



DAVE KISTLER

### **Setting Up A Standard**

In Exodus 17, Israel is confronted by an imposing enemy in the people of Amalek. Verse 8, says, "Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim." Israel did not go looking for a fight, Amalek came to them. Once faced with this enemy, as is true with all enemies, Israel had no choice but to respond. Amalek was, certainly, not going to go away. Moses commissions Joshua, his top general, to go out and fight, while he would watch from the top a nearby hill with the rod of God in his hand. As the battle rages throughout the afternoon, Moses notices that when he holds up one of his hands, Israel prevails. And when he lowers his hands, Israel suffers defeat. To facilitate victory, Aaron and Hur, placed a stone under Moses and supported his weary arms till the going down of the sun. When the battle was over and Israel was victorious, Moses built an altar and named it Jehovah-nissi--THE LORD OUR BANNER (STANDARD).

Oftentimes, in time of war, a flag, or banner, is carried in front of the advancing army. In Bible times, a banner or flag would often be posted on an adjoining hill as a reminder under whose colors that army was battling. The "banner" or "standard" as it was called, served as a rallying point for the entire army. Isaiah 59: 19, says, "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a STANDARD (banner or flag) against him." The banner was a source of hope and encouragement to war-weary troops. I have been reading at length, recently, about the Civil War, particularly the role of chaplains in that conflict. When going into battle, a young Confederate or Union soldier would carry high the banner of his army. If he were to be shot and fall, another dedicated young man in uniform would quickly pick up the "standard" before it could touch the ground. The "colors" (banner) was a motivating tool to keep the soldiers advancing, or to rally them to a particular portion of the battlefield. A banner was an indispensable necessity for a successful military campaign.

This past Monday, September 17, a small group of Christians in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, lifted up a much needed standard for the cause of Christ. Their "banner" came in the form of a full-page article in USA Today newspaper, a response to the demeaning comments about Jesus Christ made by comedian Kathy Griffin at the Emmy Awards. Miss Griffin boldly stated, "A lot of people come up here and thank Jesus for this award. I want you to know that no one has had less to do with this award than Jesus." She went on to use profanity and declare, "This award is my god!" In case you did not see the article, it was graciously, but directly worded. In a bold, not brash, way, the cast and crew of the Miracle Theater in Pigeon Forge, said "enough is enough!" In essence, they were stating that they were tired of having their Savior and King maligned, mocked and misrepresented by those in Hollywood who refuse to recognize Him. They went on to say that they are unashamed to acknowledge that their talents have come directly from Him, and that it is their privilege to proclaim His Name nightly in their performances. Praise God for people in the entertainment community who are willing to raise a "standard" at the financial cost of over \$90,000.

While addressing issues like this must never become our primary focus (the gospel must always be priority one), it is necessary, from time to time, to raise a banner for righteousness. I, for one, am thankful for a group of Christians who are not ashamed to declare under Whose colors they are living and Whose name they gladly bear.

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