

**GOD FIGHTS THE BATTLES AND  
WE SHOUT THE VICTORIES**  
Jeremiah 51:10-14

March 31, 2023

As I was seeking employment to earn money before going off to college, Mr. Johnson, a neighbor on the block, told me that his company was hiring. As I sat before the interviewer, I shared that Mr. Johnson sent me to apply for the position. Initially, I believed that I received the job based upon my own merits and because of my own abilities. Yes, I did my best in the interview, however, I later realized that Mr. Johnson was the banner or authority under which I received the job. It was by his hand that I was successful.

Earlier in the chapter, God declared, “I will raise up against Babylon...” Babylon’s doom and destruction was already set in motion. God proclaimed complete destruction. Therefore, God commanded the army to polish the arrows, gather the shields, set up a banner and prepare the ambushes. They would go forward and fight, however, God made clear in verse 14 that the victory would come because of God’s sworn promise to himself, “The Lord of hosts has sworn by himself...” (NRSV).

As we experience victories, accomplishments, achievements and success, we often only acknowledge our abilities, talents and preparations that have contributed to attaining those goals. However, may we also acknowledge that God is the banner or authority under which we attain everything we have. May we remember: God fights the battles for us and after we are victorious, we shout the victories.

**I AM MARRIED TO GOD WHO DELIGHTS IN ME**      **April 1, 2023**  
Isaiah 62:1-12

There are couples who, after years of marriage and years of unresolved disagreements, decided to divorced from each other and go their individual ways. Accordingly, they abandoned the relationship, the wife forsook the name and they sold the house. Everything that represented the former relationship laid desolate. Years later, some couples found a way to resolve past disagreements, reconciled past grievances and remarried. They came under the banner of God as the head of their marriage and hope was restored. The wife received her new name and they reestablished a home together. No longer was their relationship called desolate. Instead, it was called blessed.

God promised vindication and restoration of God’s people and declared that they will be a “crown of glory in the hand of the LORD...” They would no longer be termed Forsaken and Desolate. Instead they are called Hephzibah (meaning My delight is in her) and Beulah (meaning Married). They will rally under the banner of God and reestablish their marriage with God.

At times, we may feel divorced from God – forsaken and desolate – because we have walked away from God to pursue our own desires. Come under the banner of God as God, instead, wants us to be a crown of glory in his hand, as everyone calls us “God Delights in You” and “Married to God”.



*Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me*

**THE LORD MY BANNER  
(JEHOVAH NISSI)**

**YOUR ROD AND STAFF COMFORT ME**  
Psalm 23:4

**March 26, 2023**

Law enforcement officers carry a gun and baton. These tools are provided for their protection and the protection and service of community residents. Unfortunately, some officers have used their gun and baton to inflict pain and death on those whom they have sworn an oath to protect and serve.

As a shepherd, David carried a rod and a staff. He kept them with him at all times. His rod was a club used to fight off animals seeking to harm his sheep. His staff was used to gently guide his sheep and pull them back from danger. David’s rod and staff were never used against his sheep to inflict pain or death. They were used to protect and serve the well-being of his sheep.

David affirmed that his God, the good shepherd, also had a rod and staff that was used to bring comfort to him. God never used the rod and staff to inflict pain or death. They were used to protect and serve David’s well-being.

God’s rod and staff are a type of banner that we, too, can look to for protection and support. Ancient armies would display a banner [also called a standard] raised in the air with their country’s symbol on it. As the soldiers saw the banner, it would remind them of who they were, whose they were and those for whom they fought. As the banner was raised, they looked up to it and received strength, support and hope that they would be victorious in battle.

As you face difficult, dangerous and destructive challenges, look up and see God standing before you with rod and staff in hand, raised high. Look up and receive comfort that your good shepherd is between you and your enemies, ready for battle. Look up and see the Lord your banner, your Jehovah Nissi, reminding you of who you are, whose you are and why you fight; strengthening you and giving you the comfort and hope that victory is yours.

**LIFTING UP THOSE WHO STRENGTHEN US**      **March 27, 2023**  
**Exodus 17:8-15**

As I became an adult, my mother's role in my life changed. There was a time when she cooked for me, bought and washed my clothes and cared for me. As I matured, I no longer need her to fulfill those tasks. I depended on her more for her prayers, advice and support. Even more, as she grew older, I understood the need to support her and lift her up so she could continue to bless me and be my banner as I looked to her for strength and received the comfort and hope of knowing that the victory was mine.

Joshua lead the army in fighting against the Amalekites. Moses stood on top of the hill with the rod of God in his hands as a banner for the army. As Moses held up his hands with the rod, the Israelites were strengthened in hope and winning. As he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. When Moses' arms became tired, Aaron and Hur found a stone for him to sit on. Then, they supported Moses by standing on each side of him, holding up his arms until sunset. Because Aaron and Hur supported Moses and lifted his hands to be a banner for the army, Joshua was victorious over the Amalekites. Moses, knowing that the true banner under which they fought was God, built an altar named, Jehovah Nissi, meaning the Lord my Banner.

God has placed individuals in our lives to serve as banners; strengthening us and giving us the comfort and hope to know that we are victorious. Our responsibility is to support them; to hold them up as they are banners for us as we praise God, our true banner, for placing them in our lives. Take time this week and lift up those God is using as a banner in your life.

**THE HAND THAT DISCIPLINES ALSO DELIVERS**      **March 28, 2023**  
**Psalms 60:1-12**

After being disciplined by their parents, many have heard the phrase, "This hurts me more than it hurts you." Whereas we may not have found comfort in that phrase, we did find comfort in knowing that the hand of the person who disciplined us was also the hand of the person who loved us and could be depended upon to provide strength, hope and support for our success.

Because of Israel's sins, David acknowledged that God had rejected them, broken their defenses and been angry with them. David asks for God to restore them. In verse 4, he said that God had raised a banner for those who fear him to be displayed as a rallying point because of the truth. Under that banner, they would be delivered and receive victory through the power of God's right hand. The hand of God who disciplined them would be the same hand of God that would be raised to strengthen and support them to be successful.

It is a very uncomfortable feeling when the hand of God is upon us to discipline us. Alternatively, what a joyful feeling we experience when the same hand of God is raised above us as a banner under which we can find strength, hope and support to overcome any and all enemy and achieve the victory. Praise God the hand that disciplines is also the hand that delivers.

**A BANNER OF PEACE AND COMFORT**      **March 29, 2023**  
**Isaiah 11:1-10**

After Thurgood Marshall was sworn in as a Supreme Court Justice, there was a belief among many Black people that there was now an opportunity for justice, equity and hope to be restored to the courts. There was an expectation that his presence on the courts would stand as a banner of peace and comfort for everyone – Black and White, rich and poor, urban and suburban – to stand under as he would influence the court towards justice and equity.

Isaiah prophesied that a descendent of Jesse would come forth. This descendent was the Messiah, that is, the anointed one who would come to bring salvation to God's people. He would reign with righteousness, equity and delight in the fear of the Lord. More significantly, he would establish a kingdom of peace which was illustrated through the infamous images of animals paired together with their prey: the wolf and the lamb, the leopard and the young goat, the calf and the young lion, the cow and the bear. Whereas these images should invoke bloody images of death, instead they invoke images of peace and tranquility. The Messiah stands as a banner of peace and comfort to everyone (both Jews and Gentiles) who will come for refuge.

Praise God the Messiah has come in the person of Jesus, the Christ. He has ushered in a reign of righteousness, equity and, more significantly, peace. Under the banner of the Messiah, is an expectation that everyone, independent of ethnicity, class, gender and other differences used to divide, can live peacefully because he will be a righteous judge and a just arbitrator. Jesus stands as a banner of peace and comfort to everyone who comes for refuge.

**GOD'S ARMY RIDES TO THE RESCUE**      **March 30, 2023**  
**Isaiah 13:1-5**

A scene prevalent in old western movies is that of the 'good guy' losing in a shootout against the 'bad guys'. As the 'good guy' ran out of bullets and was about to die, there was a thunderous sound of horse hooves as the camera panned to the Calvary riding to the rescue. The bugles could be heard blowing and the flags could be seen waving in the wind, representing the U. S. Army – the authority under which their rescuers rode and brought the victory.

As Israel struggled under the weight of the affliction from Babylon, they felt hopeless and helpless. Imagine the joy, however, as the camera panned to the left and they heard the horns blowing and saw the army of God riding in on the thunderous sound of horses, waving the banner of God as God was heard saying, "I have commanded those I prepared for battle; I have summoned my warriors to carry out my wrath—those who rejoice in my triumph." Imagine the praise as God's army rode in to the rescue.

God's army is still riding in to the rescue. As we feel hopeless, helpless and burdened under the weight of the world's afflictions, look up and hear the trumpets of God blowing. Look out and see the army of God riding in. Look in and hear the voice of God comforting you as his army comes to your rescue.