



October 16th

THE NEW SHOFAR

For Luke's Jesus, prayer is basically a matter of asking the Father to do what he has promised.

Yahweh: a Name to remember

It is helpful to remember the Name used of God by the Hebrew people during the Exodus. God revealed the divine Name to Moses from the burning bush. He said he was **YAHWEH**, the God of the ancestors of the people of Israel. It is a difficult word to translate but my preference is – *the God who is now, as has always been and will so be in the future*. In other words, look at all of the wonderful, awesome things God has done since creation. What was available for people then is available to us today and forever. If the God who created everything out of nothing is with us as we walk the Exodus, then we need fear not. Especially not the Amalekites. Nothing can stop God's will from being done.



How to stop and defeat the people of Amalek

Who were these Amalekites? The Amalekites, descendants of Amalek, were an ancient biblical nation living near the land of Canaan. They were ferocious nomadic bandits who survived by robbing caravans and plundering other tribal groups. But they end up being more than that in the Bible. They were the first nation to attack the Jewish people after the Exodus from Egypt. This conflict turned them into the archetypal enemy of the Jews. They represented any darkness that came upon the people of God. The nation of Amalek is long gone, but they live on as the internal enemies that we each battle on a daily basis.

As this time, the Hebrew people were little more than a loosely bound collection of various races, nations and each one brought with them their own religious beliefs and practices. It was only at Mt Sinai, when God bound them to him in a covenant, that we say the nation was born. There was no way this ragtag bag of misfits was ever going to defeat the fury of Amalek. It is here we find a significant message.

The question to ask is: Who is doing the fighting?

Moses notices something in the battle with Amalek. As they engage them in battle, the Hebrew army is winning. Moses stands at the top of a hill being the connection point between the people and God. While he is with God, things go well, and Amalek is in fast retreat. But, when Moses relaxes, the tide is turned, and the Hebrews are being overwhelmed. Moses responds by lifting his arms in prayer. While he was praying, Israel was winning. When he tired, down went his arms and Amalek was surging forward. In the next

step of the battle, Aaron and Hur held the arms of Moses up so that they were jammed between rocks in an upright position. His prayers thus never ceased, and Israel won and were able to move onward.

This is early in the Exodus journey and the story is about laying the foundation for the people to place their trust and hope in the One who called them, the One who was leading them to the Promised Land. The God who was with them was none other than YAHWEH, the God who was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. Why should they doubt? Why would they allow themselves to think that Amalek was strong enough to disrupt the saving works of God in creation. God will have his way and God's way was the salvation and restoration of his wayward children. In praying, this is what we are doing, collaborating with these divine, saving works.

Prayer is about God and not the person praying

When we pray, we are entering into an engagement with God. We are building up and growing in our relationship with God. We are living out our deep desire to grow closer to God and to receive what God longs to give all of us: His unconditional love, which is always available, always freely offered, and always life-giving.

Prayer, like all worship, is always a response to God's revelation of himself and his will. But if we are to call upon God's name, we must first know his name and it is God who takes the initiative in making his name known. Where do we find God? God reveals himself in his deeds; he also makes his name known directly by his words. In both, God is revealed as personal, in a relationship with us. In his words he both promises and proclaims his deeds. The wonder of what we experience in both these words and his deeds calls forth a response of adoration.

On top of this, the Bible teaches us how prayer is the act of asking God to do what he has already promised to do. We pray because we know God is faithful and trustworthy. We can rely on him. That is all we need to know. We come before God filled with a sense of confidence, hope and trust. Thus, when we come to talk with God, he is already there waiting for us.

We see this kind of interaction with God evidenced throughout the Bible as his people continue to ask him to follow through on his promises and bring about his kingdom and rule. That is the starting point in our own praying.

Theologically, then, it is God who invites us through the gospel to participate in the life of the Trinity through a union with Christ. This includes us petitioning God the Father to come to our assistance, to walk with us, to enable us to participate in Jesus's sonship by divine adoption through faith. When we make our prayers of petition to God, it is this we are seeking. Not

for ourselves alone is our prayer, but that the saving plan of God may unfold around us and through us. In our praying we become collaborators in God's works.