having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne*” (Revelation 8:3).

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- And we prevail by the Spirit of God who works in us to will and do of his good pleasure. — *“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered”* (Romans 8:26).
- The Lord Jesus, by his grace, and the Holy Spirit, by his reviving influences, like Aaron and Hur, uphold and sustain our drooping souls in this world.

Let us pray, ever pray for ourselves and for one another. — *“The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”* But this fact is clear: — **If you and I prevail over sin and Satan, it will not be because of our prayers! We will prevail by Christ alone, our great Prophet, Priest and King.** Put Moses the prophet, Aaron the priest and Hur the prince (Miriam’s husband) together, and you have the picture.

Here (vv. 9-13) is **the first mention of Joshua**. He is called “*Jesus*” in Acts 7:45 and Hebrews 4:8. I know that the Greek for Joshua is Jesus; and I know why that is the case. — Joshua represents our blessed Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Here he is set before us as...

- A Man of War.
- The Captain of the Lord’s hosts.
- A mighty Conqueror.
- Israel’s great Savior!

When Moses was weak, Joshua was strong! When Moses’ hands sagged, Joshua’s were victorious! It is Christ, our great Joshua, who fights all our battles for us and makes us more than conquerors by his grace (Isaiah 40:28-31; Hebrews 7:24-25; Romans 8:37-39; Revelation 12:11).

(Isaiah 40:28-31) “Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, *that* the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? *there is* no searching of his understanding. (29) He giveth power to the faint; and to *them that have* no might he increaseth strength. (30) Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: (31) But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; *and they shall walk, and not faint.*”

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(Hebrews 7:24-25) “But this *man*, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. (25) Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

(Romans 8:37-39) “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. (38) For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, (39) Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

(Revelation 12:11) “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.”

DEFEATED NOT DESTROYED

It is important to note the fact that Amalek was defeated by Joshua, but not destroyed. We are told that “*Joshua discomfited Amalek.*” The fact is, there is no destroying or eradicating the evil nature within us. Though discomfited and conquered by grace it is very much alive and still at war. Let us ever be mindful of these things and give praise to our great Savior for his grace.

(Deuteronomy 25:17-18) “Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; (18) How he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, *even all that were* feeble behind thee, when thou *wast* faint and weary; and he feared not God.”

JEHOVAH-NISSI

We are sure that this whole thing is written in the Book of God to point us to Christ as our Savior and to illustrate our great salvation in and by him, because the Lord commanded Moses to write a memorial, build an altar, erect a banner over it and name the place Jehovah-nissi. By this he assured Moses, Joshua and Israel, “*I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.*”

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(Exodus 17:14-15) “And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this *for* a memorial in a book, and rehearse *it* in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. (15) And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovahnissi.”

- Christ is our Banner.
- The Banner is the Symbol of Victory.
- The Banner is a Rallying point (Isaiah 12:10).

(Isaiah 11:10) “And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.”

(Psalms 20:5-7) “We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up *our* banners: the LORD fulfil all thy petitions. (6) Now know I that the LORD saveth his anointed; he will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand. (7) Some *trust* in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.”

Still, there is more. And I will send you home rejoicing with this. — **This is a war to which the triune God has sworn himself** (v. 16).

(Exodus 17:16) “For he said, Because the LORD hath sworn *that* the LORD *will have* war with Amalek from generation to generation.”

(Isaiah 59:19-21) “So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him. (20) And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD. (21) As for me, this *is* my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that *is* upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.”

The Lord God has laid his hand upon his own throne and swears by himself that he will utterly root out and destroy Amalek; and he will. Soon, he will

make a new heavens and a new earth; and there will be “*no more sin!*” The very slime of the serpent will be eradicated from God’s creation and from us! In resurrection glory, this corruptible shall put on incorruption and this mortal shall put on immortality forever!

How blessed to know that, when our God makes all things new, our blessed Savior shall “*change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself*” (Philippians 3:21).

Amen.