

JEHOVAH-NISSI: The Lord, My Banner



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Text: Exodus 17

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Series: Drawing Near to God through His Name

Wednesday night Prayer Meeting

Introduction: Open your Bibles to **Exodus 17**. “Ancient armies carried standards of banners that served as marks of identification”.¹ The people of Israel belonged to the Lord. A banner, like a flag, was something that could be seen from a long distance, and it was there to rally the people. Usually the flag was carried by the army who protected the people.

In Exodus 17, we are going to be introduced to a Name of God that is very reassuring to all of us. “*Jehovah Nissi: The Lord is My Banner*”. We should always be able to see with the eyes of faith that the Lord will **protect** His people. He says, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you” (**Heb. 13:5**). God will defend you. As God says in **Isaiah 54:17**, “no weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed”.

In spite of a lack of water and a lack of protection, God’s people of old were never in any real danger. We are going to find out that Christ, the Lord, is our Banner. He’s our provider and protector!

Let’s read **Exodus 17** (ESV) — “All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. 2 Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water to drink.” And Moses said to them, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?” 3 But **the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses** and said, “Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?” 4 So Moses cried to the LORD, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.” 5 And the LORD said to Moses, “Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6 **Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb**, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.” And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7 And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the LORD by saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?”

“8 **Then Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim.** 9 So Moses said to Joshua, “Choose for us men, and go out and fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand.” 10 So **Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought with Amalek**, while **Moses, Aaron, and Hur** went up to the top of the hill. 11 Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. 12 But Moses’ hands grew weary, so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it, while

¹ Ann Spangler. *Praying the Names of God*, 109.

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. 13 And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword. 14 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.” 15 And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, The LORD Is My Banner. 16 saying, “A hand upon the throne of the LORD! The LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.”

Moses didn't know what to do. The people of Israel were **furious**. They were hungry. The people were **not trusting** the Lord. Let's consider what that looks like. Verse 3, Listen to what the people were saying to Moses, Verse 3, “the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, “Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?”

In other words, they were thirsty and needy and vulnerable. Do you ever feel that way? They felt so needy that they concluded the Lord did not love them or care enough to take care of them. What did they do? Instead of **praying**, they **complained**. What did God do in spite of their complaining? He quenched their thirst from a Rock!

NT Commentary

God provided for these people. Listen to Paul's commentary on **Exodus 17**. It's found in **1 Corinthians 10:3-4** (ESV) — “and all ate the same spiritual food [manna] 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.” – Paul suggests that the pre-existent Christ was the one who sustained the people with food and water.²

The Rock of Mount Horeb had enough water to quench the thirst of 2 million people. God can make water come out of rocks if He wants. But the spiritual Rock was Jesus Christ. It was Christ who was loving and caring for His people's needs.

First application:

I. Christ is our Rock of Horeb – He'll provide for all our needs (vs. 1-7).

1. Instead of complaining, we ought to **pray** (Phil. 4:19). Do not think that the Lord has forgotten about you or that He's become distracted. God is always 1000% engaged with you because He can be nothing else. He is omniscient which means He is 100% aware of all things at all times.

Realize, it is sinful to complain. **Verse 3**, “the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses”.

Let's not make this as if these are the most carnal people. With all our comforts, I can't imagine any of us acting any differently.

§ We complain when our air condition or our car goes out.

§ We complain when circumstances are difficult or trials come.

² Carson, D. A. (1994). *New Bible commentary : 21st century edition* (4th ed.) (Ex 17:1-7). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press.

§ We complain about our children, our job, our spouse, our health...

Are there grumblings and discontentment and unbelief still in us? We still have hearts that struggle with unbelief.

Of course the Lord answered even in spite of the people's complaining. **Verses 5-7**, "And the LORD said to Moses, "Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6 **Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.**" And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7 And he called the name of the place Massah [*testing*] and Meribah [*quarrelling*], because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the LORD by saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?""

Paul says in **Philippians 4:19**, "And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

Water out of a Rock?

Now it must have been a crazy sight for those Israelites seeing water come out of the Rock. But God can provide for His people in whatever ways He wants to.

Child of God, God loves you and is going to provide for all of your needs!

2. Complaining is a **sin** (**Phil. 2:14**). So be careful about complaining. Don't do it. Plain and simple, complaining is a sin. **Philippians 2:14** (ESV) — "Do all things without grumbling or complaining."
3. All difficult circumstances are there to test our faith and to **grow** us into the image of Christ (vs. 6b-7; Rom. 8:29; Jms. 1:2-5).

God's purpose for "all things" is to "conform us to the image of His Son Jesus Christ" (Romans 8:29). Can I ask you a personal question about your faith? Where are you spiritually? God wants you to know. And sometimes the way He lets you know where you are spiritually is through a test.

Testing of True Faith

Heart-probing and faith-testing experiences were in God's design for ancient Israel during their journey between Egypt and the Promised Land.³

Verse 6b-7, "and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink." And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7 And he called the name of the place Massah [*testing*] and Meribah [*quarrelling*], because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the LORD by saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?""

Every once in a while we have tests. Actually, they are about every day! The place where there was no water was called **Massah**. Massah means "*testing*". God meant it to be a test, but the people turned it into **Meribah**, which means *quarrelling or complaining*.

Do you have some Massahs in your life? Don't turn them into Meribahs. The tests of our faith are not for God. God already knows where we are spiritually.

³ Hughes, R. B., & Laney, J. C. (2001). *Tyndale concise Bible commentary*. The Tyndale reference library (37). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

Tests grow our faith IF we learn to PRAY instead of COMPLAIN! I'll prove it to you from James 1:2-5.

James 1:2–5 (ESV) — “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. 4 And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.”

II. Christ is our Banner – He protects us in every circumstance (vs. 8-16).

In Exodus 17 the people of Israel were in a bind. Of course this bind was designed by God to test their faith, but it was a major bind nonetheless. There were 2 million people who were well fed with Manna each morning. But they lacked something else. They were **without water**. And they were complaining. Then, even worse, there were **enemies** in the wilderness that wanted to destroy the people – the notorious Amalekites.

So Israel was thirsty and felt vulnerable and forsaken. In short they felt like someone living in a dangerous neighborhood without a police force. They felt like someone who had no army to protect them.

But God's message to them and us tonight is: The Lord is our banner. He's our sign of victory. He's our protector. He's the One who cares and loves us and will be a shield for us from all our enemies.

What is a banner?

What is a banner? It's like a flag. In the days of Moses, it would have been made out of wood or metal. It was a symbol that the army was coming. The victory was near. The people could feel secure.

So let's look at this battle more closely.

A. There was an **enemy** (vs. 8).

“8 Then Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim”.

The Amalekites are known throughout the Old Testament as the enemies of the Lord. Remember the great enemy of Israel that King Saul refused to kill, King Agag, the **Amalekite**. The prophet Samuel had to put him to death. And then remember the evil villain in the book of Ruth? It's Haman the **Amalekite**.

We have two great enemies. You have enemies in your life.

1. Do you know who your worst enemy is? **You!**

Romans 7:18–25 (ESV) — “For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. 21 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, 23 but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.”

Evil lies close at hand, even when you want to do right! What must you do? You must war against the sinful desires in you by putting them to death. Forsake them and refocus.

Principles to consider:

§ **Put Sin to Death**

Romans 8:13 (ESV) — “For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”

Colossians 3:5 (ESV) — “Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”

1 Peter 2:11 (ESV) — “Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.”

§ **Fight the Good Fight**

1 Timothy 6:12 (ESV) — “Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life...”

§ **Put Off / Put On Principle**

Ephesians 4:22–25 (ESV) — “put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, [and] 24 ... put on the new self”

§ **Flee temptation**

2 Timothy 2:22 (ESV) — “So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.”

1 Corinthians 10:14 (ESV) — , “flee from idolatry”

2. Another enemy is the **World!** As John says “Love not the world” (1 John 2:15-17). What do we stand against in the world? – “the lust of the flesh [PLEASURE], and the lust of the eyes [POSSESSIONS], and the pride of life [PRAISE OF MEN, POPULARITY], is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

The Amalekites opposed God’s people for many years to come, and so it is with us. Our flesh and this world will oppose us until Jesus comes!

B. There was an **army** (vs. 9).

9 So Moses said to Joshua, “Choose for us men, and go out and fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand.”

There were those who were called to fight for Israel! We are all called to spiritual warfare in God’s plan. There is strength in numbers. One of the important ways of defeating the enemies in your life is through the local church. You need this fellowship of believers.

Ephesians 4:15–16 (ESV) — “Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love”. Of course chapter 6 of Ephesians is all about spiritual warfare. But you must never forget that the greatest way to equip yourself is not to fight alone, but with the Body of Christ.

C. There was **strategy** (vs. 10-12).

10 So Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought with Amalek, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. 11 Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. 12 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.

Prayer is the strategy! Go forward on your knees! Raise your hands in prayer the way Moses did. Don't give up. Ask others to hold your hands up if you get tired. God is faithful to fulfill his word.

Pray for your leaders! Make sure your leaders are praying!

D. There was a **victory** (vs. 13-14).

13 And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword. 14 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven."

1 Corinthians 15:57, "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

E. There was a **reality** (vs. 15-16)

15 And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, The LORD Is My Banner, 16 saying, "A hand upon the throne of the LORD! The LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

Moses lifted up his hands to the throne of the LORD and there was victory! There will be a war with Amalek, but it will be with the Lord!

Conclusion: What is your battle right now? Do you struggle with a life dominating sin? Are you struggling with bitterness? Loneliness? Difficulty accepting poor health? Depression? Hopelessness? The list goes on and on and if I haven't named your battleground you can just fill in the blank.

You know what you are at war with and you know that in the heat of battle it is hard to see the victory at the end. Remember **Jehovah Nissi**. Call upon Him! Raise your hands in prayer the way Moses did. Don't give up. Ask others to hold your hands up if you get tired. God is faithful to fulfill his word. When your battle is over you will have the right to replace your enemy's flag with your own. Set it on high for all to see that Jehovah Nissi is your God who has secured your victory.