

Jehovah-Nissi... The Lord is My Banner

Introduction

This morning we in the third of our talks about the various names of God in the Bible. Each name brings out a characteristic of God that we can rely on. This morning, we come to a name of God that was, and is, given to us individually and as a church to encourage us not to quit, not to accept defeat, to claim back what the enemy has stolen, or seeks to steal, from us.

We will see that there is a banner we can see lifted up and that we can run to in every circumstance and problem and battle in life.

1. JEHOVAH-NISSI, the Lord is My Banner

The first mention of this name of God came as Moses, the man of God, was leading His people in the first war since the people had been led out of slavery in Egypt. The Amalekites were a sly, fierce enemy and had been sneaking up behind the children of Israel, killing the sick and the aged who were at the back of the huge movement of people that moved across the desert.

Moses, led of God, said it's time to fight this people and stop what they are doing. He put Joshua, his number two, as leader of the fighting and Moses climbed a hill and lifted his wooden rod above his head. A strange thing happened when he lifted the rod: Joshua and his army began winning. When, because of tiredness, he would drop the rod, the Amalekites would start winning. As soon as Joshua and his people saw the uplifted rod, victory would start happening.

At the end of the battle, which Joshua and his men won, Moses said this strange thing. Let's read it. Turn to Exodus 17:15-16 - 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."

Now, I want you to see the . . .

2. The History Of The Rod

You know, in the past years since I have been in America, I have noticed that, around the world, when people got mad with America they would burn effigies of the president, whether it was President Reagan, President Bush, President Clinton, or the now President Bush, and we would get mad, but not really get too worried. But, if they burned the flag, Old Glory, then you could have a war on your hands.

See, that flag has history and people love and can get passionate about it. It's not just the flag. After all, it's just a piece of multi colored material. It's what the flag represents that makes it unique and treasured. So it was with the rod of Moses. It had history attached to it and what it represented was important, no, vital to the children of Israel.

It first became a sign that Israel's God was a miracle working God when Moses first went to Pharaoh and demanded that the people be freed from slavery. God told him to take his rod with him. He was to throw the rod down in front of Pharaoh and it became a snake. He picked it up and it became a rod again. It became a sign to the children of Israel that God was with them and was a miracle working God. As they looked to Him, they were looking towards a miracle working God.

On another occasion, the rod became a sign of deliverance from adverse circumstances. As the children of Israel left Egypt, being set free by God's mighty hand, they came upon a circumstance

that called out for deliverance from certain death. They were surrounded by mountains on the right and the left. They were being pursued by Egypt's armies at the back. In front was the mighty Red Sea.

Moses called out to God and was told to go forward. He lifted that rod over the sea and the sea opened up. When all of the children of Israel were through, every man, woman, and child, every animal, every bird, Moses lifted that rod again and the sea came back down. Deliverance from extreme circumstances had happened. They had looked towards a deliverance-bringing God. From then on, that rod became a sign of God, my deliverer. Whenever they saw the rod, they remembered Jehovah Nissi, God my banner, my deliverer.

Then, on another occasion, the children of Israel had sinned and fallen away from God and God had sent in snakes to bite them and make them deathly sick. Moses repented on behalf of the people. He cried out to God to heal his people. God told Moses to make a bronze serpent and mold it around the rod. He was then to take it through the camp and cry out, "Look and live! Look and live!" And every one who looked to the serpent on the rod lived. They then rejoiced in God their healer. They cried out again, "Jehovah Nissi, the Lord my banner, healing my backsliding and my sickness."

So, you see, friends, this rod had significance. In the story we told where we have the first mention of the name of God, Jehovah Nissi, enemies had come against the children of Israel. I feel sure that Israel was shocked. They had been set free from Egypt and now they were set for all the blessings of freedom. They never expected any battles on the way to the Promised Land, much like us. We come to Jesus and everything is new and fresh and exciting and we don't expect enemies to come against us, but they do. Then we find fear and doubt and all sorts of negative feeling invading us.

So, where do we run when we need circumstances changed? Where do we run when we need deliverance? Where do we run when we need miracles? Where do we run when our souls are dry and parched? Where do we run when we need healing? Where do we run when we are in the midst of a battle and we are losing? Well, let me tell you about another man who climbed a mountain with another piece of wood. Let me talk a moment about . . .

3. The Significance of the Cross

On a hillside long ago, an old prophet stood and proclaimed some momentous words of prophecy and said, (Isaiah 11:10) "In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious." NIV He was speaking of Jesus, friends, Jesus standing as a banner for us to rally to.

Jesus himself said in John 12:31-33 – "Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die. NIV He was talking about dying on the cross.

It's not the cross, but what happened on the cross that causes us to rejoice, friends. There is no power in the cross as two pieces of wood. When we talk and sing of the cross, we are talking and singing about what that old cross represents. See, it represents the miracle power of God. It represents the fact that we were held as slaves to sin and the satanic powers of darkness.

But, here is the truth we live by, friends: JESUS IS STRONGER THAN SATAN AND SIN. On the cross and by the resurrection, Jesus smashed Satan's power.

Listen, this is the reality: Satan is powerful - Jesus is all powerful. He can take the broken and mend them. He can take the addicted and free them. He can take the sinful and forgive them. He can take people bound for hell and give them a new destination, heaven. He is the mighty miracle worker, our banner, our rallying point. I know this, I cannot face life without Him. Run to Jesus, friends.

Then, also, the cross represents Jesus, the one who believed you were worth fighting for. The cross represents the greatest battleground that has ever been, the place where Jesus took on the forces of Satan and evil. And He was fighting for you and me. He was fighting for our eternal lives.

And, you need to know, friends, Jesus won! Hey, our hero won the fight and Satan lost. There's one problem, though. Satan does not believe that he lost. He is still fighting as if he has a chance to win. He still wants to ruin our lives. Apostle Peter says " He prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking who he may devour."

Let me tell you, friends, we have to live in the power of what happened on the cross. Jesus won every one of your battles. Our problem often is that we let Satan beat us up. We believe his lies. He fights with accusations that you are not good enough, that you are a lousy Christian, a lousy prayer who doesn't pray enough, a lousy Bible reader who doesn't read enough, a lousy spouse, a lousy parent, a lousy worker, that you are a lousy everything.

Listen, friends. Beware of making agreements with the devil. When he says you're lousy, you say, "Yes, you're right." You agree and down goes your head, and you are defeated. If you are going to agree with anyone, run to the cross and agree with Jesus. He feels you're worth coming to earth for. He feels you're worth dying for. He feels you're worth fighting for. He thinks you're awesome. He knows you can win. He knows the plans He has for you, to bless you and to prosper you.

Don't go making agreements with the devil. Run to Jesus. Agree with Jesus. You will be agreeing with the winner, our hero, Jesus. You will be clinging to the champion, Jesus. You will look to the banner, the cross of Christ, and divine strength and victory will gush into your being. You will win, because in Christ we are winners.

As you look to the power of the cross, you will determine not to quit. You will prove your victory comes from clinging to all that happened on that cross, because Jesus won there for you and me. He won! Hallelujah.

Then, one other thing. If you believed Satan's lies, you entered an agreement to allow the devil to beat you up and take you away from God. The cross represents to us a place to run to in our times of slipping away from God.

In years gone by, we used to be afraid of backsliding. By that we meant slipping back into our old ways and away from God. We don't hear the word 'backsliding' much these days. It still happens, though. The children of Israel were frequently doing this. That was the thing that they did that resulted in the fiery snakes being sent by God to bite them and make them deathly sick. Remember, we talked about this earlier. Remember, we said that Moses cried out to God for them to be healed and he made a bronze serpent, wrapped it around the pole, and went through the camp shouting, "Look and live!"

Oh, my slipping friends here today. You know that you're soul sick. You have fallen, slipped away from God. You are not where you were or where you should be. You know that there is some sin or backsliding that is separating you from God right now.

I remember when I was a teenager, I had walked with the Lord for a few years and I was going through teenage things and was wandering from the Lord. I had been up to my neck in His word and prayer and was at church whenever the doors opened. One Tuesday night, I remember it so well, I had come home from work and had fallen asleep in the chair. My day awoke me saying, "Hey, it's time for the prayer meeting. Are you coming?" and I remember saying, "No, I am not coming tonight." I still remember the look of shock and disappointment on my dad's face. He went without me and I went out and climbed the hill at the back of our house and I began to weep and weep. That night I ran back to the cross and begged forgiveness. I could not stand the thought of being away from God.

And, friends, I want to tell you the place of forgiveness and soul healing this morning. It's the cross of Christ. Look and live! Back to the cross. Cry out for forgiveness. You're coming back to the place of a brand new start.

There are some here, and it's been, oh, so long since you came to the cross, oh, so long since you felt the nearness of Jesus, oh, so long since you felt His nearness deep down in your spirit. Oh, He is here today. He wants to heal you, refresh you. He is here, He is here. Look and live!

Now, there's one other thing that the Holy Spirit demanded I include. The cross represents a place for you to run to on behalf of your children or other family members who are wandering or are away from God. Turn to Isaiah 49:22-25. This is what the sovereign LORD says:

"See, I will beckon to the Gentiles, I will lift up my banner to the peoples; they will bring your sons in their arms and carry your daughters on their shoulders. Then you will know that I am the LORD; those who hope in me will not be disappointed." Can plunder be taken from warriors, or captives rescued from the fierce? But this is what the LORD says: "Yes, captives will be taken from warriors, and plunder retrieved from the fierce; I will contend with those who contend with you, and your children I will save." NIV

I cannot spend much time here, friends, but I have to tell you that you can run to the cross of Christ and cry out for your children. You may be living for God, but your children are not. You pray and little seems to happen. Things may even have seemed to get worse after you prayed. It may be sex, money, drugs, partying, or sheer apathy, but your kids are not walking with Jesus. The enemy is tormenting you with thoughts that he has them and that you nor Jesus will ever get them back.

But this scripture says, "Those who hope in God will not be disappointed." It does not say that those who hope in God may not be disappointed. No, it comes right out and says, "Those who hope in God will not be disappointed."

Your kids, grandkids, nieces, nephews may be making terrible choices right now. They may be into a load of illicit things. They may be living on the streets or drinking themselves to death. But the whole story has not been written yet. Don't let the devil tell you it's all over. Pray that Jesus will unfurl the banner of the cross over them. Determine that you are going to win this battle and they shall return home to Jesus. Pray the fulfillment of the promise of this scripture in Isaiah 49: 25 - But this is what the LORD says: "Yes, captives will be taken from warriors, and plunder retrieved from the fierce; I will contend with those who contend with you, and your children I will save."

Now, let me close out here.

Conclusion

Jehovah Nissi . . . the Lord my banner. The cross of Jesus is our rallying point. Jesus, our great hero, our champion, our lover, our king.

You know, the rod of Moses disappeared with the death of Moses. We don't read of the children of Israel ever worshiping the rod of Moses. They don't wear effigies of the rod around their neck or have rod ornaments around the house. But, they still worship and respect and trust Jehovah Nissi, the Lord my banner. They worship the God of the rod.

And, this morning, I don't want you leaving here worshiping the cross, friends, but I do want you realizing what that old cross represents. The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:18 – "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." NIV The cross represents power. It represents Jesus is our banner. It represents a champion we can run to. It represents a war won. It represents stolen family and stuff being returned. It represents a cause worth dying for.

See, He is alive and remains our rallying point:

Jehovah Nissi, the Lord our banner.