

Yahweh Nissi: I Am Your Banner. You Are the Victor.

By Bobby Schuller

We're going through the names of God in a series, and this is important because when God gives us His name, He's saying this is so much a part of me that it's never not true, it's never not available, it's always there. And today the name that we're talking about is Jehovah Nissi, or Yahweh Nissi. I am the Lord your Banner, or as we might say more colloquially, I am the Lord your flag. I am your flag.

And this is an important thing because the banner is a flag that goes into a war. It is the flag that is carried by soldiers that symbolizes all the other wars that have been fought and shows we've been through a lot, we're here and we're about to do something great. And so in the ancient and even in the modern world, the flag or the banner is very important.

And God wants you to know He is the banner flying over your life, and the scriptures assure us that the banner over me is love. That the flag that is flying over your life is not condemnation, the flag that's flying over your life is not one of bondage, it's not addiction, it's certainly not poverty, it's not the things that people have said about you, the banner that flies over you is love and this love is going to carry you through to victory.

Today, I want you to know that whatever battle it is that you're facing, big or small, whatever it is you're going through, I want you to know you and God are going to get through this together. He never leaves us. He never forsakes us. He's so strong and He loves us. Amen? He's our flag.

There was a great Ted Talk by Roman Mars, who has a great radio show on design, and he spends about twenty minutes talking about flag design. And if that doesn't sound boring, it sounds like it would be so boring. It's amazing. I would recommend after this, not now, checking out this video.

And the basic point of this video, this speech he gives in Vancouver, is that people love flags. We do. We have flags for countries, we have flags for cities, we have flags for sports teams. He talks about his favorite flags, his favorite all time flag, you ready for this? Amsterdam. Really cool flag. Red, black with three St. Andrews crosses through the middle. And what he says is flags stand for something more than the thing itself. Flags have rolled up into them an idea, a place that is home, memories. We see within it something much more than the symbol. That's why burning an American flag is such an awful thing to us because the flag isn't just a piece of cloth. Within it is our whole history. An idea. Democracy. Freedom. Liberty. Freedom of expression. Freedom to make your own decisions. Limited government. And we have within the flag itself the ideas of a people, of a place, of a home. I remember

when I lived overseas, I would see the flag like over an embassy or something and after months of being overseas would feel a longing for home because the flag was more than just a sheet.

And God wants you to know that the greatest flag in your life is His namesake. And that flag that flies is big and awesome, and it stands. And whatever thing it is that you're going through, people love flags because flags are a symbol of ideas. And the idea, the power, the presence of God has never left you.

Recently I was with Haven. In fact right now, in Castaway's Park in Newport Beach there is this great display of American flags. I walk there often to pray and I was there and just was overcome by how many amazing flags were there. Someone told me there was actually 1,776 of them, in fact. Quite appropriately. And each flag represents someone in the military, most of whom have given their lives for our country. So you see a symbol of sacrifice. As Jesus said, "no greater love has any man than he lay down his life for his friends." And so you see many of these veterans who died in order that we could have life and freedom and safety and liberty and first responders. And so it was so powerful walking through, not only because it was beautiful and it was sunny and you were near the ocean, but each flag represents a person. Someone who gave so much so that I could have so much, and so my kids could have so much.

And so the flag itself was so overwhelming, so I made a little home video and I brought my daughter, Haven, and I told her about the importance of the flag, and so I put this little video together on my phone on the airplane last night, and I want you to see it. It's really nice.

(VIDEO ROLL IN)

Bobby: So beautiful, isn't it. All these heroes. There's flags everywhere. Wow, look at that. What do you think, Ha?

Haven: I think this is amazing. It's like I can't even count how many. There's like a thousand flags.

Bobby: Lots of them, that's for sure. A lot of flags. Okay. There's a lot of love, Haven. There's a lot of love.

Haven: Today, I learned that lots of people died for our country. And we should be proud that they did it for our freedom and liberty.

(END OF VIDEO)

Yes. Yes.

So when we think about the American flag for us as Americans, we're really tied up in our flag, in a lot of ways. It's important to us as a culture because within the flag, she even said it there, right? Many people died for our freedom and our liberty. So people love flags. No matter what they are, they just adore flags. Why? Because the flag is a symbol of victory. It's a symbol of victory.

And so when we look to God, He says over us that when all flags have disappeared, when everyone has vanished, when every border

doesn't exist anymore, and every people group is gone, there will be one flag that will fly forever and that is the name of the Lord. And that name is strong and it is good and it is love.

God loves you, and He wants you to know; maybe you come today and you are going through a battle. Everybody's fighting something big and small. I believe it. I've been a pastor long enough to know whether you know it or not, everybody's got a little something they're facing. Maybe you're coming here today and you've got a bill you don't know how to pay. And maybe you're going through a divorce. Maybe you just got fired. Maybe you lost your business. Maybe you're going through a lawsuit. Maybe somebody flipped you off on the way here today and you're still thinking about it. How dare they. I'm on my way to church. I will pray for them.

We all have battles big and small that we're going through, but the Lord wants you to know whatever it is that you're facing this week or in life in general, if its sickness, poverty, He wants you to know you are going to have the victory, so don't give up. Endure! He's going to give you everything you need to endure whatever attack the enemy is sending upon you.

This name, I am the Lord your banner, is only mentioned once in the Bible, but it's an important one because it comes in a famous story. When the people of Israel are attacked by a group of soldiers called the Amalekites.

So Moses has an interesting story. Moses, in the time of Egypt, barely made it as a baby. In those days, Pharaoh was so upset that these slaves he had made out of the people of Israel were getting so big that he decided he was going to start killing their children so that he would keep their numbers down. Moses' mother, who was Jewish, took Moses to save his life and put him in a little basket in the Nile River. This child, on the river, made his way to the palace of Pharaoh. And as a historic irony, the very babies that Pharaoh was trying to kill, was put into Pharaoh's house because Pharaoh's daughter, a princess, adopted this little Hebrew baby and made Moses her child.

So Moses grows up as a prince, an Egyptian prince, but he's also Hebrew! So he's in this weird place where he's got an incredible amount of power and influence and he knows Pharaoh personally, and yet his own people are enslaved. And what you see is that all of Moses' life will be a struggle. That's true of every great life, by the way. Can you think of one great person that hasn't gone through lots of struggle? I can't.

So Moses was called to a great struggle because Moses was called to a great life. If you're going through a struggle right now, that means you have an incredible purpose and calling on your life. And can I tell you even if it's self-inflicted that's true. A lot of Moses' issues were stupid things that he did and he didn't need to do. God will carry you through that, too. His banner over you is love.

So Moses grows up and it's just a constant struggle. He murders a guy trying to defend one his own people and then runs away, and as he's in hiding, he gets married and he wanders into a cave and it's there in the cave he sees God in a burning bush and God says 'Moses, I've heard the cry of my people and you're going to go to Pharaoh and tell him to let my people go.' And Moses says 'okay, and who will I say is sending me? Who are you?' And then God gives Moses his name, 'I Am that I Am. Tell them I Am sent you. I have not forgotten my covenant with my people that they will be blessed, and they will be a blessing to the whole world, and through them will come the salvation of the whole world.

So Moses then says okay I'll go. And God says okay, 'the staff you're holding in your hand. What are you holding?' He said 'I'm holding a staff.' He says 'throw it on the ground.' He throws it on the ground and it turns into a snake. Moses freaks out, of course, because not only is it a snake but his staff turned into a snake. He runs away and then God says 'grab the snake by the tail' and Moses looks at God and says you grab him by the tail. He picks up the snake, it turns into a staff again, and you watch as the staff, which becomes essentially the symbol, the banner, like a flag for the Hebrew people becomes a constant source of power.

With the staff he does this again the snake thing with Pharaoh. He uses the staff to part the Nile. He strikes a rock and water comes out. And finally you get to the battle of the Amalekites.

So God calls.. God through a long story, if you don't know the story watch Ten Commandments with Charlton Heston, it's terrific. It's the best version. If you disagree with me, you're wrong, you haven't seen it. It's the best one. Everybody knows that. That's not even a debate. Why are you even debating?

So the Hebrew people are freed from Egypt. This huge mass of slaves is leaving the most powerful country in the world, and where are they going? To a land of promise given to them by the Lord. And you see as the journey from Egypt to the Promised Land is not only long, but very difficult. And early on, the Amalekites attack the Hebrew people just after they've crossed the Red Sea, and there they are, Amalekites attacked them and Moses says to Joshua, his general, 'okay Joshua, you take the men and you lead them into battle and I'm going to go up on that hill and I am going to pray.' So Moses goes up with Aaron and Hur, his two sidekicks, and he raises his arms and he raises that staff. And as his hands are in the air, they have victory. And as his hands get weak and fall, they begin to lose. So he throws them up again and then the victory is coming, because this battle goes on for hours. As he gets weak and they're trembling, and they start to fall, the Hebrew people begin to lose.

So Hur and Aaron notice this and they create like a little stone chair, so Moses sits down on the chair. Whoa. I need more squats. Moses sits down in the chair, and.. does it look like I'm sitting right now? Because of the robe, right? Good. My quads are on fire. Woo! And he

raises his arms and Aaron.. okay this is not.. P90X. He raises his arms. Aaron holds one arm, Hur holds the other and they stay up in the air until the sun rises. All through the night the battle rages. And because he kept his hands up in praise, in prayer, in surrender to God, they had the victory. This wouldn't be the last battle but the first of many battles that they would face.

Can I say something, by the way? Maybe you come here and you feel as though you're under attack spiritually. Whatever it is you're going through. Or you're going through something difficult and you're asking God, why did you do this to me? God did not send the Amalekites. In fact, He cursed them and said because they attacked my people, their name will be blotted out.

And this is what you need to learn from this story, first of all, is that God calls people to greatness all the time, but that doesn't mean they're not going to struggle. Just because God has called you to the Promised Land doesn't mean you won't come under attack. In fact very often the struggle and the journey of getting to the Promised Land is the thing that prepares you to inherit the thing you're going to. And even more importantly, just because you're attacked doesn't mean He isn't with you. And we can feel that way. When we're going through the trial, pain makes time feel so long, doesn't it. When you're really going through the trial it can feel as though that clock is ticking backwards. And God wants you to know whatever it is you're going through, it's not because of

your sin, or because you made a mistake; He's not cursing you, He's not attacking you. He wants you to know that He is going to carry you through to victory, even if you've messed up. It's called grace, and it's the greatest gift we've ever been given, the love of God, despite our flaws and our shortcomings.

You're going to have the victory. Doesn't mean you're not going to have a struggle. And very often each struggle is harder than the next. What we don't realize is that that struggle is the thing that makes you stronger. So if you hear anything I say, I want you to know you and God are going to get through this to victory. You and God are going to get through this! And you're going to have the victory. So hold your ground, and keep moving forward.

Paul talks about the armor of God, and before he does, he said for our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against.. oh I don't have it memorized, something like rulers, principalities and powers of the air. Bible nerds, is that right? Can you just raise your hand? It's not against flesh and blood, it's a spiritual battle. It's a spiritual battle. By the way in those days, when Paul is writing in the Roman world, war looked very different than it does after the invention of the machine gun and artillery. Modern warfare after World War I, it changed a lot. During the Roman days and medieval days, war was almost always fought in lines, and most of the fighting was done may lay style – swords, spears, some bows and arrows and things. And what's funny is when you watch movies,

you'll see like Braveheart take, for example, you see like the Scotsman and the English, and they're screaming, right? And they come running at each other, full blast in a sprint and just goes (BA BA BA BA BA BA BA) like people are falling. It doesn't happen that way, historically. Rather, they typically march, and as they get closer to each other, they slow down sometimes, and sometimes they'll charge and they'll hit each other, but then they'll kind of bounce back.

And then what happens is you have this.. this is a theory, because nobody really knows because we don't have any medieval battles on video. It's really weird. We just have some writings and stories. But what happens is you have the two front lines facing each other, and there's kind of a no man's land of like four to eight feet where there's prodding and stabbing and throwing and hitting, and one guy jumps in and he hits and then he either dies or then he jumps back, and then another guy hits so just kind of does this. In fact, you can see it today, like when I was in Greece not that long ago, there was a riot. You'd see the line of police with their shields and their batons, and then the rioters, and they're doing this kind of a thing, but there's like a gap there. And that's what would happen in may lay combat.

And so typically the dying that would happen in war wasn't usually when people were standing their ground, rather it was when the line broke. In warfare you call this routing. So what happens is a line breaks and the people run, and then the other line, the opposition gets excited

and then they just start charging and cutting people down. This is so important because what's true in physical battle is also true in spiritual battle.

In the physical battle, the thing that killed people wasn't as much the sword and the spear as much as panic. Imagine, for a second, most soldiers in the ancient world were not soldiers. They were bakers with like a shield and a makeshift spear, okay? And imagine, you've got a line of people, you got like Joe from McDonald's and Nathan from Blockbuster Video, and here you are a mechanic or something, and you guys are just with your spears and your shields, and all of a sudden you see an arrow or a spear go into Joe's face and he just dies right there. What are you feeling?

So then the guy over here kind of closes in the gap like you're supposed to do, and then he dies. And then Nathan goes down. And then that gets closed in, and you're still kind of doing your fighting but then this guy panics and he turns and runs, and then the guy next to him runs, and then you look over and like ten people on this side are running and you're just standing there like an idiot. What do you do? And you run, of course.

So what happens is if you could see those ancient battles like with a drone, you'd see like a whole line when one guy runs, usually the whole.. it takes about ten seconds and it just goes (G G G G G G G G G G) because if you're in that last fifty percent that are still standing your

ground, you're dead. That's why the famous axiom a legion is only strong as his weakest link is true. One guy runs, it makes the whole thing weak.

And here's what I want to say to you. That fighting battles means standing your ground. And you really have to hear this. It's not just for you. It's for those who are next to you fighting the same battle. You having the victory in your life is not just about you having a victory, it's about everyone else who's fighting the same battle having a victory, too.

So when you're fighting that battle, and you run out of energy, don't forget you have friends, and family members, and even strangers and coworkers who are watching you fight that battle, and you just might be giving them the hope and strength they need to keep fighting themselves. In other words, I'm proud of you because what you're doing as you fight your battle is you're leading. You're leading by bleeding. Man that's good.

The thing that kills people in a battle is not swords and spears, its panic. Its fear. It's running away. And you're tougher than that. You may feel like you're about to give up, like you're going to collapse, just keep fighting five seconds longer. I want you to know something – you might be afraid, but I want you to know the enemy is afraid, too. He is afraid too because his future is sealed. All he has left in life is to make life worse for you. But you are going to win that fight because the banner of love, the name of the Lord, the name of Jesus is a strong name. It is a strong name and it is a name that will have victory over your battle.

So stand your ground and don't give up the victory. Stand your ground. The enemy is scared, too. The enemy will want to remind you of your past. Remind you of all the ways that you failed, all the times you gave up before. He'll want to remind you of all the things.. all the ways you messed up. He'll want to make you feel guilty and ashamed. He'll say God has left you because remember that thing you did? There's no way He'd be with you. You're a mess up. You're a screw up. These are rally calls. This is the enemy trying to get you to run. God is with you, He is your banner, and He's never left you.

So when the enemy reminds you of your past, you be sure to remind him of his future. It is not good. Your future is great. So stand your ground. Amen? God has not left you. You have so much power! And very often, the struggles that we face in life teach us just how tough we are. You don't know it, but when you go from one victory to the next, yes you might come out bleeding and scratched, but you look down at yourself and you say I won one more battle, and you watch as the fear and worry in your life turns into peace, calm, and strength.

That's why when Paul talks about the armor of God, the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the feet shod with peace for the gospel, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the Bible, that you see everything is in the front. There's nothing in the back. That means, the armor of God is for when you're facing your battles. It is so important that in the battles of life, so much

of it is just standing your ground or moving forward. Don't panic, don't run. The victory is a lot closer than you think.

Remember, even when you look at this armor, whether it's on the real battlefield in ancient Rome or today, where is the battle really happening? Right up here. It's in your head. The battle is in the mind. Fear is something that's happening in your body. And if you can learn to move toward the thing you're afraid of, you will see how much power you really have, my friend, and it is a lot.

That's why your imagination can be your greatest advantage, or your biggest handicap. Watch your thoughts. Many times we think about what I would say to that person that flipped me off on my way to church. Oh I'll tell you what I would say to them. I've got a good one liner. We think about all the things that this person did to us, or how they didn't thank us. Sometimes you're dwelling on something somebody did to you a year ago. It's still bugging you. Or maybe you're dwelling on your own faults, or your own weaknesses, or all the ways you could fail. Change those negative thoughts and become someone who can, in fact, use your imagination to dream.

There is something really powerful about day dreaming. My teachers used to hate it when I day dreamed, but I realize as an adult now, day dreaming is one of the most productive things I do. There's something really powerful about writing something down on a cocktail napkin and imagining what's possible in your life. And the more you

dream, even if it's not something you're actually going to do, it just kind of opens up your mind to think about a bigger life than the one you are living and that is where faith is born.

So you're going through a lot. I'm sorry. And I want you to know that a lot of the challenges you're facing are not from God. But one of the things we don't realize, sometimes, is the pain of living and the pain of our challenges are often birthing pains, as Paul calls them. Birthing pains. We don't realize it at the time, but God wants you to know that because that makes all the difference, doesn't it. A woman in labor, she doesn't go God, well she might. Why is this happening to me? She's incredible, there's no doubt that's incredible pain, and it's probably the most painful thing she's ever faced in her life. Undergirding it is a sense of hope and expectation for a new life and a new member of a family.

And you may not know it, but there is a purpose to your pain. There's a purpose to your pain. The pain is a birthing pain. And out of your struggle, something new is going to be born into your life. And you're going to look back and you're going to say it was totally worth it.

You see those people that left Egypt, they left Egypt with the mentality and the heart of slaves but they arrived in the Promised Land with power and freedom. They left Egypt with the mentality of slaves. They were constantly whining to Moses. A lot of them were like 'I want to go back to Egypt.' And Moses would say no, we have a Promised Land to get to, God has called us, and they fought battles, they faced hunger,

starvation, thirst, the desert. They had to cross waters and fight giants, but when they arrived, they arrived a new, better people. A called people, a refined people, a people birthed out of struggle! And the thing we learn is that an easy life is a not a good life. A good life is one that is birthed out of the fires of a crucible. Out of the pressure of living. That the struggles we face, though they may not be from God, God will make you stronger, tougher, more joyful and more hopeful. You're going to leave whatever battle it is you're going through with a bolder, brighter vision of your future because you're going to see just how much you have within.

It's not about an easy life, it's about a victorious life and that's what you're going to have. God's given you everything you need. It's better to pray for a stronger heart than it is to pray for an easier life because an easy life is not a good life. And the good life is difficult. But you will have the courage and the willpower to endure, and I'm so proud of you. These struggles are going to make you stronger.

Am I allowed to quote Machiavelli in church? I hope so. Machiavelli made a great point: "The sinews of war are not gold but good soldiers for gold alone will not procure good soldiers but good soldiers will always procure gold." What does that mean? It means that an easy life is not going to give you a victorious life, but rather these struggles of the spiritual warfare's you're going through are going to make you deeper, wider, stronger, smarter.

Maybe you were born into a slavery mindset like the Hebrews in Egypt. God is birthing you out of that. To be smarter than you've ever been and more victorious. And I want you to know that it was the struggle that made them free. So though God didn't put this struggle on you, more than likely, He's going to get you through. He is your banner, and that banner is love. So He just speaks over you blessing and favor. He's not here to condemn you. He's here to lift you up. He's here to see you through to victory. Amen?

You're going to make it. So don't give up, don't turn, but keep moving and move forward. And I can't wait to celebrate with you when you get to victory, and you will. It's closer than you think. Amen.