

Sermon Series: "I Am" Part 2
"The Father's Protection"
Pastor Dale Campfield - January 9th, 2011

Intro:

Matt 28:19 "Go and make disciples of all nations..."

ECC Process of Discipleship: Making an IMPACT...To Love...To Grow...To Serve

We have 3 priorities – To love...which is expressed in our Sunday morning celebration and connection groups. To grow...which is expressed in our Path to Discipleship. To serve...which is expressed in our daily lives in the places we live, work and play; as well as through the local church. The vision of E.C.C. is to gather together weekly for corporate worship, loving God and each other; then to come together in small Connection Groups for discipleship and fellowship, and are regularly involved in reaching out to others with the love, acceptance, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ through community outreach. To Love...To Grow...To Serve!

Intro:

Today we continue with our sermon series entitled: "I Am".

The Goal of this series: To fall more in love with who God is, becoming a passionate follower of Christ, desiring to walk in obedience to His teachings.

How will we do this: By Learning Who the Father Is.

Jesus asks the question of Peter...

Mark 8:29

"Who do you say that I am?"

Let me ask you again: "Who do you say that He is?"

Last week we looked at The Father's Love; and the fact that the Great I AM loves us beyond measure; no matter what we do, think, say, etc. His love is unconditional.

Today's Sermon Title: "The Father's Protection"

Because of His love for us as a FATHER; He will protect us. But not only protect us, He will fight for us as well!

There are many Hebrew names of God that talk about God being our protector and the one who will fight for us...

EL G'MULAH JEHOVAH = The LORD, God of Vengeance (Jer. 51:56)

EL NATHAN N'QAMAH - God who Avenges for Me (Ps. 18:47)

ELOHIM MISGAB = God my Defense (Ps. 59:17)

But today we're going to look at JEHOVAH NISSI = The Lord our Banner or Victor

Illus: Let me ask you a question: Picture of Hiroshima flag raising... Why was this photo so powerful?



These six guys were raising a flag... the American Flag is our nation's banner. This photo became a rallying point for the entire country during that time.

Illus: What do you think of when you see this picture?



If you ever have a chance to watch a re-enactment of a Civil War Battle, take the time to go. It is magnificent to watch the rows of charging foot soldiers, the feel the ground vibrate with the gallop of the cavalry and hear the thunder of the cannons as they bellow on the field. I have never seen one in person, but I have had the opportunity to view several on TV or video. I have always been struck by the confusion of the battle field. The clouds of smoke rolling from the guns, the crash of arms and cries of battle. It seems like it would be easy to get disoriented. But one thing always rises above the smoke and confusions, the flags of the different armies and companies. You can see the pennants and flags flying in the breeze even when you can't see the man standing next to you.

The standard bearer was an important part of the battle before the invention of radios and satellites. He was the one who led the charge. Amazingly, he went into battle unarmed. If the standard bearer was wounded, the nearest man would drop what he was doing to pick up the flag, partly out of respect, but more importantly because it was the focal point of the troops. Without

the banner to lead the way, the battle often fell into disarray.

This presents a striking picture for us today, as we look at a battle in Israelite history, and a time when the God received the name Jehovah Nissi, the Lord your banner. For His people, God is the banner to be followed. He leads the way into battle. This morning we look at Jehovah Nissi, and see why He called Himself by this name.

Illus: How about this photo? What do you think when you see this one?



This was a time when our country was at war. This picture, raising the flag, our nations banner, became a rallying point for many.

Friends.... **We are in a battle – the battle of good vs. evil; truth vs. lies.** The battle is taking place right now in your lives. We've got to have God on our side in this battle; we've got to raise the banner of Jehovah Nissi.

When was the last time you faced a situation where the odds were stacked against you? The science of probability and statistics is fascinating. Some day, unless Jesus comes back first, every person in this room will die. How do you think you will go? The odds are that you will die in a car wreck are one in a hundred. That you will die in a fire are one in 800. That you will die by electrocution are one in 5000. That you will die in a flood are one in 30,000 or in a tornado - one in 60,000. That you will die by a venomous bite or sting - one in 100,000. That you will be killed by lightning - one in 2.8 million. (By the way, the world record of being struck by lightning is a guy named Roy Sullivan, a forest ranger. He's been struck seven times by lightning). The odds that you will die by food poisoning are one in three million. Knowing how some of you bachelors cook maybe the odds are a little higher in your case...

The odds of you winning the lottery are against you. I don't know how any sane person plays the lottery. You are six times more likely to be struck by lightning than to win the lottery. Someone calculated that if you drive ten miles to buy a Lottery ticket you are three times more likely to be killed in an auto accident on the way than to purchase the winning ticket.

Jehovah Nissi is found throughout the scripture....

Psalm 20:5

"We will shout for joy when you are victorious and will lift up our banners in the name of our God. May the LORD grant all your requests."

Psalm 60:4

"But for those who fear you, you have raised a banner to be unfurled against the bow."

Song of Songs 2:4

"He has taken me to the banquet hall, and his banner over me is love.

From the beginning; we find this reference to Jehovah Nissi in **Exodus 17: 8 – 16.**

Now here is the context to the story – Moses and the People of Israel had just escaped from Slavery in Egypt and they were facing their first major challenges. You need to remember that it is estimated that there was probably over 2 million people in this travelling party – heading out into the desert in search of a better life. What was going to be their first challenge in a hot, dry, parched, desert – any ideas? What would they be in need of in a water-less, arid, desert? Come on, help me here – WATER. And so God provided them with water – in Chapter 15. How nice of him – it wasn't bottled, but it certainly was from a spring.

What else would you need in a barren, desolate, arid, treeless desert? - FOOD Right. Where would you get food to feed 2 million people? I mean there wasn't any Macca's around the next sand dune. Even if there was, I mean – come on – you'd starve to death waiting for the food!!! There were plenty of rocks, but no hard rock café's. There were no Coles supermarkets and no corner stores so what did they do – grumble and you know what – God provided food – manna and quails. They had quail hamburgers, hot and spicy quail manna pizzas, BBQ quails, Satay quail manna subs and they were content.

Well it seems as though this road trip is going to be easy – water on tap every time they complained loud enough and food every day – what else did they need? Well for one thing, they needed protection. In Chapter 17 we read that the next big challenge after food and water was raiding parties from other nations.

The Amalekites were a nation who lived in the desert. The interesting thing about these guys were they were cousins of the Israelites. You see Abraham had a son – What was his name – Isaac. Look I'm glad you are still with me here ... And Isaac had 2 sons – Jacob and Esau. Now Esau was the eldest, but sold his birthright to Jacob for a bit of lentil stew. Well Jacob had how many sons? 12 – and from them we get the 12 tribes of Israel who had multiplied in Egypt, become slaves and now were wandering around the desert.

Esau had several sons also ... The eldest was Eliphaz and one of his sons was – you guessed it Amalek. So Amalek was a third cousin to Dan, Judah, Benjamin and Joseph and all the other brothers. Now remember that Jacob had the birthright that rightly belonged to Esau and I'd guess that Esau's children and grandchildren were a bit peeved about this. This would have no doubt created some rather tense relationships and so it is not surprising to see the Amalekites coming up to make war on the Israelites. Had they sat back and realized it though, they would have known that because they were descended from Abraham, the promises given to him were also meant for them if they had followed YHWH like Abraham.

But Amalek didn't remember this and instead attacked Israel. It wasn't a full frontal attack initially, it was more like raiding parties, picking off the weak and elderly that couldn't keep up with the rest of the pack (Deut 25:17-19).

Attacking God's chosen ones always draws God's wrath and so Moses ordered for the army to gather and went out to attack Amalek. And you know the story – while they fought in the valley, Moses stood up on the hill overlooking the valley and while he kept the staff of God raised in the air, the Israelites were on top. But when he became tired and put his arms down, the battle turned and the Amalekites started to gain control. In the end of the day, Hur and Aaron who were with him made him sit down and they held up his arms until the battle was won.

What was the Key to this Victory? WORSHIP!

Worship, lifting up Jesus Christ! Lifting up Jehovah Nissi.

Take a quick look at...

2 Chr. 20:12 – The battle of Jehoshaphat. The battle was raging. They said, “We don’t know what to do, but our eyes are on you.” Vs. 15 do not be afraid.... The battle is the Lord. Vs. 21, how did he do it; by singing to the Lord, praising Him. As they began to sing, the Lord sent ambushes against them. They didn’t shoot a shot, or swing a sword. The Lord did the battle for them, because they lifted up Jehovah Nissi.... The weapon of Worship!

When you lift up Jehovah Nissi...

#1: It will proclaim our allegiance.

We’ve got to proclaim it outside the walls of the church building too.

Illus: A Bengals Fan.... Do you wear it at the stadium? Yes. Do you wear it outside the stadium? Usually not. Or, a Seahawks fan, we pledge our allegiance if they’re winning, but when they don’t we jump ship. When we win, everyone is rejoicing and yelling and wearing the colors, but when they lose, we stop. We lift the banner of the Sports World, Hawks, Bengals, but can we lift up the banner of Jehovah Nissi? It’s easy on Sunday, but what about Monday?

Illus: Song: the Battle Belongs to the Lord. How are we singing it? Ohhh hummmm.... Or with some gusto.

Are you proclaiming your allegiance to God? Inside and Outside?

The Lord doesn’t want any secret agent Christians. We cannot be afraid to stand up for Him. In some nations around the world, you could be killed for standing up for Christ.

Who’s colors are you flying today?

Worship isn’t relegated to the time we spend on Sunday mornings. But when you come to church, are you prepared to worship Him. Are the things of the world weighing your hands down.

We can’t lift up the wrong banner. Often times we lift the banner of money, popularity, health, pleasures of the world, jobs, family, etc. We’ve got to lift the right banner.

Jesus said, I am the Way the Life and the Truth. He is the Truth. When we lift up the Banner of God, we are lifting His Truth, thus we’re not going to believe the lies of the devil.

#2: It will define who our enemies are.

Our adversaries will come out. Darkness does not like the light. The Bible says we will have enemies when we stand up for Christ. We've got to be the kind of light in the darkness that shows who the enemy is. Remember, we only have one enemy, and it's not each other. The only enemy is the devil.

Do not go to war against others who lifting up the Banner of Jesus Christ. Don't see your brother and sister as your enemy.

When we are faced with opposition, we have three choices:

A. Run from it. Moses sending Joshua/Israelites to fight. Joshua: "Us? Fight them? The Amailkites were fighters, bandits, land pirates. They know how to fight. We know how to make bricks! How can we fight?" Israel had not been in a battle before this. (God beat the Egyptians alone.) Israel knew how to be slaves. They chose to stand and fight because of God's promises of the new land.

B. Ignore it. How can we ignore a battle? We are fighting a very different kind of battle today. - Similar to cancer. Unseen. - Ignore the children, the lost. Worry about us!

C. Engage in it. Accept the calling God has given us.

#3: It will determine who our allies are.

Your Aaron and Hur will be there when you go through the battle. Life is tough. We need each other. When you're in the battle, they will be there. You can't do this thing alone. I can't do this thing alone.

Who have you come along side and lifted their arms up?

Let me encourage you, don't neglect the support of your Christian Friends. Who stepped up to help Moses when he got tired? Some of his close friends. Friends are important people and Christian Friends are even more important.

I'm not saying to ignore your non-Christian friends – no way – you need to try to develop good relationships with them so you can have a chance to witness to them. But do you know what – you need to have a couple of close Christian friends also. We all need the support and encouragement of other Christians when things get tough. They can help you fly the banner, they can stand with you and help you set the standard.

So join a youth group, join a bible study group, join a connection group here at Eastgate and get connected to some other Christians who can pray for you and support you when you don't have any strength left.

#4: It will show who our God is.

It was God who won this battle not Joshua, Moses, the Israelites or even the staff. The personalities in this story were not important. Moses was a shepherd who had been enlisted to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt, He had not power in himself, he was only the mouthpiece of God. Moses didn't win this battle.

The Israelites, didn't even hold the key to this battle. They fought all day against the Amalekites and often it seemed they were on the losing side. They didn't win this battle.

And don't think that that staff Moses held had anything magical about it. I know I can see some of you thinking – Where can I get my hands on one of them staves. It was a bit of wood – nothing special about it at all.

- BANNER - The word means to glisten
- a. Historically, a banner was a pole with a shiny ornament that glittered in the sun
 - (1) looked like the flag poles without flags
 - (2) or the baton of the band director in the marching band
 - b. The physical banner here was the Rod of God
 - (1) an historic shepherds staff
 - (a) turned into a serpent
 - (b) initiated plagues in Egypt
 - (c) divided the red sea
 - (d) provided water in the wilderness
 - (2) a symbolic stick
 - (a) a simple piece of wood
 - i) nothing special
 - ii) just a tool
 - (b) a visible symbol of God's presence and intervention
 - i) did not make the wood powerful
 - ii) it was a tangible reminder that He was at work
 - a) much like the Arc of the Covenant would be
 - b) both were later stored in the Holy of holies - the place where God visited man
 - c. The real banner was Jehovah Himself
 - (1) notice the rod was not named
 - (2) name was given to the alter
 - (a) place where man met God
 - (b) place of worship
 - (c) place of memorial
 - (d) place of recognition
 - (3) Jehovah was the one who glittered that day, held aloft for all men to see
- As the banner of His people, Jehovah Nissi is...

Verse 8 describes the dilemma that God's people are about to face. They've been thirsty and hungry but now an enemy is ready to ambush them. While they are at Rephidim, getting refreshed, the Amalekites attack. The Amalekites were the descendants of Esau, and were the enemies of God and of God's people. As we go through this encounter, it may help to view the Amalekites as representing the sin within our hearts and the evil one who continuously comes after us. When Moses sees that his people are about to be pummeled, he calls out to Joshua in verse 9: "Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands." Joshua made a careful, well-thought out choice to find the best men he could locate while Moses was up on the mountain. The people were to do what the Psalmist did in Psalm 121:1-2: "I lift up my eyes to the hills — where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth."

This is a paradigm shift for God's people. Up until now, God fought all their battles for them. The problem with this is that they became passive and then became complainers when God didn't do things exactly they way they wanted. Now, they are told to be proactive and fight their enemies. The danger here is that they will have to remember that they cannot do anything in their own strength. They are to be proactive and not passive, yet they are to remember that God is their power. The same is true for us. We can't just sit back and do nothing, nor can we do everything, but we must do something.

As we rely on His strength, taking steps of courage, He alone gets the glory and our faith in Him will grow. Instead of just being observers of God's work, now they were being asked to be participants in God's work. Oliver Cromwell, who fought for England over 300 years ago, had no military training but was very successful. He often pointed to the fact that God enabled him to win his battles. He is known to have said to his troops, "Trust in Providence and keep your powder dry." We must do what we can but must always trust in God.

Picture the scene. Up to two million Israelites are trying to quench their thirst and now the Amalekites attack. Those in the front of the group are whetting their whistle and those in the back are very vulnerable. The Amalekites have gone out of their way to come after God's people, because Rephidim isn't even close to where they live. The Amalekites want to take them out before they head to the land of Canaan. Satan does the same to us. He comes after us when we least expect him, and he'll go out of his way to knock us out, or knock us off stride. We know from Deuteronomy 25:17-18 that the Amalekites attacked when God's people were at their weakest point: "Remember what the Amalekites did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt. When you were weary and worn out, they met you on your journey and cut off all who were lagging behind..."

While Joshua is leading the battle below, Moses, Aaron and Hur are battling above them, at the top of a hill. Look at Exodus 17:11: "As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning." With the rod of God in his hand, Moses visibly demonstrated that it was the power of God fighting for them that gave them strength. As his hands are held in a posture of praise and adoration, the troops could trust that God was with them. The staff symbolized how God had come through for them before and He would do so again. It was the pledge of His presence.

The important thing was not what it was, but what it was being used for. God was at work when Moses held his arm up. He was active when Moses reached out seeking his help. It was a lesson for Moses and all of Israel that they had to come in subjection and humility before God, relying on him and him alone. Only when Moses held up his arms – as if calling on God and surrendering himself to God - could God act. When he forgot about God and dropped his arms - forgot that God was the key player and focussed on his and his army's own resources, God was not able to work.

God is a powerful God who can influence what happens in this world and when we feel that we are under attack, God is always there to help us. He will do the fighting for us if only we are open to him and rely on him.

During World War II, a passenger ship set sail from Great Britain headed for port in New York City. The Captain of the ship being afraid of enemy vessels, sought the advice and guidance of the British Admiral. The Admiral calmly assured the captain that no matter what happens, he should be sure to sail his ship straight ahead. "Do not take any detours -- sail the ship straight ahead -- continue on-ward, heading straight towards the intended mark;" he said.

After several days of sailing across the Atlantic Ocean which was undeniably filled with submarines and enemy vessels of all kinds, the Captain spotted an enemy destroyer off his forward bow. Nervously he grasped the handset and called for assistance. The calm voice replied, "Keep on Straight, Do not Detour, just sail the ship straight ahead. Everything will be just fine. Just keep on going - straight ahead."

After a couple more days the ship pulled safely into the great harbor of New York city. Shortly after docking the great British battleship "Man-of-War" pulled into port behind the passenger vessel. The Captain realized that while he did not see the British Battleship, she was there, standing by. Standing ready to come to his defense should it prove necessary.

This is how it is with God, he is always there waiting to stand by to come to our aid – when ever

we would ask. We might not always see him, but he is there, encouraging us to just keep going and not turn away. It would have been easy for the Israelites to pack up camp and run, but God was there to take care of them. It would have been easy for my Mate Ian to just shut up and not stand up for what he believed to be right, but He didn't, he stood firm and maintained his witness. When difficulties came, God looked after him.

Every army, the world over fights under a flag. The flag has no power in itself, but it signifies that the soldiers who are fighting have behind them one whose power and resources are at their disposal. If we are Christians, we can fly God's flag or banner because we have at our disposal all of God's strength and resources.

What struggles are you likely to face in your week coming? Are there going to be temptations that you have to grapple with – maybe the kids at school want you to act some way which you know is not honouring to God. Maybe the kids at school are pressuring you into coming along to their parties and having just a try of some alcohol or some of their drugs – just to see what it is like. Maybe the struggles for you are some kids who constantly pick on you because you are not one of the cool guys.

I don't know what you are going through or who your Amalek is, but God does and providing you are flying his banner and relying on him he will be there to fight with you. If you lock him out of your life though and trying to do things in your own strength – flying your own flag, he can't work. Whose flag are you flying – Your own or God's.

Oh yeah, and remember that when you do finally overcome, give the Glory where it belongs – to God.

#5: It will draw others to Christ.

John 12:32

“And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself.”

Jesus said, “If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me.” The lifting of our Banner, Jehovah Nissi goes beyond the benefit of ourselves; but it will IMPACT all of those around us. It's not just about you winning the battles in your life, it's about the people in the path of your life seeing the Christ that is within you and coming to Him, being a follower of Christ!

You are on path. The people in your path are the ones God has given to you. Our job is to love God on that path, and make Disciples of people on that path. When you lift up Jehovah Nissi on your path, others will be drawn unto Christ. When you begin to worship God in the midst of your battles along your path, people will be drawn to Him.

Conclusion:

We are at war. We must lift our arms up to heaven, proclaiming Jehovah Nissi. Is there some area in your life you need victory? Are you lifting up the banner of Jesus? Is there something we can do to help come along side you, pray for you and help you?

The Key to Victory: WORSHIP – lifting up Jehovah Nissi

What are you struggling with in your life today. Are you facing a battle that you don't think you can win? A battle against people? A battle against a system? A battle against temptation? A battle against a desire?

Paul writes in Eph 6:12

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.”

We are at battle – we are at war with Satan and the trouble, sin and temptations he would place in our path. To win this battle, we need to stand firm and fight under the banner of Jehovah for our God is Jehovah Nissi – the Lord is our Banner. Get to know Him today – He wants you to be His.

And as you do.... You wait, you watch, you'll see!

Coming up...

Part 1: I Am Your Father - and because of this...

Part 2: I Am Your Protector - He will fight for us.

Part 3: I Am Your Provider - He is our source.

Part 4: I Am Your Companion - He is our friend, who will never leave us.

Part 5: I Am Your Teacher - He teaches us all things that ensure our success in life.

Part 6: I Am Your All - There is nothing or no one like Him. He is our I AM!

Here's a good homework assignment for you this week.

Ps. 100 A weapon you can use against the enemy. Read it, memorize it, etc.