

Pray

And it came to pass when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; And when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. (Exodus 17: 11)

To most of us, this was a little-known battle the Israelites fought on their way from Egypt to Mount Sinai. Moses (who was about eighty years old at this time) had given command of the Israelite army to Joshua when they went out to fight the Amalekites, but that didn't mean Moses just sat on the sidelines doing nothing. While the men were fighting, Moses was up on a nearby hilltop with Aaron and Hur, hands raised, praying.

As Exodus records it, *"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. So his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword."* (Exodus 17:11-13)

It doesn't seem like Moses did very much to win the battle. After all, it was Joshua and his soldiers who were out there doing all the fighting. Yet without Moses' hands raised in prayer, the battle would not have been won, would it?

In a devotion published in 1922, Rev Frederik W. Herzberger highlights this in words that still apply to our day and age: "What an inspiring example Moses here gives to our old Christians who no longer can actively engage in work and often complain about being so useless, and impatiently wait for death! Oh, you dear old fathers and mothers in Israel, stop your grieving and complaining, and follow the example of Moses here. If you can do nothing else, you can all pray; and you know the apostle says that fervent prayer availeth much (James 5:16). Employ your lonely hours by praying, praying for your loved ones, for your Church, for your missionaries, for your dear country, for the poor and the sick and the dying."

Today we can turn on the television, the radio, the computer, our cell phones—we have no shortage of sources for information of what's going on in the world around us! Unfortunately, most of that news is bad news, so much so that we may be more inclined to turn it off rather than turn it on. After all, in most cases there's nothing we can do about the troubles of the world around us. It's clear to us that they're much too big for us to handle, with forces too powerful for us to change, no matter how young or old we may be.

But wait a minute. God said, *"Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me."* (Psalm 50:15) And Jesus said, *"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"* (Matthew 5:44) Jesus also *"told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart."* (Luke 18:1ff.) And St Paul wrote, *"Pray without ceasing"* (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

Indeed, the prayers of the people of God appear throughout the Scriptures, as do the commands and encouragements to such prayer! As Pastor Herzberger put it: "Oh how many glorious examples there are of the great saving power of persistent and interceding prayer! The battling Church of Christ needs nothing so much in these restless, stormy, evil days as the

effectual earnest prayers of its faithful adherence. Then let all of us, and especially our old Simeons and Annas, pray, pray Christ's cause on to *victory*."

[Devotion for June 21st. *The Family Altar: Brief Daily Devotions Based on Selected Scripture Texts*, by F W Herzberger, (CPH, 1922) has been reprinted and is still available!]

If you cannot be out the watchman Standing high on Zion's wall,
Pointing out the path to heaven, Offering life and peace to all,
With your prayers and with your bounties You can do what heaven demands,
You can be like faithful Aaron Holding up the prophet's hands.