

When Evil Pursues

**The Israelites went through the sea on dry ground. . . .
The Egyptians pursued them (Exodus 14:22-23).**

Scripture: Exodus 14:21-31

Song: “Awesome Power”

My mother once made a late-night stop at a gas station. As she reentered her vehicle, she set her purse aside and pulled out. Within a block, she felt something or someone grip her hair. Her heart leaped to her throat as she pulled over. Slowly she reached back to the taut chunk of strands . . . and found them caught in the window she had just rolled up! If only evil were always so simply eliminated.

With chariots and horses thundering behind them, the Israelites, terrorized with fear of death or re-enslavement, fled across the sea floor. But only one would be shackled that night. God seized Pharaoh’s evil heart for His own use and hardened it further. The vicious ruler became the very tool God used to push the Israelites across to freedom and lead the Egyptians into their grave.

As Christians, evil will pursue us—our marriages, our churches, even our integrity—but we know that our God is greater. His power is just as present in our lives as it was in the Israelites’ lives. Put your trust in Him and pursue the victory He wants to bring.

Father, help me trust in Your power when evil pursues me. In Jesus’ name, amen.

September 1–5. **Shannon Baldridge** teaches Bible studies at her church and in her Atlanta-area community, where she resides with her husband, two daughters, and four-legged running partner.

Serving Fearlessly

Praise be to the Lord . . . because he has come . . . to rescue us . . . and to enable us to serve him without fear (Luke 1:68, 74).

Scripture: Luke 1:67-75

Song: “Soldiers of Christ, Arise”

When American troops and Filipino guerilla fighters snuck behind enemy lines and ambushed the World War II Japanese prison camp in Cabanatuan City, they wiped out all the guards. But the American troops still had to coax the frail, skeptical captives to leave the camp. The prisoners were not sure they were actually being rescued.

Zechariah prophesied of a different “Great Raid,” proclaiming that our rescuer would boldly come into hostile territory to seek us out. In fulfillment of the promises of long ago, we would be taken from the enemy and redeemed in His name. We would be restored whole so that we could serve fearlessly in the capacity God created for each of us.

For you and me, the rescuer has already arrived. He is here, hand extended, inviting us out of our prison and into His strength, wrapping us in the warm cloak of His grace. No matter the pain of our past or missteps that lie ahead, we have been set free from it all. Spiritual death is no longer an option if only we take hold of Him. The enemy has already been defeated. So let us leave behind our shame and insecurities and join the ranks of His army, stepping out each day in thankful service to our Lord.

Father, enable me to serve You boldly each day. In Jesus’ name, amen.

The Death of Death

“Death has been swallowed up in victory” (1 Corinthians 15:54).

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:51-58

Song: “Victory in Jesus”

There it is again—another fresh, leafy shoot stretching a few inches above the grass. Five years ago I had a large crepe myrtle tree removed from my yard. It was beautiful, but it crowded our front walkway. Despite the work crew’s ripping it from the ground and tilling up the root system, that crepe myrtle is still alive and well. It proudly reminds me so every summer!

When our lives are rooted in the blood of Jesus, we can count on having our own defiant celebration of life one day. At the last trumpet, we will witness the death of death. The law of sin that once shackled us to our graves will be shattered, and we will rise reconfigured with all our brothers and sisters for a life with our Lord in Heaven. What a magnificent day it will be to participate in this mysterious truth’s unfolding!

Jesus’ victory over the tomb is for us. And the weight of that victory brings perspective, purpose, and freedom to our lives today. No matter the adversity or guilt we face, we are enabled to stretch above the daily grave we deserve and live unhindered lives reflective of the gift we have received. So each day let’s celebrate together death’s defeat, and live in the victory we have. In this way we can help a hurting world that needs to know our Savior lives.

Father, may I live out Your gift of life triumphantly each day. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Bringing the Fight

“The LORD is a warrior; the LORD is his name” (Exodus 15:3).

Scripture: Exodus 15:1-10

Song: “The Battle Belongs to the Lord”

Bears rarely charge people, but Bridger Petrini saw trouble when he spotted the pinned ears of a 400-pound bear barreling toward him and his family just downhill. He fired his handgun, but the bear was undeterred and tackled him, tearing at his legs. Bridger battled back with adrenaline-fueled kicks. Even as he was tossed about, his hyper-focused eyes tracked for another shot. He fired—another stinger. Then a misfire. Unwilling to submit, and with the bear’s jaws locked around his leg, Bridger fired again . . . and the beast finally collapsed.

Our Heavenly Father is a fighter. We might not think of Him that way often. After all, it is His gentle and merciful love that has drawn us to Him. He is patient in His long-suffering hope that all would call Him Lord. And our experience with His Spirit is that of a peace-giving nurturer. Because this is our relationship with the Father, we easily forget the measures He is willing to take against those who seek to do us harm. But make note, there is nothing passive about our God.

The precision of the punishment He dealt the Egyptians was the sign of a proficient and mighty warrior. His victory was fierce. With that same passion, He fights for us today. So in the moments we feel beaten and think God is distant, we can trust that He is merely winding up a forceful blow to deliver to our enemies.

Father, thank You for fighting for me. In Jesus’ name, amen.

A Joy That Moves

Miriam . . . took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women followed her with timbrels and dancing (Exodus 15:20).

Scripture: Exodus 15:11-21

Song: “Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee”

Texas A&M led by six with 1:12 left in the game. With the crowd on their feet, Oklahoma launched a pass downfield. I held my breath and sank to my seat as the ball spiraled away. In that slow-motion moment, I watched as thousands of feet simultaneously floated off the bleachers and landed in real time with deafening cheers. An A&M safety had pulled down the interception, sealing the 2002 win as the Aggies’ first victory over a number-one ranked team.

Victory is joyful. The Israelites could not help but celebrate their God’s massive win. Their joy moved them to memorialize the historical night in song, in hope that no future generation would ever forget its significance. Their joy moved them to confidently sing of His great power over all their enemies. Their joy moved them to parade, dance, and worship. Their joy moved them.

There is no greater source of joy than our victory in Jesus. Our joy can be raucous or reverent, but it should always move us. Move us to worship and serve. Move us through trials. Move us to record His power at work in our lives. Move us to tell others of His great love. Let us be mindfully joyful, meditating on all His great works, so that joy may power us forward in our faith journey.

Father, may I always respond to Your victories with a dynamic joy. In Jesus’ name, amen.