

Pastor's Thoughts of the Week

*Isaiah 59:19: When the enemy shall come in like a flood,
the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him.*

What a sure defense the believer has on which to rely. The unrelenting mystery of iniquity is constantly reappearing in some delusive form to vanquish the work of the church. It must be that Satan knows "he has but a short time" and so he is about devising his diabolical machinations to thwart the power of the gospel. Our inspired text imbues us with the confidence that the gates of hell cannot and will not stand against us. Be assured that where "*sin abounded, grace did much more abound*".

But what is it that that is in the Spirit's hand that causes the enemy to make so hasty a retreat? The word *standard* refers to the unfurled banner that each of the 12 tribes had around which the various sons of Israel would rally in times of emergency. What courage the wearied fighter would take when in the midst of the grand conflict his eye should spy that standard. Of the myriad of names ascribed to our Lord, *Jehovah-Nissi* might most aptly embrace the prophet's imagery—*the Lord our Banner*. Emblazoned on this sacred cloth we might easily be find the words "*If God be for us, who can be against us*". With a renewed invigoration the warrior advances the cause of Christ with invincible fortitude to "win the well-fought day".

Anarchists have co-opted peaceful and justifiable protests in our country to advance their own evil agenda. These agents of the devil have rioted, burned, looted, and occupied sections of our cities in hopes of fueling an overthrow of constitutional government and the rule of law replacing it with Marxist socialism. True believers must earnestly resist this insurrection by petitioning the Holy Spirit to lift up the standard against them.

On September 13, 1814, Francis Scott Key, aboard a British vessel where he was negotiating for a captured American officer's release, anxiously watched the bombardment of the Fort McHenry through the daylight hours. According to Key, "It seemed as though mother earth had opened and was vomiting shot and shell in a sheet of fire and brimstone." But as darkness descended, Key could see little more of the battle than the "red glare" of the enemy's newly designed gunpowder-propelled Congreve rockets tracing fiery arcs across the sky. "The heavens aglow were a seething sea of flame," he later wrote to his friend John Randolph. In the "angry sea," as Key described conditions on that stormy night, the flag-of-truce sloop was "tossed as though in a tempest." Key was alarmed by the sound of "bombs bursting in air"—British shells detonating short of their target.

It seemed unlikely, Key would later recall, that American resistance at the fort could withstand such a pounding. Not until the mists dissipated at dawn September 14 did he learn the outcome of the battle. "At last," he later wrote, "a bright streak of gold mingled with crimson shot athwart the eastern sky, followed by another, and still another, as the morning sun rose." Gradually he was able to discern not the British Union Jack that he had feared, but still, defiantly, an American flag, enormous in its dimensions, fluttering in the breeze from the flagpole of an undefeated Fort McHenry. The fort had not fallen: Baltimore remained safe. It was, he later wrote, a "most merciful deliverance." And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air gave proof through the night that our flag was still there"

One likewise wonders if our nation can withstand the enemy's assault from within and preserve the freedom that has been purchased and preserved at so precious a price. God owes no nation that "forgets" him any promises of preservation. But to the Church that He has purchased with His own blood, He extends the promise that "*the gates of hell cannot prevail against it*". Let us not be found derelict in our duty as preserving salt. Let us plead to the Almighty to lift His holy standard against the existential evils of our day and preserve the liberties for the coming generations.

Have a blessed day,

Pastor

Faith cometh by hearing: and hearing by the word of God Romans 10:17