

Too Heavy for You

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[0 : 0 0] Now we are in Exodus chapter 17, verse 8, going to chapter 18, verse 27. Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's word. Heavenly Father, we believe that your word is truth.

And because of that, that your word is good. And we ask now that you would quiet our hearts before the reading and preaching of your word.

That you'd incline our ears, our hearts toward you. And we ask that you would speak, address us as your people.

That we might live in accordance with your will. That we believe you will speak specifically to the individuals here and to us as a church.

Speak, Father, in an unmistakable way. That we might know that we are hearing your voice.

[1 : 2 6] In your word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. If you are able, please stand for the reading of God's word from Exodus 17, verse 18, 27.

Then Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim. 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. So Joshua did as Moses told him and fought with Amalek. While Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed. And whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. 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.

[2 : 3 6] So his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword. Then the Lord said to Moses, write this as a memorial in a book.

And recited in the ears of Joshua that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven. And Moses built an altar and called it the name, The Lord is my banner, saying, A hand upon the throne of the Lord.

The Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation. Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel, his people.

How the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt. And now Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, had taken Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her home, along with her two sons.

The name of the one was Gershon, for he said, I have been a sojourner in a foreign land. And the name of the other, Eliezer, for he said, The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh.

[3 : 43] Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness, where he was encamped at the mountain of God. And when he sent word to Moses, I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her.

Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and bowed down and kissed him. And they asked each other of their welfare and went into the tent. Then Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardship that had come upon them in the way, and how the Lord had delivered them.

And Jethro rejoiced for all the good that the Lord had done to Israel, in that he had delivered them out of the hand of the Egyptians. Jethro said, Blessed be the Lord who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh, and has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians.

Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods, because in this affair they dealt arrogantly with the people. And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God.

The next day Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood around Moses from morning till evening, when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people. He said, What is this that you are doing for the people?

[5 : 18] Why do you sit alone, and all the people stand around you from morning till evening? And Moses said to his father-in-law, Because the people come to me to inquire of God.

When they have a dispute, they come to me, and I decide between one person and another, and I make them know the statutes of God and his laws. Moses' father-in-law said to him, What you are doing is not good.

You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone. Now obey my voice, I will give you advice, and God be with you.

You shall represent the people before God, and bring their cases to God, and you shall warn them about the statutes and the laws, and make them know the way in which they must walk, and what they must do. Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens.

And let them judge the people at all times. Every great matter they shall bring to you, but any small matter they shall decide themselves, so it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you.

[6 : 35] If you do this, God will direct you. You will be able to endure, and all this people also will go to their place in peace. So Moses listened to the voice of his father-in-law, and did all that he had said.

Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens, and they judged the people at all times.

Any hard case they brought to Moses, but any small matter they decided themselves. Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went away to his own country. This is God's holy and authoritative word.

You may be seated. Are you guys hearing echoes? Are you guys okay with the sound? Okay. This passage serves as a hinge in the book of Exodus in two ways.

First, chapter 18, verses 1 to 12, summarized the Lord's deliverance of Israel through Moses, recounted in chapters 2 to 17. And then chapter 18, verses 13 to 27, lay the groundwork for the governance and judgeship of God's people as a nation, and anticipates chapters 19 to 40, where God gives specific laws and instructions for obedience to him and his worship.

[7 : 58] And in this way, chapter 18 serves as a conclusion to the first half of the book, and an introduction to the second half of the book. And we see here another kind of transition in second way.

17, verse 9, is the first time in the Bible that we are introduced to Joshua, who will eventually succeed Moses as a leader of Israel and lead God's people into Canaan.

And in this passage, both chapter 17 and 18, we see Moses delegating more of his responsibilities, thereby laying the groundwork for his eventual transition from leadership.

So this passage serves as a hinge to a new phase of life in Israel as God's people. And one of the main lessons that we learn from this passage is this, that God appoints weak people to carry out his weighty purposes with the help of others.

And first, we're going to see generals for times of war, and then we're going to see judges for times of peace. When the Israelites were still at Rephidim, which is in the region in the wilderness of sin that they've been at for the past two weeks, where the Lord provided water for the Israelites from the rock, it says in chapter 17, verse 8, that Amalek came and fought with Israel.

[9 : 15] We know from Genesis 36 that Amalek is Esau's grandson. This is, it's his firstborn son, Eliphaz, who gave birth to Amalek through a concubine.

And so here we see a distinction between the chosen line of Jacob and the line of Esau, the Amalekites. Since Moses and Aaron were only four generations removed from Jacob, it's not inconceivable that the Amalekites are here actually being led by Amalek himself.

That's why in verse 13, it refers to Amalek and his people. So considering that they were distant relatives of Israel, what they're doing here is even more egregious.

Deuteronomy 25, verses 17 to 19 provides some more details about this attack of the Amalekites. And it says this, remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you came out of Egypt, 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. So this explains why the Lord declares in verse 14, I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.

[10 : 34] God is absolutely furious at what Amalek is doing here. Because when you're on a march with hundreds of thousands of people, millions of people, who are the people that lag behind at the back of the line?

Sick people? Old, infirm people? Families with children? Pregnant women? These are the people who are lagging behind, people who are falling in the back.

And what Amalek is doing is cutting off the tail, attacking the most vulnerable member of Israel as a nation in order to profit themselves. And so God declares war on the Amalekites on behalf of the Israelites.

They did not fear God. They came upon the Israelites when they were faint, it says, and weary from their long journey through the wilderness. Up to this point, Israelites have not had to take up the sword.

But here the Amalekites forced their hand and it says in verse 9, Moses said to Joshua, choose for us men and go out and fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand.

[11 : 48] So we'll see, this is the first time we are introduced to Joshua and we're going to see more and more his increasing role as an assistant to Moses and eventually to take over the mantle of leadership.

And Moses here determines that Joshua is the most fitting man to recruit an army among the Israelite men to go out and fight with Amalek. Maybe, I mean, he's certainly younger than Moses.

He's fresher, stronger. He appoints Joshua to lead the men into battle. And Moses says, tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand.

So just so you know, this is not a cowardly attempt to avoid the perils of war on the safety of a hill. He says in verses 11 to 13, whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed.

And whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. 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.

[12 : 46] One on one side and the other on the other side. So his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword. Moses' hand is mentioned six times in verses 9 to 12.

There's a focus on Moses' hand. And it's not because Moses' hand itself has some magical properties or any special powers, but it's because in his hand, as verse 9 says, is the staff of God.

The authority and power that God had personally entrusted to Moses to lead his people. So whenever Moses raises his hand holding the staff of God, the tide of battle turns in favor of the Israelites, but whenever he lowers it, the tide turns the other way in favor of the Amalekites.

So I don't know if you've ever tried to hold your hands up for a long time. It's really hard to do that for more than a few minutes. I know because growing up, this is how my parents punished me when I did something wrong.

They said, kneel over there and keep your hands up for several minutes. If I get into fights with people, this is what they make me do. And it's really hard to do. So eventually it gets very tiring so you start squirming and if you're only having to raise one hand, you can support it with the other hand.

[14 : 00] And it seems like that's what Moses is doing. That's why in verse 11, it only mentions one hand of Moses. But then in verse 12, it says Moses' hands, plural, grew weary.

And the phrase grew weary is literally grew heavy. It's getting too heavy for him to keep up his arms. And it's becoming, it's plural because he's doing this, he switches hands to the other hand, he's doing this, or he's doing this and now he can't keep either one up.

So now he's, that's why both hands are weary. This is why they make him, make him sit down. You know, you might wonder why, you know, Aaron and Hur put a stone under him to have him sit down.

It's not his legs that are tired, it's his arms. The reason why is because if Moses sits down, his arms are lower, so Aaron and Hur don't have to keep their arms up, they can just hold his arm against their body.

So they're literally holding his arms up on either side while Moses is sitting on the stone. And so what's the point of all this? Why are we getting all these details?

[15 : 04] So there are at least two things that I think the Lord is teaching us through this. First is that Moses, though he was the Lord's chosen representative, he was only human.

He was weak, he was inadequate, he needed the help of others, and in this case, Aaron, his brother, and Hur, a man from the tribe of Judah, who is the grandfather of Bezalel, who is responsible for designing and crafting the tabernacle and its furnishings in Exodus 31.

It's not verified by scripture itself, but later Jewish tradition says that Hur is actually Miriam's husband, which would make him Moses' brother-in-law. So if that's the case, he's taking his literal closest brothers to hold up his arms while he's up on the hill, his brother and his brother-in-law.

That shows us that God appoints weak people to carry out his weighty purposes with help from our brothers and sisters in Christ. Because there will be times in your own life when your hands grow weary with work that you are doing for the Lord.

The things that God has called you to do, but you will not be adequate for the task. You will not be able to do it on your own. And when you grow weary, it's not cause to despair, but it's cause to remember that God designed it to be that way because you're not meant to carry the burden on your own.

[16 : 24] No one is self-sufficient. Ephesians 4.16 says, when each part of the body of Christ, the local church, is working properly, it makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Each part has a role to play. 1 Corinthians 12 says, for the body does not consist of one member, but of many, and that God arranged the members in the body, each one of them as he chose.

So that each part has an indispensable role to play. Moses was God's appointed leader of Israel. He was the one to whom the Lord had given the authority to carry the staff of God.

Aaron and Hur could not carry the staff of God for Moses. However, they could help Moses hold up his arms. And that's exactly what they did. I feel like I'm overusing references from this lately, but in the Lord of the Rings, the return of the king, where Frodo, Baggins, and Samwise Gamgee enter Mordor, Mordor, sorry, they are approaching the fire of Mount Doom, and Frodo is so exhausted from the journey that he literally cannot take another step.

And you guys know where I'm going. But he is a chosen ring bearer. Frodo is the only one who can carry the ring to go destroy it in the mountains. So this is what in that moment his loyal friend Samwise Gamgee says to him, come Mr. Frodo, I can't carry it for you, but I can carry you.

[17 : 55] And he literally picks him up and starts walking into Mount Mordor. And sometimes that's going to happen to us. That's what Aaron and Hur are literally doing. I can't carry the staff for you, but I can carry your hand.

I can pick your hand up and keep it up. Galatians 6, 2 commands us to bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.

When one of us is caught in any transgression, we can't repent for that person. But we can restore him in a spirit of gentleness.

We can rebuke him in love. When one of us is grieving a loss, we can't experience the loss for her, but we can comfort her in her mourning and point her to the resurrection hope that we have in Christ.

When one of us is afflicted by severe trials in a marriage, and we can't go through the trial for that person, but we can help him or her bear some of others' burdens, the other burdens in that person's life.

[19 : 04] We can encourage that person and pray for that person. Some of you are carrying very heavy burdens this morning. You can't hold up your arms anymore.

But don't give up. Look around you. See who can be your Aaron. Who can be your her and call them to your aid. And brothers and sisters, knowing that there are people in our midst who are weary, whose hands are growing heavy, look out for such people around you so you can come to their aid to be their Aaron and her for them.

The second thing, and I think this is the main thing that this passage teaches us, is the same lesson that we have seen over and over again throughout the book of Exodus. And that is this, the battle belongs to the Lord.

Lord, pretend that you are a film director for a moment. You're adapting this passage, Exodus 17, short verses for the big screen.

Where would the focus of your movie be? I would venture to guess that you would probably not spend the majority of your movie showing Moses struggling to hold his hand up. You'd probably spend most of the time showing the swords clashing, chariots clashing, people running, blood spilling, action on the battlefield.

[20 : 27] Joshua rallying his troops into battle. Because from our human standpoint, that's where the action is. But that's not where the focus is in this passage, in the word of God.

Apart from the summary statement of verse 13, which says Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword, there is zero description of the battlefield. The focus is instead on the hand of Moses carrying the staff of God.

When it is lifted, they win. When it is lowered, they start losing. How Moses' hands grew weary and how Aaron and her helped them keep them up. Why is the focus so much on Moses' hand?

God's perspective, because that's in the spiritual scheme of things, from God's perspective, that is where the real battle is taking place. Because the battle is not being decided by the sword of Joshua, but by the hand of the Lord.

Surely Joshua was a valiant young man as we see throughout the first six books of the Bible, but it's not his competence or courage as a military general, nor the might of the Israelite army that brings victory.

[21 : 44] They did have a role to play. They did have to go and fight, and we likewise have a role to play. We do have things we must do as God's people, but the battle belongs to the Lord.

It's him who decides the victory. That's the whole point of verses 11 and 13. It says in verses 14 to 16, then the Lord said to Moses, write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the years of Joshua that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.

And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, the Lord is my banner, saying, a hand upon the throne of the Lord, the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.

Since there is a repetition and an emphasis on the hand of Moses, the expression, a hand upon the throne of the Lord is most likely a reference to Moses' outstretched hand with the staff petitioning the Lord on behalf of Israel.

It's as if Moses' outstretched hand is like a hand on the throne, on the throne of God, pleading with him to fight on Israel's behalf. And because his hand was on the Lord's throne, the Lord says, I will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.

[23 : 00] So Moses, to commemorate this, builds an altar and names it, the Lord is my banner. The banner, most likely when we hear the word banner, we now think of advertisement banners.

That's not what's in view here. It's referring to the signal, the military signal, or the military standard, the flag, the banner under which an army fights.

If the Lord is the banner, that means this is the Lord's battle. He's the king who is depicted on the flag. As Christians, we will face battles in this life.

Jesus says in John 15 to 20, 15 verse 20, if they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. When you try to obey God and follow his word, you will face opposition from the world and from your sinful flesh and from the devil.

We should not be surprised by that. 1 Peter 5, 8 says that our adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. He will come upon us when we are faint and weary like the Israelites were.

[24 : 09] He will try to cut off our tail and attack the weakest and most vulnerable members among us. there will be sweat and tears and sometimes even blood.

There's a reason why Ephesians 6 tells us to put on the full armor of God. You don't need an armor if you're not in war. You might not want to fight, but our enemies will bring the fight to you.

But in the midst of these battles, we must remember that the Lord is my banner. The battle ultimately belongs to the Lord. So let me ask you, are you fighting your battles in the Christian life in your own strength or in the strength of the Lord?

Here's how you know. Here's a good diagnostic test to gauge what's happening in your life. Where are your hands? Are your hands always busy with ministry?

Are your hands always serving? Or are your hands upon the throne of the Lord? Are your hands stretched out toward God in prayer?

[25 : 24] If you're not clinging to God's throne in prayer, then you're operating under the assumption that your activity and not God's activity is decisive in your life.

But the battle does not ultimately belong to us. It belongs to the Lord. So let's not forget, let's not be a church that forgets where the banner is, under whose banner we fight.

Because as soon as we become a prayerless church, we will be a powerless church. After defeating the Amalekites, the Israelites have some respite. And it's during that time, Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law comes to visit Moses and see how he's doing.

In Exodus 4, we were told that Moses actually took his wife and children with him to Egypt. So it seems, according to chapter 18, at some point later in time, he sent his wife and children back to Egypt, which would be a very understandable thing to do.

It's probably what I would do in his shoes because Pharaoh's refusing to let the Israelites go. Tensions are rising. Plagues are falling. There's conflict going on.

[26 : 39] So it's maybe a sensible time to send your children and your wife back home since they have a place to go to in Midian. And it recalls a couple things, the names of his sons.

And this is significant because in this family reunion, we see a summary of Moses' biography. Verses 3-4, chapter 18, tells us that the name of the one son was Gershom, for he said, I have been a sojourner in a foreign land and the name of the other, Eliezer, for he said, the God of my father was my help and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh.

So Gershom was the son Moses had with Zipporah when he entered the land of Midian. He was saying that he is now a sojourner in the foreign land of Midian. And then Eliezer is the son he had just before re-entering Egypt and he named him Eliezer because God had just told him that the men, including Pharaoh, who were seeking your life in Egypt are now dead.

And so Moses praised God saying that God has delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh. He was my helper and so God, he named him Eliezer. And this is a sketch of Moses' life, how God has been faithful to him.

But in this passage, it also serves to exemplify, to capture what God has done for the Israelites. Because Gershom, I have been a sojourner in a foreign land. Israelites were also sojourners in the foreign land of Egypt.

[27 : 59] And Eliezer, God is my help, he has delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh. The Israelites have also been delivered by God from the sword of Pharaoh. God has been their help. So in this, we see God's utter faithfulness.

Moses sees his son, Gershom, Eliezer, and he sees how faithful God has been. And so Moses greets his father-in-law warmly, and they spend the while catching up in Moses' tent.

And it says in verse 8, that Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardship that had come upon them in the way, and how the Lord had delivered them.

So Moses tells Jethro of all the amazing signs that God did in Egypt that he witnessed, how the Lord defeated Egypt and Pharaoh by his mighty hand. But that's not all he tells.

He also tells of their hardships and their struggles. He tells his father-in-law, pours out his heart about all the hardship that they faced in the wilderness. If you think about the last few passages, it hasn't been an easy journey for Moses.

[29 : 08] People grumbled against him at the bitters of waters of Marah. They grumbled against him for lack of food in the wilderness of sin. And then they quarreled with him at Massah and Meribah and almost stoned him to death.

So Moses is kind of sharing his griefs with his father-in-law. Can you believe what these guys are trying to do to me? But the Lord has delivered them.

Think about this for a moment. From a human standpoint, this is a fantastic opportunity for Moses to impress his father-in-law. Look at what I've done!

Look at what I've done! I just went into one of the most powerful ancient kingdoms in the world and delivered millions of people out of their slavery and brought them through the wilderness and here they are!

You thought your daughter married a no-name fugitive from Egypt but here I am, the great Moses. It's a great opportunity for him to do that but Moses doesn't do that.

[30 : 14] He emphasizes the role of the Lord in all of it. He speaks of all that the Lord had done to Pharaoh and to Egyptians and he speaks of how the Lord had delivered Israel.

It's about what the Lord has done and not what Moses has done. Likewise, when we recount the triumphs and victories of our lives, we should give credit where the credit is due and glorify God.

We can take credit in quite subtle ways. There's a difference between saying, look at the amazing things that God has done in my life.

There's a difference between saying that and saying, look at the amazing things that God has done in my life. Do you see the difference?

What God has done in my life makes me amazing, makes me so mature, makes me so put together, makes me so experienced.

[31 : 29] If the effect of your testimony is the elevation of your standing before people rather than elevation of God's standing before their eyes, then your emphasis in your testimony is in the wrong place.

Because Moses puts the emphasis in the right place, Jethro's response in verses 9 to 11 is appropriate. It says, Jethro rejoiced for all the good that the Lord had done to Israel in that he had delivered them out of the hand of the Egyptians.

Jethro said, blessed be the Lord who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh and has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods because in this affair they dealt arrogantly with the people.

Jethro's response is not, wow, I am so lucky to have such an impressive, successful man as my son-in-law. No, his response is, wow, the God you serve is greater than all the gods.

That's, that should be the desire, the heartbeat of every Christian. For people to look at us and say, wow, look at, not look at how impressive those Christians are, but for them to look at us and say, look at how amazing their God is.

[33 : 07] And Jethro comes to correct conclusion that the Lord is greater than all the gods. Because the ancient world was so thoroughly religious and because God's people were keenly aware of spiritual realities and that there were spiritual forces, demonic spirits at work among the pagan deities and the pagan nations, they sometimes expressed their monotheistic faith, the belief that there is only one true God in henotheistic terms, terms that acknowledge that there are other gods.

But this is not a denial of their monotheism. There is only one true God, but because all these nations believe in other gods and because there are evil spirits at work, they say things like, the Lord is greater than all gods.

There is no God like our God. God. Jeremiah 2.11 makes this clear when God, they're there in that context, God's bemoaning the fact that the Israelites have exchanged God, the true God, for idols.

And this is what God says in Jeremiah 2.11, has a nation changed its gods? So are there actually gods? It says, has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods?

But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. Every other nation has not changed its gods, even though their so-called gods are actually not gods at all.

[34 : 32] But it speaks like they are gods. God's people had exchanged the true God for idols. In light of this, Jethro's profession that the Lord is greater than all gods is remarkable.

Remember from verse 1 that Jethro is the Midianite priest. He is the priest at Midian. He's not only a non-Israelite, a foreigner, a Gentile, he's the priest of Midianite religion, worshiper of a different false deity.

And yet after hearing of all that Yahweh has done on behalf of the Israelites, he concludes, I know that the Lord is greater than all gods.

Knowing God, knowing the Lord is a major theme in the book of Exodus as we have seen over and over again. Pharaoh claimed, I do not know the Lord. And every time God reveals himself through signs in Egypt, his purpose is so that the Egyptians and the Israelites might know him, know that he is Yahweh, he is the Lord.

The purpose of the Exodus is revelation, to reveal God. But sadly, we saw in the preceding episodes the last two weeks that the Israelites, even after all that they had been delivered from, did not rightly know God as they ought to.

[35 : 51] But here is a Gentile pagan worshiper, the priest of Midian professing, I know that the Lord is greater than all gods. This is a humble admission that Yahweh is greater even than the God of the Midianite religion that he is priest of.

In fact, it may even be a profession of faith that Yahweh is the only true God. We can see the possibility of that in verse 12. Where it says, Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God.

And Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God. This is a preview of the sacrificial system that will later be instituted and resembles a fellowship offering that is stipulated in Exodus 20 and Leviticus 7 where they make a burnt offering to God and then God's people share in that meal together to indicate their fellowship with one another and with God.

So, after being, having been introduced in verse 1 as the priest of Midian, Jethro is never again called the priest of Midian again in scripture.

But he is called repeatedly again and again, 13 times to be exact in this passage, Moses' father-in-law, showing that he is a member of Moses' family included in the fellowship of God's people and it's his relation to Moses and his profession of faith in the Lord that gives Jethro standing among God's people, not the fact that he is a priest of Midian.

[37 : 22] And Jethro is not afraid to use his standing as Moses' father-in-law to give him some fatherly counsel in verses 13 to 27. He notices in verse 13 that Moses sat to judge the people and the people stood around Moses from morning till evening.

So we learn here from verse 15 to 16 that Moses hears an individual case and takes each individual case to the Lord in order to hear from him and to be able to make a judgment, a decision.

And he's the one that in those cases individually teaching people that come to him the statutes of God and his laws. Jethro sees immediately that this is not only a painstakingly slow process, which is why people are standing around just waiting in line all day.

It's testing people's patience. But also Jethro sees that his son-in-law is headed toward inevitable burnout. So he says to Moses in verses 17 to 23, what you are doing is not good.

You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out for the thing is too heavy for you. You're not able to do it alone. Now obey my voice, I will give you advice, and God be with you.

[38 : 35] You shall represent the people before God and bring their cases to God, and you shall warn them about the statutes and the laws and make them know the way in which they must walk and what they must do. Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens, and let them judge the people at all times.

Every great matter they shall bring to you, but any small matter they shall decide themselves. If you do this, God will direct you, you will be able to endure, and all these people will also go to their place in peace.

Jethro's recommendation is what in modern days people call the principle of subsidiarity. The Oxford English Dictionary defines subsidiarity as, quote, the principle that a central authority should have a subsidiary function, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed at a more local level.

So this principle was expounded upon by 13th century theologian, Italian theologian Thomas Aquinas, as well as by 16th century German lawyer and Calvinist political philosopher Johannes Althusius, but the principle is way more ancient than that.

It goes all the way back to Moses. This principle is codified in the laws of the United States. The Tenth Amendment states, quote, the powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution nor prohibited by it to the states are reserved to the states respectively or to the people.

[40 : 18] Subsidiarity. Our federal justice system also reflects this principle with 94 district courts spread throughout the country serving as the primary trial courts. And then when issues cannot be resolved there people make appeals which then goes to the 13 courts of appeals and then if the issues still remain unresolved then it goes to the one U.S.

Supreme Court for final review and judgment. This is the principle of subsidiarity. It's a wise and biblical principle. And note that this is not merely Jethro's good idea it's actually ultimately God who is directing Moses and the Israelites this way.

That's why it says in verse 23 if you do this God will direct you. The NIV translates it this way if you do this and God so commands Moses follows his father-in-law's advice because he believes that this is in fact what God is commanding.

Once again we see that God appoints weak people to carry out his weighty purposes with help from others. God makes babies to be born within families.

We're celebrating the Miller's new baby this weekend. They're all born into families. Yeah. And he makes families function within larger societies.

- [41 : 41] Similarly God places every Christian within the family of God when they are born again through repentance and faith in Jesus. The church and because we need each other because we cannot function alone God places us in local church families.
- The lead pastor of a local church does not make all the decisions by himself. In our church we have a plurality of elders so that there is accountability and counsel from other wise elders.
- We also have deacons who attend to the physical temporal needs of the church members in our church things like food and water housing health care etc.
- Lauren's one of our deacons but she's on maternity leave so don't go to her if you have those issues for a little bit. You can go to John so he's kind of on paternity leave but we're kind of bringing him back.
- In a much smaller scale Israel is millions of people by this point the principle of subsidiarity functions even in our church. Decisions that don't require pastoral oversight are made by other leaders in the church.
- [42 : 54] Note that subsidiarity doesn't flatten out the leadership structure altogether. Moses does not abdicate his leadership responsibility but he still has to lead the people of God but he does not bear the burden of leadership alone.
- The criteria for the officers of the church the elders and deacons are primarily matters of character not competence apart from the fact that elders need to be able to teach all the requirements in 1 Timothy 3 are character requirements.
- Same is true here in Exodus 18 21. What does Jethro say? Look for able men from all the people men who fear God who are trustworthy and hate a bribe.
- The word able sounds like it's speaking of jurisprudential expertise but it's not speaking of that it's actually translating the same Hebrew word that is translated in Proverbs 31 to describe the excellent wife the wife of noble character.
- It's the same word that is used to describe Boaz in Ruth as a worthy man and Ruth as a worthy woman. The following phrases unpack what it means for them to be able men.
- [44 : 04] They are men who fear God who are trustworthy and hate a bribe. To fear God is to live ever before the presence of God under the authority of God for the glory of God.
- Such men are trustworthy even when no one is watching because they know that God is watching. And such men hate a bribe because they know that bribe subverts justice and because they know that they will have to give an account to God even if they can get away with taking a bribe among men.
- If we gave more weight to a person's character than to a person's wealth celebrity verbal pugilism genealogy or academic pedigree when electing public officials I think our country would be much better off.
- This passage is also a helpful reminder of the importance of humility and leadership. It might not have been easy for Moses to listen to Jethro's advice. Many of you have heard the dreaded unsolicited advice from your in-laws in the past.
- Some of you have wonderful in-laws and you desire their advice some of you don't. And remember also that Moses is the one that holds the staff of God in his hand.
- [45 : 29] He just defeated Egypt. He's a big shot if there ever was one. And Jethro is his lowly elderly father-in-law.
- A recent convert if anything. A priest of Midian. What does he know? I talked to God. Who are you? No, that's not Moses' response.
- Moses is humble enough to know that he does not have a monopoly on godly wisdom. He's humble enough to recognize that his outward successes had nothing to do with him and everything to do with God.

He's humble enough to know that even his newly converted Midianite father-in-law can give him good godly advice.

This is something that we all have to remember especially those of us in leadership positions in the church. I don't know if you noticed but there are actually many parallels between the passage about Amalek's attack of Israel and Jethro's greeting of Israel.

[46 : 36] There's an intentional contrast being set up between the two passages. Chapter 17 verse 8 says that Amalek came and fought with Israel. Chapter 18 verses Jethro came to ask for war.

Jethro comes for peace. Exodus 17 8 to 16 repeatedly speak of how Moses has to raise up his hand with the step of God against the Amalekites. But in Exodus 18 1 to 12 Jethro repeatedly speaks of how the Lord delivered Israel out of the hand of the Egyptians.

Chapter 17 verse 8 Moses tells Joshua choose for us men to go out in war. Chapter 18 verse 25 Moses chooses able men to help judge the people in times of peace.

Chapter 17 verse 12 Moses sits down to hold up the staff of God until the going down of the sun. In chapter 18 verse 13 Moses sits down to judge the people from morning till evening.

And finally in chapter 17 verse 12 Moses hands grew weary or literally his hands grew heavy and Aaron and her had to help him bear the weight and in 1818 Jethro says to Moses the thing is too heavy for you it's the same Hebrew word and counsels him to appoint worthy men to help him bear the weight.

[48 : 02] So in this way Amalek and Jethro are case studies studies in contrast of how even Gentiles can inherit God's first based on their response toward God and toward God's people because Amalek comes to war against God's people the Lord will war against him generation after generation because Jethro comes in peace toward God's people the Lord allows him to join God's covenant people even the Gentiles can believe in the Lord and be included this is a fulfillment of what God had promised Abraham in Genesis chapter 12 he said 17 verse 15 when

Moses builds an altar he names it the Lord is my banner the Lord is the signal or flag under which the people of God gather in battle many of you are probably familiar with the iconic photo entitled Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima you guys aware of that picture it's taken by the photographer Joel Rosenthal during World War II taken on February 23rd 1945 one of the most recognizable images from World War II from any war in fact it was taken nearly after two months of fight hard fought battle on the island of Iwo Jima the island was significant tactically in war because there was a mountain on top of it and it gave people the ability to spot what the enemies were doing and to accurately aim their artillery and so toward the end of the battle six U.S.

Marines climbed up the mountain to raise the American flag and plant it there to claim it as belonging to the U.S. and to rally the troops toward it it's a dramatic picture with a lot of movement and the flag streaming in the wind in the confusion of war when people are fighting and swords are clanging and guns are going off people are scattered all over the battlefield and people are dying and fearful it's in those times that a banner is raised a signal is raised to say all of you who is with us gather here to reform so that we might know who is with us so we can fight together instead of being scattered and being slaughtered out on the battlefield that's how a banner functions that's what the standard does it provides identity for the people who gather it provides security for the people that gather under it that's why psalm 60 verse 4 says you have the Lord you have set up a banner for those who fear you that they may flee to it from the bow as the arrows are coming you flee and there's a prophecy in

Isaiah 11 that tells us exactly what that banner is that God has set up or more accurately who that banner is it says in Isaiah 11 10 to 12 in that day the root of Jesse who shall stand as a signal for the peoples that's the same word standard banner for the peoples of him shall the nations inquire and his resting place shall be glorious time to recover the remnant that remains of his people from Assyria from Egypt from Petros from Cush from Elam from Shinar from Hamath and from the coastlands of the sea he will raise a signal for the nations and will assemble the banished of Israel and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth the root of Jesse is a title for the Messiah the Christ Jesus he is the descendant of David a descendant of Jesse Isaiah prophesied that a day is coming when the

Messiah will be the banner that gathers all of God's people not only from among the Israelites but from all the nations from all the people groups this is what Jesus was fulfilling in John 12 32 when he said when I am lifted up from the earth when he is crucified I will draw all people to myself by paying for the penalty of our sins by his death on the cross and then by rising from the dead Jesus brought a new era of salvation for all nations Jesus is our banner Jesus is the one to whom we are to gather there is a battle waging and many are falling in battle and many are injured in battle and many are confused in battle and many are fearful in battle and here is our banner the banner on the cross the Lord Jesus Christ saying gather here for those who gather here there is safety for those who gather here there is salvation for those who gather here we shall know they belong to the

[53 : 35] King Jesus and we will have victory have you gathered under the banner of Christ those who scatter will be defeated but those who put their faith in Jesus and gather will live forever and be victorious so come to him acknowledge your weakness and come gather under the banner of Christ let's pray together yes God we have gathered under your banner and we are proud to fly that flag the standard of our King Jesus the Lion of Judah the Lamb that was slain you are our banner Lord Jesus use us

Lord to gather all your people from the four corners of the earth back to yourself for your glory in Jesus name we pray Amen