



Exodus 17:1-16

WINNING OUR BATTLES

Just as surely as God desires to lead us to a knowledge of genuine Christian fellowship, so surely must we be overwhelmed by a great disillusionment with others, with Christians in general, and, if we are fortunate, with ourselves. By sheer grace, God will not permit us to live even for a brief period in a dream world. He does not abandon us to those rapturous experiences and lofty moods that come over us like a dream. ...Only that fellowship which faces such disillusionment, with all its unhappy and ugly aspects, begins to be what it should be in God's sight, begins to grasp in faith the promise that is given to it. He who loves his dream of a community more than the Christian community itself becomes a destroyer of the latter even though his personal intentions may be ever so honest, earnest, and sacrificial.

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*

Israel is a redeemed people. God has redeemed them by the blood of the lamb and delivered them through the waters of the Red Sea. Now God takes them through the wilderness to teach them to rely on Him. They are out of Egypt; now God must take Egypt out of them.



In the wilderness, Israel faces attacks on two fronts—from inside their own community (and inside their own hearts) and from outside the community with those eager to destroy them. To be effective as God's people and to experience His rest, Israel must win both battles.

ATTACKS FROM THE INSIDE (17:1-7)

- **The Problem at Rephidim (17:1)**

- **The Protest of the People (17:2-3)**

They contended with Moses

They complained against Moses

- **The Prayer of Moses (17:4)**

The incidents recorded in this chapter provide an interesting opportunity to explore two contrasting situations that illustrate the impact of unity and division among God's people... 1) Divided we quarrel... 2) United we stand.

—T. Desmond Alexander

Rephidim. Heb., “resting places.” The exact location is unknown. It is near Mount Sinai, probably in the south of the Sinai Peninsula.

Contend. Heb., *rib*, “to fight with fists or words; to quarrel; to make a charge or to conduct a lawsuit.”

They demanded water to drink.

We do this when we make demands on God at home or in the church, insisting that He work on our terms. There are times we must wait on the Lord patiently.

—Tony Merida

Murmur. Heb., *lun*, literally, “to lodge, stay the night; figuratively, to persist in a negative mindset, be stubborn, grumble, complain.”

An unthankful, complaining spirit is an abiding sin against God.

—John Broadus (1827-95)

- **The Provision of the Lord (17:5-6)**

Go before the people

Take with you some of the elders

Take your staff and go

Strike the rock where I am standing

- **The Principle for God’s People (17:7)**

Today, if you will hear His voice:

“Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion,

As in the day of trial in the wilderness,

When your fathers tested Me;

They tried Me, though they saw My work.” (Psalm 95:7b-9)

Watch out, brothers, so that there won’t be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart that departs from the living God. But encourage each other daily, while it is still called today, so that none of you is hardened by sin’s deception. (Hebrews 3:12-13)

ATTACKS FROM THE OUTSIDE (17:8-16)

- **The Attack (17:8; Deut. 25:17-19)**

- **The Battle (17:9-12)**

We cannot _____ the battle when it comes.

We cannot _____ the battle, apart from prayer.

We cannot _____ the battle alone.

- **The Victory (17:13-16)**

Joshua won the battle on the ground.

Moses won the battle before the throne of God.

The Lord won the battle as our victorious King (cf. Isaiah 11:10)!

I will stand before you there. *An astonishing statement. Man stands before God, not God before man. In this trial God takes the place of the accused, standing in the dock.*

—Reformation Study Bible

The rock pictures Jesus Christ who was smitten for us (1 Cor 10:4) that we might have the living water of the Holy Spirit within (John 7:37-39). He was smitten on the cross that the Spirit of life might be given to save and satisfy thirsty sinners.

—Warren Wiersbe

Horeb. Heb, “dryness, desolation.” An alternate name for Mt. Sinai.

Amalekite. Descended from Esau (Gen. 36:16), this organized group of nomads developed a type of guerilla warfare, using the camel as their “secret weapon.” They would later be represented by Haman the Agagite in the book of Esther (3:1; cf. 1 Sam. 15:8).

The Lord is my banner. *Yahweh Nissi*, i.e., the Lord is my sign, flag, pole, rallying point.” He draws us together for a common purpose.

The sustained prayer of Moses was the secret ingredient securing the military victory of Joshua. Without prayer, nothing will bring victory. The essential battle is the battle for the secret place. —J. Alec Motyer

Christ is represented to us here as Moses on the hill pleading, and as Joshua in the valley fighting.

—Charles H. Spurgeon

Our banner must not be our ministries, denominations, programs or methods. Our banner must be Yahweh-Nissi. He alone is our rallying point. He alone gives victory.

—Sammy Tippit