

"The Banner of Jesus Christ"

Intro- proper context. What are you left with when you take the text out of context?
A con!

I want to start off with a helpful reminder for us all when we are reading God's word, either devotionally or in deeper study, it is vital for us to know the context of God's word to properly interpret and also understand it.

Big picture recap

Chapter 14 through the beginning of chapter 17. God brought the Israelite people out of the bondage of their slavery in Egypt and then God led them to a place of desperation. He led them to what appeared to be a dead end with the Red Sea at their back and the Egyptian army bearing down on them. God grace was displayed in saving His people by parting the Red Sea and they walked through on dry ground then the Lord totally destroyed the pursuing Egyptian army.

Chapter 14:30-31 "thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore Israel saw the great power that the Lord used against the Egyptians so the people feared the Lord and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses."

Chapter 15 starts with Moses and all of Israel singing a celebratory song of praise to God.

Then halfway through chapter 15 until our passage currently in chapter 17 we see the Israelites begin their wilderness journey. Not long into their journey they face trials, 3 trials. God uses these trials as a tool to expose unbelief in their hearts in the hearts of the people and the to teach them to trust in him daily for all their needs.

Exodus 17 :8-16

⁸ Then Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim. ⁹ So Moses said to Joshua, "Choose for us men, and go out and fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand." ¹⁰ So Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought with Amalek, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. ¹¹ Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. ¹² But Moses' hands grew weary, so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it,

while Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side. So his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. ¹³ And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword. ¹⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven." ¹⁵ And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, The Lord Is My Banner, ¹⁶ saying, "A hand upon the throne^[a] of the Lord! The Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

Pray for God's wisdom and strength to communicate with clarity the message of this text. God use this to deepen our view of your character and faithfulness. Help us to see your sovereign hand at work in all circumstances of our lives. Grow our love for you and for others by continually remembering your faithfulness displayed on the cross, in your Word, and in our lives. Father grow our trust in your Word as it leads us into deeper commune with Jesus. In the name of Christ we pray.

Here we see the fourth trial that the Israelites face. Keep in mind the overarching theme God continually draws us back to in Exodus is "the glory of Yahweh." Remember the past trials. We learned last week as Ty preached what God's purpose was in these trials. He used the trials of thirst and hunger to reveal the grumbling hearts of unbelief that Israel had. God is redeeming his people from the enslavement of Egypt and teaching them through the preceding trials and this trial to glorify his name with an act of trust. This means much more than external words or actions. God is preparing a people that will trust him in all areas of their life from a heart that is bowed down in worship. God wants the Israelites to recognize their complete dependence on his grace and the power to live in this broken sin cursed world.

There are three very important points God shows us in this text.

First, God's sovereignly uses trials as a tool to expose the hearts of his people and reveal his glory and their desperate need to trust in him completely.

Second point. Humble dependent prayer, both personally and corporately, takes man off the throne of our hearts and places God in his rightful place. This realigns our self-willed desires toward desiring God's will for our lives.

Third Point. Is a call to continual remembrance of God's faithfulness and redeeming power in our lives replaces doubt with faith.

Ok let's dive into this text starting in Verses 8 through 10.

Who is Amalek?

Here we are told that Israel is attacked by Amalek. Who was the Amalek? If we look back to Genesis 36 we see that Amalek is listed as the 13th descendant of Esau. At this time Amalek people group was described as a nomadic desert dwelling nation. So, in the desert wilderness the Amalek would have viewed the Israelites as trespassing on their territory. Moses who later shared just how the Amalekites attacked Israel

Deuteronomy 25:17-18 stated this, "Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you came out of Egypt, ¹⁸ how he attacked you on the way when you were faint and weary, and cut off your tail, those who were lagging behind you, and he did not fear God." This wasn't a planned battle but an attack upon the weak and elderly that would have been at the rear of the Israelites.

OK, so there's a picture of how the battle began, and also gives a better understanding of God's Just Wrath pronounced later in verse 14. Then we have Moses giving commands to Joshua... this is the first time Joshua is mentioned. His introduction is done nonchalantly, but at this point we don't know anything about him. Later we'll find out he's Moses's right-hand man, and a chosen successor that will lead the people of Israel into the promised land. But let's examine the vast contrast of Joshua's response to this trial and the responses of the people of Israel to the previous three trials experienced.

Remember how the people responded when tested with thirst and hunger??? They grumbled.

Compare that with how Joshua responded and we see a vastly different response. It states that he did as he was told. This displayed an active trust in the God who had redeemed him out of Egypt which resulted in his obedience. This could also be a form of showing how the trials previously used by God developed in him an obedient trustworthy heart.

Joshua's obedient response shows an active trust even when a hard trial of testing is upon him. It echoes the truth of William Cowper hymn, "God moves in a mysterious way"

*Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.*

*His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.*

Point #1. Active trust or faith in the God who has redeemed you should result in a growing obedience to his Word. Changing our view of trials from something to get through to a means by which God uses to sanctify us and produce a steadfast immovable hope in our hearts.

² Count it all joy, my brothers,^[a] when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. (James 1:2-3)

³ Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. (Romans 5:3-5)

What do I mean by active trust... in the Christian life there's a balance between only depending on God, and acting in accordance with our faith.

Duncan states it well "there's a nice balance between the active and the passive elements of the believing life. There is the passive element of depending on the Lord, trusting in the Lord, resting in the Lord, depending on his power, and there is the active element of doing the responsible things God calls us to do."

So here in this passage we see a balance of Israel depending on God's grace and strength as well as to play an active role in their own defense.

Now let's switch over to another character in this historical narrative. Moses states he is going to top to the top of the hill with the staff of God in his hand. So, Moses goes up to the top of the hill with Aaron and Hur. He was on display for all to see. But picture this Moses is in his late 80s at this time and needed the help of his friends to steadily hold up his arms to God. It wasn't Moses on display on top of this mountain, other than his human weaknesses, but God's power was rightfully on display for all to see.

It doesn't specifically say that Moses was praying here. Although some commentators agree he is interceding for God to act as his arms are being lifted upward. Yet other

scholars say that the staff is the symbol of God's power so it's shown the God's power as the sole factor of victory or defeat for Israel. It would seem that both would coincide as Moses with the staff was clearly appealing to God for his power for the battle. So, it seems that there was intercessory prayer going on at this time. Wiersbe sums up the purpose of prayer quite well in this quote. "The immediate purpose of prayer is the accomplishing of God's will on earth; The ultimate purpose of prayer is the eternal glory of God."

Point #2. Humble dependent prayer, both personally and corporately, takes us, man, Moses off the throne of our hearts and places God in his rightful place. This realigns our self-willed desires toward desiring God's will for our lives.

What a picture for all of Israel to see as they looked up to the top of the hill, God was their help and their only hope... Then they would have seen the human weakness in Moses with his two friends bearing the burden and pointing him steadily towards God's strength.

I lift up my eyes to the hills.

From where does my help come?

² My help comes from the Lord,

who made heaven and earth. (Psalm 121:1-2)

² Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. (Gal. 6:2)

Our eyes must be fixed on Christ as the Author and Perfector of our faith when we are facing trials. Looking to Him for our strength and recognizing His perfecting work is shaping our lives through these present trials to conform us more into God's original intent for His Sons and Daughters will give peace to our hearts.

Another clarifying point God displays through Moses, Aaron and Hur is that we all need community, brothers and sisters in Christ, to steady our faith by pointing us towards Christ when our strength is waning. Are you that kind of friend? Do you have those kinds of friends?

Now we come to the last three verses of this text. Vs 14-16. The Lord says to Moses write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua. Think about what God is telling Moses, write down my Words and recount it to build your faith.

God wants His written word to be used as a memorial or a place of remembrance for Joshua to recount God's faithfulness. God wanted Joshua to continually keep in the forefront of his mind God's faithfulness. Joshua was at this battle, but still there was a need to accurately remember that it was God's strength that defeated the enemy.

Point #3 recounting God's faithfulness and redeeming power in our lives replaces doubt with trust/faith. Even when we are unable to see the outcome of whatever we face we can trust God as we walk by faith, knowing He is good and His plan is for our ultimate good and His Glory. 3x's

We finish the text with Moses building an altar and naming it the Lord is my banner or Yahweh Nissi

This altar's name has a military reference to it. Somewhat like a coat of arms displaying who and what they stand for or even a country's flag. Some of us who recited the pledge of allegiance can remember looking to the star-spangled **banner**/or flag. Here's a little history lesson for us.

When the phrase under God was incorporated into the Pledge of Allegiance by Eisenhower signing the bill into law... he was quoted saying, "from this day forward, the millions of our school children will daily proclaim in every city and town, every village and rural schoolhouse the dedication of our nation and our people to the Almighty."

Although this wasn't a bad thing for our schools to have implemented at the time. It misses the fullness of the Gospel standing under the banner of Jesus Christ alone, we're enabled to stand under it by His grace. It's a banner that states God's attributes along with His compassionate love demonstrated fully on the cross. We can stand under the banner of Christ by receiving His free gift of grace and believing in His sacrifice for our sins.

There are many banners vying for our allegiance in this world and in our culture. But there is only one worthy of our full allegiance. That is Jesus Christ, the victor over death and sin. His banner is the cross and his blood which is the only thing that is sufficient to cover our sins and make a just payment for them.

Recap on 3 points

Point #1. Active trust or faith in the God who has redeemed you should result in a growing obedience to his Word. Changing our view of trials from something to

get through to a means by which God uses to sanctify us and produce a steadfast immovable hope in our hearts.

Point #2. Humble dependent prayer, both personally and corporately, takes man off the throne of our hearts and places God in His rightful place. This realigns our self-willed desires toward desiring God's will for our lives.

Point #3. Recounting God's faithfulness and redeeming power in our lives replaces doubt with trust/faith. Even when we are unable to see the outcome of whatever we face we can trust God as we walk by faith, knowing He is good and His plan is for our ultimate good and His Glory.

Think of these three points as pillars to hold up the banner of God so that those of us who are believers stand under in awe looking up to the God of salvation! Remember His faithfulness, pray with fervent dependence, and grow in obedience to His Word. All of these enable us to look up and rightly view the God who created everything and holds everything together by the power of His Word.