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Lift Up Heavy Hands

When I was young, my grandma was already in her eighties. She was a godly woman and very knowledgeable of Scripture. We use to play a game where you think of a Bible character whose name begins with an "A" and the rest would try to guess who you had in mind. You would continue moving through the alphabet as the person who had guessed your character would then choose a character using the next letter.

On this particular day it was my turn and my letter was "H". By brothers and grandma guessed and guessed. When no one could guess who it was I was asked to reveal my Bible character. My character's name was Hur whom I had just recently learned about in Bible class. When grandma heard me say Hur, she let out an audible "awe" because she did not believe there was in fact a Bible character named Hur. Can you believe it?; I had stumped my grandma.

In Exodus 17:8-16 we have the story of Israel's defeat of the Amalekites. What makes the story so interesting is that while Israel fought Amalek in Rephidim, Moses stood on a hill above the battle with the rod of God in his hand.



"And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed."
Exodus 17:11

You can only imagine how tired Moses would become with his arm raised holding the rod of God. This is where Hur comes in.

"But Moses' hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun." Exodus 17:12

When I connect this story to 1 Thessalonians 5:14, it helps me understand Paul's point to "uphold the weak". There are times that fellow saints will become weak and the children of God have a responsibility to help support them. This is exactly what Aaron and Hur did when Moses grew physically tired. Moses needed help and Aaron and Hur gave him much needed support. Ultimately what was at stake was the win or loss of the battle.

Weaknesses are not limited to physical weakness, but can also be associated with some type of spiritual weakness. Paul certainly understood a person can become *"weary in well doing."* Galatians 6:9. Consider what he said in Galatians 6:1-2 *"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."*

Consider also: *"Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed."* Hebrews 12:12-13

May the Lord help us to lift up the hands of those who are weak, just like Aaron and Hur did.

The House of God

Jeff Himmel

Have you ever wondered where our English word “church” came from? The word evolved from the Old English *cirice*, which had its origins in the Germanic *kirika*, which was adapted from an ancient Greek term, *kyriakon*, meaning “the Lord’s [house].” You can detect a similar history of the word for “church” in many modern languages, from Swedish (*kyrka*) to Czech (*cirkev*) to Afrikaans (*kerk*). Even in Scottish dialect, a church is called a *kirk*.

Think on that for a moment: “church” derives from a word denoting the Lord’s house. What is the Lord’s house, Biblically speaking? In the Old Testament, “the house of God” is a common description of the tabernacle/temple (cf. Judges 18:31; 1 Kings 9:1). The New Testament, however, identifies God’s temple—His house—as His *people*. Paul wrote:

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:19-22)

Notice two pictures in this passage. Christians are described as God’s *temple*, a spiritual house in which He dwells (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Peter 4:4-5). And we are also described as God’s *household*, members of His family (cf. 1 John 3:1; 1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 10:21).

It shouldn’t surprise us, then, to find that the word “church” in the New Testament denotes, not a building or a location, but a group of people. In our English Bibles it translates the Greek word *ekklēsia*, meaning an assembly or congregation. The word is never used of a place of worship. It does sometimes mean a worship assembly, as in 1 Corinthians 14:34, [35](#) (so it’s not technically wrong to speak of “going to church” in that sense). But most often the New Testament applies this term to the people of God, either generally (all those who are saved in Christ) or locally (a community of believers in a particular place—a congregation).

By the way, that ancient word *ekklēsia* is also echoed in the word for “church” in several modern languages, including Spanish (*iglesia*), French (*église*), and Irish (*eaglais*).

But look again at Ephesians 2 and notice yet another picture: Christians are described as *citizens* in God’s kingdom (verse 19). In its universal, comprehensive sense, the church is sometimes referred to as God’s kingdom—those who have submitted themselves to the rule of God in their lives (cf. Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:6). The New Testament Greek word translated “kingdom” is *basileia*; and here, too, traces of the word survive in some modern languages: “church” in Latvian is *baznīca*; in Romanian it is *biserică*.

In just about any language today, the most common usage of the word for “church” is to describe a physical place of some sort. But the New Testament concept of the church is something far greater. What a privilege to be part of God’s family...to be a living stone in His temple...to be a citizen in His kingdom...to be a member of the “assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven” (Hebrews 12:23). That’s what it means to be in God’s church. Are you?