**Small Group notes – 15 November 2020-11-14**

 **Hands lifted high – Exodus 17:8-16**

In this passage in Exodus we see that the Amalekites launch an unprovoked surprise attack against God’s people. This appears to be the Hebrews first battle. There is no record that the Jews had to fight any battles when they were slaves in Egypt. Even on the night of their deliverance they didn’t have to fight the Egyptian army, because the Lord fought for them.  *Exodus - 14:13*

Once they are freed they become pilgrims on a journey to the Promised Land. They face opposition and conflict and this is reoccurring theme for God’s people.

This is the same for us today. As we journey through this life like the Hebrews we will face opposition and we will experience conflict. The call to discipleship, following Jesus is not a continuous journey of comfort but involves conflict. 1 John 2 reminds us that we will have conflict with the world, the flesh (the sinful nature) and the devil. We overcome the world, the works of the flesh and the works of the enemy by daily putting on the Armour of God and praying at shown in Ephesians 6. ***“Prayer works and prayer is the work”.***

* **Prayer displays that God is the Saviour of his people**

Although Joshua led the Israelite army into battle, the spotlight of the story shines on Moses at the top of the hill. We clearly see that what mattered most was whether Moses held up his hands in prayer. Verse 11.

It was customary for the Jews to lift up their hands when they prayed. Moses held up the staff of God in his hands and prayed to the Great ‘I am’. He was displaying his total trust and dependence on the authority and power of God. Persevering in prayer was key to winning the battle.

The victory did not come through the sword alone but the **sword** and the **staff**. The sword alone represents our own abilities, power, strength, wisdom. If we are honest, many of us trust in these things on a daily basis. When we find ourselves in a fight that is beyond us we realise the importance of the staff.

When victory was achieved God told Moses to write down on a scroll what had happened and what he promised. Moses then builds an altar and calls it **‘The Lord is my banner’**. It was a constant reminder to the people that is was a victory that came about by God’s gracious and mighty hand through prayer. Joshua and his men could not claim to have won this battle through the sword alone. What transpired that day on the top of the hill at Rephidim was crucial for the success of the people of God in the valley.

What transpired on the top of a hill two thousand years ago in Jerusalem (Jesus’ death on the Cross) is crucial to living a victorious life in Christ as we make our way home. The stone was physical reminder to the people and the empty tomb is a physical reminder for us today. We have the victory in Christ over the world, the flesh & the devil.

* **Prayer displays that God is the sustainer of his people**

Let’s be honest, prayer is hard work and difficult at times. We need God’s help to pray.
Paul reminds us that it is the Holy Spirit who helps us in our weakness (Romans 8:26-27)

“*In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God”.*

Our heavenly Father knows we find prayer difficult so he sends us Jesus and he promises the Holy Spirit to help us (John 14:26 & Romans 8: 26-27). Like Aaron and Hur with Moses they prop us up. So Joshua couldn’t have succeeded without Moses, but Moses couldn’t have prevailed without the support of Aaron & Hur.

We can be those who help others to succeed by sharing the load (burden) in prayer. And likewise others can “lift our hands up” when we get tired and weary from the fight.

**Questions**

* Who attacked God’s people? Who were they descendants of?
* How many battles had the Hebrews had up until this point?
* Why did the battle hinge on the position of Moses’ hands?
* What did Moses’ staff symbolize?
* Why was Aaron and Hur’s presence alongside Moses so important?
* What did God tell Moses to do for a memorial of this victory?
* What does it mean, “The Lord is my banner?”
* What conflicts and battles have you experienced since becoming a follower of Jesus?
* Why is prayer so important?
* Do you find prayer easy or difficult?
* Do you have a prayer partner? Are you part of a prayer group or do you attend a regular prayer meeting?
* What has Father God been speaking to you about during this study?

**Prayers for:**

* Leaders in all walks of life.
Government, Education, Health care, Church during this difficult time.
* Emergency services and NHS
* Those affected by Covid 19
* People who have lost their jobs or are on furlough
* The poor, (other nations) the vulnerable and those suffering with
mental health issues.