

## #70 “Lessons in Perseverance”

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The Bible gives us some excellent counsel (as we would expect) as to how we can persevere when difficulty and temptation come. God’s desire is that we would run the race of faith fervently, diligently, and to the finish, so let’s look at an instance in Moses’ life to glean some direction as to how we can better persevere in our own lives.

Exodus 7:9-13 says,

“So Moses said to Joshua, ‘Choose men for us and go out, fight against Amalek. Tomorrow I will station myself on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand.’ Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought against Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. So it came about when Moses held his hand up, that Israel prevailed, and when he let his hand down, Amalek prevailed. But Moses’ hands were heavy. Then they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other. Thus his hands were steady until the sun set. So Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.”

For whatever reason, Moses understood from the Lord that as long as he held his staff above his head, the Israelites would prevail in victory over the Amalekites. But if Moses’ strength would give out, causing the staff to fall below his head, then the Amalekites would suddenly prevail. Clearly, Moses had a challenge before him, one which would require an incredible amount of endurance. It is no easy task to keep our arms raised over our heads even for a matter of minutes, let alone for hours upon hours and with the weight of a staff. But Moses finished the task, and there is much to learn from just how he was able to finish.

There are those who tell us that in times of adversity we are to believe in ourselves and to just try harder, dig deeper, and somehow, by mustering some extra something from within, keep on keeping on. But the fact of the matter is that the victory in spiritual perseverance and in staying strong spiritually is not found within ourselves, as if we ourselves are strong. The flesh (Matthew 26:41), that is, our humanness, is weak, but Christ in us is strong. It is through Him, not through our own human willpower, that we are able to please Him and do His will (Philippians 4:13). This lesson of finding our strength and winning the victory through Christ was evident in this battle with the Amalekites. God was trying to make it clear to Israel that He was the only hope of their winning. Otherwise, what would a man holding a staff over his head have to do with winning a battle fought with brute strength and manmade weapons? The point that God needed to make to Israel and to us is that it is by His strength that spiritual victories are won.

Without His provision, protection, blessing, and favor, we have no hope of advancing the gospel or growing in faith. Faith in Christ and His Word is the means to victory. So, as Israel was instructed through this very visible object lesson, perseverance is only possible by the strength which God supplies.

Sometimes in order for us to learn this lesson of dependence upon the Lord, God must remove all of the things which we thought made us strong so that we see our weakness and watch His strength be perfected in and through our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). There will be times when our strength will fail us, and no amount of digging deeper into ourselves will be able to get us through the predicament we face. Severe illness, crisis, disability, and near death experiences all remind us of our frailty and feeble nature. These circumstances are valuable in that they cause us to call out to God for strength which we come to recognize that we don't have and strength which we come to see that only He can supply. Why trust in our strength when we have God on our side Whose strength is without deficiency or limit?

There are times in which Christ will use others to supply His strength to us. Sometimes we will sense God giving us strength to do His will that we know is not of ourselves. Other times God might work through human agents to encourage us onward. Such was the case in this victory over the Amalekites. Moses didn't have the strength in and of himself to keep his hands raised through the duration of the battle, so God supplied the strength he needed through the wisdom of others who brought him a rock to sit upon and who then held up each of his hands. We need other believers who will be there for us to support us when we grow weak and in our times of need. *There is no glory in trying to win a battle on our own in situations where God has given others to help us win.* Isaiah 40:29 says, "He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power." But the key is that we wait upon God (Isaiah 40:31), seeking His strength in time of weakness rather than relying upon our own feeble power. As David says, "My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever" (Psalm 73:26). There will be times when we lack strength to continue on, but we must believe God to be our strength. He will enable us to continue on in righteousness and to do the good works which He has appointed for us (Ephesians 2:10). He may supply others to help us, but one way or another He will give us the strength we need to do His will His way. When we feel like giving in or giving up, God's strength will enable us to persevere.