

God at War With Flesh

by Major Ian Thomas

God is at war with the flesh, and believers can overcome it by walking in the Spirit and appropriating the victory already won by Christ.

Duration: 43:37

Scripture: Exodus 17:2-24, Numbers 22:4, Numbers 23:7

Topics: "Flesh"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the battle between Joshua and Amalek. The preacher emphasizes that the outcome of the battle was not dependent on Joshua's abilities, but rather on the faith and appropriation of the victory already given. This is illustrated through the story of Moses and the rod in his hand, where God instructed Moses to throw it on the ground and it became a serpent. The preacher encourages Christians to stop running away from their challenges and instead face them with faith, knowing that God will give them victory. The sermon also mentions God's command to utterly destroy Amalek and emphasizes that there is no salvageable content in Amalek.

Transcript

Will you tell him with me to the 17th chapter of Exodus. 17th chapter of Exodus. The sixth verse of the 17th chapter.

Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb, and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. God has just brought his people out of Egypt, under the hand of Moses, through the Red Sea, as Paul puts it in the tenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, baptized into Moses, going with him into the place of death, that out of the place of death, by God's divine intervention, they may be raised to be poised upon the threshold of a new life.

Beautiful picture that God gives us in the Old Testament, of our identity with the Lord Jesus in his death, and with him in his resurrection. And reminding us again, in this beautiful picture of the smitten rock from which flows the water that spelt life, of the terms of their redemption. The smitten rock.

The lamb slain without blemish. A bone of whose body was not to be broken, whose blood by faith was painted upon the doorpost and the lintel. Beneath this sign of the shed blood of the unblemished lamb, they came out.

A picture reiterated in this way, in terms of the smitten rock. So this speaks of a redeemed people, whom God has brought out of Egypt. Now verse eight.

Then, just at this stage, the very threshold of their new life, a redeemed people. Then, came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. This morning, we saw that the atoning death of the Lord Jesus, as the lamb slain from the foundation of the world without blemish, a bone of whose body was not broken upon the cross, through his death and vicarious suffering, laid the foundations upon which a holy God could receive us to himself, without doing violence to his own righteousness.

That the moment that you and I claim redemption through the shed blood of Christ, we become accepted in the beloved. And immediately we are told in the thirteenth verse of the first chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians, that this transaction of faith is sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, the earnest of our redemption. The foretaste, the down payment, God's guarantee that we have been accepted in Christ, is the restoration to us of his divine spirit.

So Paul says in Romans chapter eight and verse fourteen, They that are led by the Spirit, they are the children of God. For, verse nine, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. But we saw also this morning, that just so soon as the Holy Spirit is restored to the human spirit, his office is to re-invade the soul, re-establish the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus in the area of your mind, your emotions and your will, so that your whole human personality might become available to him, who inhabits your redeemed humanity, your body becoming the temple of the living God.

But just so soon as the Holy Spirit seeks to re-establish the sovereignty of Christ, there is immediate resistance on the part of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. As it were, standing astride your pathway, on the threshold of your new life as a redeemed sinner is Amalek.

And Amalek here is a picture of the flesh, the sin principle of satanic origin that at all costs will seek to bar the onward pathway of God's redeemed people through the wilderness into the land of promise. Canaan, which is not heaven, but which speaks of the Spirit-filled life, the celebration of the victory of Christ in his redeemed people. Canaan is never anywhere in the Bible heaven.

It's only heaven in your hymn books. But never take your theology from your hymn books. Canaan speaks of heaven.

It does not speak of heaven. Canaan speaks of the plenitude of provision that God made for a redeemed people. Remember, if Canaan is heaven, then Moses is in hell.

He died in the wilderness. But he's not. I'm expecting to meet him.

Amalek. Most fascinating study, and we're going to make an exploration in these few moments that we have tonight, of necessity to get the broad panoramic picture we shall need to travel pretty fast. But I want you to be fascinated tonight with the Word of God itself in its amazing relentless consistency.

The Bible comes to life when we begin to understand through the Spirit the language that it speaks. And you will discover especially that the Old Testament will become very much richer as you learn to understand the language that the Holy Spirit uses. Then came Amalek and fought with Israel in Rephidim.

And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose out men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand. 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 and it came to pass when Moses held up his hand that Israel prevailed. And when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. He commissioned Joshua to go and fight with Amalek.

But in the meantime he took the rod of God, went up into the mouth, and so long as the rod was held high in his hand, Joshua prevailed. The moment the rod was lowered in his hand, Amalek prevailed. In other words, the issue of the battle between Joshua and Amalek had absolutely nothing to do with Joshua.

It depended wholly upon the appropriation by faith of a victory already given. This is signified by the rod in the hand of Moses. Turn back a few pages to the fourth chapter and you will see that after God had commissioned Moses to be the means in God's hands of bringing his people out of Egypt, Moses answered verse 1 and said, Behold, they will not believe me, chapter 4, verse 1, nor hearken unto my voice, for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee.

And the Lord said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. He said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent.

And Moses fled from the forest. And the Lord said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand.

God said to Moses, What is that in your hand? A rod. Right, throw it on the ground. It became a serpent, and he fled.

God said, Don't run away from him. Turn round and face him. And at my command, in the exercise of your faith, take it by the tail.

This was to be a victory that God would give. And when he took it by the tail, in obedience to God's command by faith, that before which he had fled, became as harmless as a rod. What is it that has been chasing you, as a Christian? What is it from which you have been fleeing, all your days, as a Christian? God says there is victory for you.

Stop running away. Turn round and take a victory that I will give you. I had a letter from one of my colleagues, just yesterday.

And he lamented the number of Christians whom he found fighting a battle already lost. Instead of enjoying a victory already won. There are countless Christians fighting a battle that is already lost.

Trying in the energy of the flesh to overcome sin. That is a battle that you can fight all your days, but I can tell you now, it is a battle that has already been lost. Instead of accepting in the person of the Lord Jesus, a victory that he has already won.

Now this is the significance of the rod. And victory over amulet, victory over the flesh, is not to be attained, but to be received. Galatians chapter 5 says, walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

What does it say? Walk in the Spirit, Galatians 5.16, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. No matter what it is that chases you. If you walk in the Spirit, in the Spirit you can turn round, face your enemy, take

him by the tail, and find him helpless and harmless in your hands.

In other words, you take a victory. As you walk in the Spirit, you assume victory over the flesh. Now the devil inverts this, as he will invert all truth if he can, to turn it into a lie.

What the devil has been saying to many of you is this, don't fulfill the lust of the flesh, and then you will walk in the Spirit. Isn't that what some of you have been trying to do? You have been trying not to fulfill the lust of the flesh, in order to walk in the Spirit. In other words, you are fighting a battle already lost.

What God says to you is this, walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh, for you will then be enjoying, through the Spirit, a victory already won. As you take every step in an attitude of total dependence upon the Risen Lord who indwells you in the power of His Divine Spirit, He celebrates in you His victory already won over sin and death and hell and the flesh. And so as Moses held the hand high, a picture of the appropriation of faith, Joshua prevails.

The moment he lowered his hand, Amalek prevails. And Joshua discomfited Amalek, Exodus 17, 13, and his people with the edge of the sword. 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. And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah Nissim, the Lord my banner. For he said, Because the Lord hath sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.

God is at war with Amalek from generation to generation. There will never come a day, God says, when I will be at peace with Amalek. There will never be armistice between me and Amalek.

There will never be under any circumstances the day that dawns when I will come to terms with Amalek. I am at war with Amalek from generation to generation, and will destroy him from under heaven. God says of the flesh, In your flesh dwells no good thing.

No flesh will ever glory in my presence. Remember what the flesh is. The flesh is the sin principle of satanic origin that invaded man's soul in the day that Adam fell into sin and forfeited the divine spirit.

The flesh is the sin principle of satanic origin that keeps you subservient and makes you the plaything of the devil's whims. It is all that you are apart from what Christ is. That is the flesh.

And God is at war with all that you are apart from what Christ is from generation to generation. Now, is there any legitimate reason why we should call Amalek the flesh? What is the characteristic of Amalek that would give us a legitimate scriptural reason for using him to represent this fallen nature of a fallen man? Well, I want you to turn with me to the 25th chapter of Genesis. Genesis 25, verse 29.

And Jacob saw a pottage, and Esau came from the field, and he was faint. And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage, for I am faint. Therefore was his name called Edom, a word that means red, as red as the porridge he was eating.

And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die. And what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day.

And he swore unto him, and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils, and he did eat and drink, and rose up and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

I want you to understand the nature of the birthright. What was the birthright that Esau despised and which Jacob was to inherit? The birthright was this. The promise that God had given in Abraham that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed.

That there would be born of him in his seed, Galatians chapter 3, emphasizing seed singular, as of one, not seeds as of many, Christ. That of his seed there would come one into the world who would redeem man from his lost condition. Who would restore man to his true relationship to God that would make him once more dependent upon the one who alone in him enables him to function as man.

This was the birthright. That God was prepared in the person of his incarnate son to redeem a lost humanity and restore them to their true manhood. And Esau despised it.

Esau said, Sunday school stuff. Esau said, I don't need this tit-sauce. In other words, inherent in Esau was the very spirit of Lucifer who perpetrated this first basic lie in Adam.

You are what you are by virtue of what you are and not by virtue of what God is. You can lose God and lose nothing. And Esau was the spirit of the devil incarnate.

What do I need of a birthright restoring me to my dependence upon God? I am what I am by virtue of what I am. Esau was a man's man. He was a hairy man.

Grey, big hairs on his chest. Just like barbed wire. And he would go out into the forest and carve his dinner.

Jacob was what one might almost describe as a sissy. He stayed home and helped mother with the washing up. He was tied to his mother's apron string.

His name meant twister. Cheat. His mother didn't even let him have a date until he was 70 years of age.

This was Jacob. Esau had no time for any birthright that was calculated to make him anything other than completely self-sufficient and completely independent. And God can do nothing for Esau.

God can do nothing for Esau. For the man who is so impressed with what he is apart from what God is in him is beyond repair. You can still maintain this attitude even as a redeemed sinner.

And that is why there are some on this campus who will never know God's purpose for their life nor the fullness of the salvation into which they have been redeemed. Because they are so thoroughly impressed with what they are apart from what Christ is in them that they'll never see any relevance in His indwelling by the Holy Spirit. And therefore they will always relegate Christ by His Spirit to their human spirits and keep Him locked up, as it were, frustrated in every attempt that He makes to credit them with the adequacy of Christ.

Impressed with what they are apart from what Christ is they will be self-sufficient. Totally, abysmally ignorant of the fact that God remains totally unimpressed with what they are apart from what Christ is. This is the basic attitude of sin.

Independence. Self-sufficiency. I will carve my own dinner out of the forest.

But Jacob. Twisted. God could do something for him.

You look in Malachi. The book of Malachi. Last in the Old Testament.

First chapter. The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi. I have loved you, saith the Lord.

Yet ye say, wherein hast thou loved? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? Saith the Lord. Yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau. I laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness.

Whereas Edom, saith that Esau, we are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places. Thus saith the Lord of hosts. They shall build, but I will throw down.

They shall call them the board of wickedness and the people against whom the Lord hath indignation forever. But Jacob have I loved. However could God love Jacob.

Because Jacob was totally unimpressed with what Jacob was, apart from what God could be in Jacob. God can do something with Jacob when he can do nothing with Esau. Because although men might legitimately despise this little sneak, they did not despise him any more than he despised himself.

And there were times maybe when in the darkness, alone, and desperately lonely, the tears would course down his cheeks and he would say, God, God if there's any kind of blessing that you can give to a person like me that will make me different from what I am, that's what I want. God can give in. God can begin with a man when he comes to the place of total despair.

When he jettisons any expectation in himself. God loved Jacob. That's why there's always a possibility for you and always a possibility for me.

When we come to the end of our own resources and recognize the innate bankruptcy of what we are, apart from what God is. I love Jacob. I hated Esau.

Go back a few pages and you'll come just before Jonah and just after Amos, between the two, the book of Obadiah. Just one chapter. Obadiah, verse one, From the vision of Obadiah thus saith the Lord God concerning Edom.

We have heard a rumor from the Lord and an ambassador is sent among the heathen. Arise ye and let us rise up against her in battle. Behold, behold, I have made thee small among the heathen.

Thou art greatly despised. The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee. Thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock whose habitation is high, that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down.

This is the spirit of Esau. I'll set myself like God above the stars. Birthright? Pathright? Who wants a miserable birthright? I am what I am by virtue of what I am and I'm very impressed with what I am.

Apart from what God is, you can keep your birthright. So God kept it and gave it to Jacob whom he loved. And there came a day in the school of despair when Jacob wrestled with God.

And God said to Jacob, What's your name? What's your name? And he said, My name is Cheat, Sneak, Twister. That's my name, God says. That's all I've been waiting for.

In the day a man is, a man is prepared to call himself what he is, God can change his name. In the day that you are prepared humbly to call yourself what you are, God will change your name. And that day

Jacob's name was changed to Israel.

Prince of God. Bethel, where he first met God, the house of God. Penael, where he wrestled and prevailed, the face of God.

Israel, prince of God. House, face, prince of God. Well you say, what's this to do with Amalek? Genesis 36.

Genesis and verse, chapter 36. Verse 8. Thus dwelt Esau in Mount Seir. Esau is Edom.

Don't forget that. Wherever you see Esau, wherever you see Seir, Mount Seir, wherever you see Edom, God is referring to the same thing. It will always mean the spirit of Satan.

Self-sufficiency, independence, the demon spirit that still, in our day and generation, works in the children of disobedience. This is what always the Holy Spirit means with relentless consistency. Esau, Mount Seir, Edom, always been the same thing.

This sin principle of satanic origin, the carnal mind that is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. And these, verse 9, are the generations of Esau. The father of the Edomites in Mount Seir.

Verse 12. Timnah was concubine to Eliphaz, Esau's son, and she bear to Eliphaz Amalek. Amalek was Esau's grandson.

And Malachi tells us that God was at war with Esau from generation to generation, and Exodus 17 tells us that God is at war with Amalek from generation to generation. For this spirit of independence that defies deity will never be at peace with God. You look at verse 31.

These are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom. Before there reigned any king over the children of Israel. There are kings in Edom before there is a king in Israel.

For you and I are born by nature, the children of Ra. And there are kings in the kingdom of Edom, the flesh, long ever before there is God's king in the kingdom of Israel. This is spiritual chronology.

There is always Cain before Abel. There is always Esau before Jacob. There is always Saul before David.

Notice the nature of the kings that reigned in Edom. Verse 33. Bela died.

And Jobab reigned in his stead. 34. Jobab died.

Husham reigned in his stead. 35. Husham died.

Hadad reigned in his stead. Verse 36. Hadad died.

Samlah reigned in his stead. Verse 37. Samlah died.

Saul died. 39. Balhanan died.

Verse 40. These are the names of the dukes that come of Esau. Last part of verse 43.

He is Esau, the father of the Edomites. Die. Die.

Die. Die. The kings of Edom who reigned before ever there was a king in Israel reigned unto death.

But there was to come one day a king in Israel whose kingdom should have no end. You look in Romans 5. Verse 17. Romans 5, 17.

If by one man's offense death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ. Verse 21. That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through the righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Numbers chapter 24. Maybe first we should glance at 22. Numbers 22.

For in the middle of verse 4 it says, Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time and he sent messengers therefore unto Balaam the son of Beor to Pithor which is by the river of the land of the children of his people to call him saying Behold there is a people come out from Egypt behold they cover the face of the earth and they abide over against me come now therefore I pray thee curse me this people for they are too mighty for me peradventure I shall prevail that we may smite them. And Balak king of the Moabites asked Balaam the prophet to curse God's people Israel. Chapter 23.

Verse 7. Balaam took up his parable and said, Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram out of the mountains of the east saying come curse me Jacob come defy Israel the prince of God how shall I curse whom God hath not cursed how shall I defy whom the Lord hath not defied. Chapter 24. Verse 15.

He took up his parable and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said the man whose eyes are open hath said 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 now he speaks prophetically I shall see him but not now I shall behold him but not now there shall come a star out of Jacob and a scepter shall rise out of Israel this is the birthright. Verse 18.

Edom shall be a possession Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies Israel shall do valiantly out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion keep your finger there if you like turn with me to Luke 1 verse 30 first of Luke in the 30th verse and the angel said unto her fear not Mary for thou hast found favour with God behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a son and shalt call his name Jesus he shall be great and shall be called the son of the highest and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever of his kingdom there shall be no end Numbers 24 verse 20 and when he looked on Amalek he took up his parable and said Amalek was the first of the nations what is meant by that is that Amalek was the

first of the nations that stood astride the path of God's redeemed people brought out of Egypt in their onward march on and into the land but his latter end shall be that he perish forever put your trust in Amalek at your peril Deuteronomy 25 25th chapter of the book of Deuteronomy verse 17 God says remember this is something that you are never to forget remember remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way when you were come forth out of Egypt he stood astride your onward path as I was to lead you on and into the land of plenitude Amalek was there defying your onward progress the flesh last sitting against the spirit remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way when you came forth out of Egypt how he met thee by the way and spoke behind most of thee even all that were feeble behind

thee when thou was faint and weary and he feared not God for he is hostile to God he is not subject to the law of God neither indeed can be he is profane he despises the birthright remember what Amalek did God says there is something that you do not have a right to remember because he has forgotten God says I will remember your sin no more God doesn't say I will pretend that you haven't sinned he says I will remember

your sin but I will remember them in the light of the shed blood of my dear son and I will remember your sins every one of them but I will remember them no more for they are as far as the east is from the west I have put them in the depths of the sea I have placed them behind my back though they were red like crimson they have become white as snow though purple, white as the

wool God says you do not have the right to remember what I forget but God says you do not have the right to forget what I remember and I remember Amalek 1 Samuel 15 and here we have the tragic story of a promising lovely young man to whom we are first introduced in the ninth chapter of the same book Winston humble, courteous, charming of unusual physique and who ultimately is appointed king but he was a man who ruined his life and died a bitter disappointed old man because he forgot to remember 1 Samuel 15 Samuel also said unto Saul the Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people over Israel now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the Lord if you are to be my earthly people's king then you must know God's mind and execute God's judgment verse 2 thus saith the

Lord of hosts I remember what I told you never to forget I remember that which Amalek did to his race how he laid waste to him in the way when he came up from Egypt now go, smite Amalek utterly destroy all that they have and spare them not slay both man, woman, infant, suckling, ox, sheep, camel, and ass there is absolutely no salvageable content whatever in Amalek and Saul forgot to remember for he smote the Amalekites verse 7 but verse 8 he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive whom God had sentenced to death he utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword but Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep and the best of the oxen the best of the fatlings and the best of the lambs all that was good good in what God had totally condemned and would not

utterly destroy them everything that was vile in their own estimate and refuse that they destroyed utterly he presumed to find something good in what God had totally condemned this is the this is the subtle temptation with which you are confronted for the devil will come to you again and again and whisper in your ear that you are not as bad as the Bible makes you out to be that there is always something good in what you are apart from what Christ is there is always something that is salvageable and says the devil dedicate it to God's service give it to him that's what Saul did he came with the people and Saul said verse 15 they have brought them from the Amalekites for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God and the rest we've utterly

destroyed don't get us wrong please don't misjudge our motives we've only kept the best out of Amalek to dedicate it to God's service this is the subtle temptation into which the devil will lead you if he possibly can he will keep you if he can preoccupied with trying to salvage out of what you are apart from what Christ is something that you can dedicate to God but I want to tell you this I want to remind you what we discovered on first evening Monday last that anything that you may offer to God of what you consider to be good out of what God has condemned will be as a sacrifice without salt no matter how much it may cost you no matter how much sacrifice it may involve no matter your enthusiasm or your austerity it will be repudiated as Saul was repudiated rebellion verse 23 is of the

sin of witchcraft and stubbornness is iniquity and idolatry because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord he hath also rejected thee if you presume to find something good in Amalek whom God has totally condemned God says I will reject you Samuel said the Lord hath read the kingdom of Israel from thee this day and hath given it to a neighbour of thine that is better than thine the neighbour who was better than he what neighbour could be better than Saul this is the confession of the neighbour who was better than Saul have mercy upon me O God according to thy loving kindness according unto the multitude of thy tender

mercies blot out my transgression wash me truly from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sin for I acknowledge my transgressions and my sin as ever before me against thee

thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest and be clear when thou judgest behold I was shapen in iniquity in sin did my mother conceive me purge me with hissip and I shall be clean wash me and I shall be whiter than snow create in me O God what I don't have a clean heart renew within me what I don't possess a right spirit I'm rotten through and through this was the confession of the neighbour who was better than Saul for God can do nothing with a man who presumes to find something good in what God condemns God can do something with David even though he has become a myth

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