

THE STAFF

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- A well-known story about Moses occurs in Exodus 17, and is the story of the Israelites defeating the Amalekites.

As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side, one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset. (Exodus 17:11-12)

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- Moses stands on a hill discovering that if he has his hands raised the Israelites begin to gain ground, but if he drops his hands, then their enemies start to gain the upper hand.
- At the end of the story, a tired Moses is sitting down with his hands supported by his two trusted deputies.
- There is a verse at the beginning of this story that has something to say to us.

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Moses said to Joshua, "Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands." (Exodus 17:9)

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- You see it wasn't that Moses just lifted up his hands, but that he held in his hands a staff raised up to God!!
- We can remember that it was a staff that had turned into a snake as a sign to Moses that God had called him while he lived in the desert.

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Then the LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?"

"A staff," he replied. (Exodus 4:2)

Then the LORD said to him, "Reach out your hand and take it by the tail." So Moses reached out and took hold of the snake and it turned back into a staff in his hand.

(Exodus 4:4)

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- It was a staff that Moses was told to take to Egypt and perform miraculous signs with.

But take this staff in your hand so you can perform miraculous signs with it." (Exodus 4:17)

So Moses took his wife and sons, put them on a donkey and started back to Egypt. And he took the staff of God in his hand. (Exodus 4:20)

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- It was a staff that God had Moses encourage Aaron's faith with by using Aaron's staff to perform a miraculous sign to Pharaoh.

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "When Pharaoh says to you, 'Perform a miracle,' then say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh,' and it will become a snake." (Exodus 7:8-9)

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So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron threw his staff down in front of Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a snake. (Exodus 7:10)

Each one threw down his staff and it became a snake. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs. (Exodus 7:12)

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- It was a staff that God had Aaron use to change the water of the Nile into blood.

The LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron, 'Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt—over the streams and canals, over the ponds and all the reservoirs'-and they will turn to blood. Blood will be everywhere in Egypt, even in the wooden buckets and stone jars." (Exodus 7:19).

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- It was a staff that Moses had Aaron stretch out over the streams and canals of Egypt and frogs began to come out of the water and cover the land.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron, 'Stretch out your hand with your staff over the streams and canals and ponds, and make frogs come up on the land of Egypt.' "

(Exodus 8:5)

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- It was a staff that was used to change dust to gnats.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron, 'Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the ground,' and throughout the land of Egypt the dust will become gnats."

(Exodus 8:17)

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- It was a staff that was used to cause hail to fall upon Egypt

When Moses stretched out his staff toward the sky, the LORD sent thunder and hail, and lightning flashed down to the ground. So the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt; (Exodus 9:23)

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- It was a staff that was used to bring locusts upon the land

So Moses stretched out his staff over Egypt, and the LORD made an east wind blow across the land all that day and all that night. By morning the wind had brought the locusts; (Exodus 10:13)

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- It was a staff that the people were told to hold at the Passover

This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the LORD's Passover.

(Exodus 12:11)

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- And do you remember Jesus' instructions as to what His Disciples were to take with them?a staff!!

These were his instructions: "Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. (Mark 6:8)

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- After the escape from Egypt, stuck between the Red Sea and the advancing armies, Moses raised “what” and the waters of the sea parted? He raised a STAFF!!

Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground. (Exodus 14:16)

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- And when the people cried out for water, what did Moses strike a rock with and water flowed? A STAFF!!

The LORD answered Moses, "Walk on ahead of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink. So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. (Exodus 17:5-6)

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- A STAFF.....what is it about a staff?
- You see, Jesus had a staff but His staff turned into a “cross”.

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- Can you imagine Jesus walking through the roads and villages of Judea carrying a staff?
- Holding on to His staff knowing that it was signifying the cross He would soon die on.

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- Sometimes, gently caressing His staff contemplating Himself as the Good Shepherd about to lay down His life for His sheep.

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! (Philippians 2:8)

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- Sometimes, holding on tightly to His staff contemplating being mocked and struck repeatedly on the head with it.

and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. (Matt.27:29-30)

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- Sometimes wiping off His staff and contemplating what was ahead of Him.

This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. (Acts 2:23)

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For Jesus endured the cross knowing that HIS TRUE JOY WAS TO FOLLOW. Sitting down at the right hand of God, having the Father look at the marks on His hands, and knowing we were set free from sin and death.

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2)

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"who for the JOY set before him endured the cross"

- What was the JOY set before Jesus to have Him endure the cross?

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- Psalm 16:9-11 gives a partial answer I believe:

Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, (v.9)

- Here we have Christ, as Prophet, talking through David and displaying His faith.

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because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. (v.10)

- Here we see Christ KNOWING He will be resurrected in a Spiritual Body.

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You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand. (Psalm 16:11)

- We see that the Father will fill Jesus with joy in His presence and with eternal pleasures at His right hand.

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I also believe the JOY SET BEFORE HIM was seeing us
"saved"!!!

That we would be “in Him” and “with Him” to share
in those eternal pleasures at the Father’s right hand.

Jesus, had gone to a foreign land where He had lived,
suffered, died, arose, and ascended.

A land that He had set the captives free from!!

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- **WE TOO HAVE A STAFF –
the cross of Christ!!**

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. (Matthew 16:24)

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- In so many situations where we feel despair, guilt and hurt the cross stands as a sign of forgiveness and hope.

May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (Galatians 6:14)

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- In the moments when we feel worthless, the cross stands as a stunning picture of our worth to God.

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

(1 Corinthians 1:18)

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- It is a sign that whoever we are, whatever we feel we have done, such is the extent of his love for us that God gave up Jesus.

and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.
(Col. 1:20)

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- In the moments when we feel powerless, the cross stands as a reminder of what Jesus has done.
- Paul speaks about Jesus “having disarmed the powers and authorities” on the cross.

having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

(Colossians 2:14-15)

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We often sense that so many things have power over us - people, sickness, anxiety, events, etc - but if the powers really have been disarmed, then the truth is that we are not actually at their mercy, but can trust that somewhere in our situation, the overall power at work is that of God.

It may seem distant, mysterious, even baffling, but it is there.

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- And we have a message that many will not understand.

For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. (Philippians 3:18)

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- But we, like many others, must stay “near the cross of Jesus”.

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. (John 19:25)

- So that the message of the death and resurrection of Jesus can be carried.

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- As I started today's teaching, we saw that the battle was not going well for the Israelites when Moses took action.
- Things may not seem to be going well for us, the attacks may well come in various forms – this is the time to raise the staff, because unless we do, the outlook is even bleaker!

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- Let's now look at the end of the battle with the Amalekites.

Moses built an altar and called it The LORD is my Banner. He said, "For hands were lifted up to the throne of the LORD." (Exodus 17:15-16a)

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- We too have had an altar built.....
the cross where Christ was crucified.
- And “Hands” were lifted up to the throne of
God.....
the hands of Jesus nailed to the cross.
- And the sacrifice was perfect.....
spotless and without blemish.

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- And someday we, like Jacob, will “lean on our staff”.

By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff. (Heb.11:21)

..... and **WORSHIP!!!**

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- The staff here, which signifies how a Christian has put their trust in the death and resurrection of Christ at the cross.
- We put our trust in the cross!!
- We pick up our cross!!
- We lean and trust in the cross!!
- AND WORSHIP!!

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- THANK YOU JESUS
FOR THE CROSS!!!
- THANK YOU JESUS
FOR YOUR RESURRECTION!!!
- And all we can do is

WORSHIP!!!!!!!