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God Is Our Hope

When I was a youngster, us young guys would get together and play a game called capture the flag. Each team would pick a side and place a flag up with a color that represented it. I would always try and get the blue flag for my team. Our team would usually break up into two parts. One group that would protect our flag from the other team and one group that would attempt to capture the other teams flag. If the other team caught you then you were considered captured and sent out of the game. The game would start and we would run around like crazy avoiding being caught by the other team and at the same time trying and grab their flag before they got ours. We never gave up until the flag was captured.

In the United States we sing the national anthem, which is based on a time of war in 1812, and while the battle raged on during the night it wasn't clear who was victorious. With the fighting furiously surrounding the soldiers on a rainy night, they stood as the last defense against the enemy. With mud and blood all around them the first thing they did when daylight came was to look for the flag and see if it was still standing. The song says, "and the rockets red glare the bombs bursting in air gave through to the night that our flag was still there"

Because in real battle much like the game of capture the flag I used to play, when you win you replace the flag of the losing team with your own. Maybe you've watched the news and seen a group of rebels overtake a government compound and the first thing they do is to take down the flag and replace it with their own. Just like an old pirate ship would hoist its flag on the ships that they captured. The replacing of the flag is the international sign that the game is over and the battle is won. Always remember that the game is not over until the flag is down.

There was a great battle in the Old Testament (Exodus 17:8-16) when Amalek was coming against Israel. Joshua was leading Israel into battle and Moses positioned himself on top of the hill to stand with the rod of God in his hand. As the battle was fought and Moses held up his hand Israel prevailed but when his hand was tired and fell then Amalek would prevail. Aaron and Hur then helped Moses by holding up his hands for him until the battle was totally won. After the victory Moses built an altar and named it **Jehovah Nissi** which means **The Lord Is My Banner**. This is actually one of the names of God.

The Lord Is My Banner is what we can call God when we are going through our battle. This name means so much to us when we are standing for a victory in our life. It means that the Lord is the one who wins our battle and not our strength. It means that as long as He is lifted up the battle is not over. So many times while we are in the midst of a struggle and we feel like we are losing because of circumstances that is the time to look at the Lord and remember that it's still not over. Even when it seems like there is no hope or no way for victory we do not have to look at those things but we can simply look at the Banner of the Lord and say with boldness, "**as long I hold that flag high then the battle is not over and we will win**"

There are many fights that we face throughout our days, fights of health, finances, emotions, family and our future. These are all struggles that every person will deal with through out their life and it is important that we see our faith as looking at the flag that is still waving while the battle is on. Please remember that just because you are in a battle it doesn't mean that you have lost. Over the years I have found myself thinking that I lacked in faith because I was fighting something but Faith is not the absence of a battle, faith is refusing to take our eyes off our flag of victory until we have won the battle.

I want to share a story of a little girl I met when I was in Brazil. She shared her wonderful story of a miracle after she had a severe fall down a flight of stairs. She didn't remember the fall only just that she woke up in the hospital unable to move or feel her body. She could only speak quietly and move her eyes. They explained to her that she had broken her neck in two different places and her lower spine was broken in one place. As she lay there listening to the doctor's report her heart sank.

She was only in her early twenty's and her whole life was before her. What about her dreams, what about a boyfriend, marriage, children. All of this was running through her mind as the doctor gave her a horrible report that she would never recover. The rest of her life she would need to be fed and taken care of because she will never move again is what they said. How could this happen so quickly and suddenly that her future was snatched away from a simple stumble down some stairs. They went on to have a second opinion and then a third and they continued until ten different doctors had confirmed that she would never recover.

With the devastating news from the doctors still coming, she took as stand of faith and began to pray for victory. She had moved away from her home and was living in Rio de Janeiro, which was many miles away. Her family, her church and her pastor all prayed from a distance for her and she prayed quietly in the Holy Spirit for twelve hours a day. Her Pastor told her over the phone that the only two persons who could help her now are there with her, the Holy Spirit and herself. She held onto the Word of God the whole time laying frozen like a lifeless statue in her hospital bed.

Everything stayed the same for two weeks until one afternoon when out of the corner of her eye she saw her right hand move. She thought maybe someone had played a trick on her and she called in the nurse to investigate. When the nurse walked in she also saw the hand move. It was so shocking that she ran out of the room to get the doctor. The movement spread quickly from her hand to her arm and it continued through out her whole body until she was completely healed. From the moment her hand moved until she walked out of the hospital was two days. The medical doctors, the neurologists, the orthopedic surgeons, the medical specialists and the psychologists were all in shock and said it had to be a miracle.

This is a testimony of not giving up in the midst of a battle, even when there looks to be no hope. The only hope we need is to look up at our flag The Lord is named as our Banner and remind ourselves that as long as we don't give up we are still winning. God believes in the impossible and so can we.

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