



## MY BATTLE SONG

By Rev. Will Nelken

*Presented at Trinity Community Church, San Rafael, CA, on Sunday, January 15, 2023*

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This is a song about prayer and worship—two constants in a life fully devoted to Jesus. And it is a song about the challenges and heartaches in life—two other constants in everyone's life.

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Today, we'll consider verse three:

### Desert Song

Brooke Ligertwood

*This is my prayer in the battle  
When triumph is still on its way  
I am a conqueror and co-heir with Christ  
So firm on His promise I'll stand*

*I will bring praise, I will bring praise  
No weapon formed against me shall remain  
I will rejoice, I will declare  
God is my victory and He is here*

*All of my life in ev'ry season  
You are still God  
I have a reason to sing  
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The pessimist says, "Life is hard, and then you die."

The realist says, “Life is hard, but also pleasant.”

The Christ-follower says, “This life is hard, but God is more than able! And the life to come is over the top!”

In many ways, it is true, life is a struggle. This is acknowledged by every religion in the world, for the aim of every religion is peace, effected either by conquest or conversion or evolution.

Our walk of faith with Jesus Christ also requires a struggle.

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And what is this fight about?

*1 Timothy 1:19 To do this you must hold firmly to faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and so have suffered shipwreck in regard to the faith.*

This is the battle ALL of us are engaged in—the good fight of faith.

The arena where this fight takes place is your mind. There ARE physical tools and weapons, but the battle is mental—dealing with strongholds, arguments, and attitudes. Let me quickly define these terms:

- Strongholds—this is the spiritual aspect, a bondage that is deaf and blind to (a particular) truth
- Arguments—this is the rational aspect, supporting my bondage with reasons
- Attitudes—this is the emotional aspect, expressing my bondage, especially through pride

This is where your fight for faith in Jesus is won or lost.

How is our faith resisted and threatened?

- Satan
- Sin
- Lack of spiritual self-care

**Satan—our adversary, and a holdout**

*Ephesians 6:12 For we are not fighting [wrestling] against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.*

*1 Peter 5:8 NLT Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. <sup>9</sup> Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith.*

*Remember that your family of believers all over the world is going through the same kind of suffering you are.*

All that is needed in the battle against the devil is to stand firm, because Jesus has already stripped him of his weapons and announced his defeat and demise. Why does he keep on fighting if he's really been defeated? Because he doesn't like the conclusion he's been presented!

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The devil is a holdout, too.

You need a strategy for standing firm in the faith (so that you won't lose your confidence).

*Hebrews 10:35* *So do not throw away your confidence, because it has great reward.* <sup>36</sup> *For you need endurance in order to do God's will and so receive what is promised.*

The most difficult part of standing true is *waiting in faith* for the enemy to surrender (he lies, he threatens, he resists—he shrieks, throws people to the ground or into the fire or the water).

He is a real foe, and he may yet wound us, but he has been defeated, and our wounds will be healed. Let's stand firm in our confidence that Jesus has won this cosmic war for us. Let's celebrate Him with praise!

### **Sin—my old, familiar nature**

The devil's only access to you and me is through the sin that operates in our lives. He sets snares for us and then baits the traps with attractive lies or offensive incidents. When we bite, choosing un-truth or un-love, we slip back into sin and away from Jesus.

*Hebrews 12:3 NLT* *Think of all the hostility He endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up.* <sup>4</sup> *After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin.*

Our sins have been forgiven through the death of Jesus on the cross, and will not be held against us (you are FREE!). But sin is still operative within us, as long as we live in these mortal bodies. Holiness is a shield, but sin is the crack in our armor.

Sin creates debt—debt to Satan, because “*you are slaves of the one you obey*” (Romans 6:16); and debt to God, because we have “forgotten that we were joined to Christ” (Romans 6:3) by covenant.

Debt is bondage. That’s true financially (“*the borrower is servant to the lender*”), and it’s true spiritually. Flee from it as quickly as you can, because you cannot live free, as Christ wants you to, if you are subject to the will and whim of another.

One sure sign that you are in debt to sin is when you identify yourself by your sin. When you try to excuse yourself from faithfulness by saying, “That’s just who I am, or, That’s how God made me, or, I can’t help it,” you are identifying yourself according to your sin.

The new birth that Jesus gives us, leads us to identify with Him—as in water baptism, when we identify with His death, burial, and resurrection. And that’s how we are to live the Christian life: from the identity of a fully devoted follower of Christ. Have you chosen His way, or do you still make up your own?

*1 John 1:9 But if we confess our sins to Him, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.*

Prayers of confession are normal; don’t be ashamed of them. And, certainly, don’t pretend you don’t need them. Instead, be eager to throw off the sin that so easily entangles you. Plead the effectiveness of Jesus’ blood, which was shed for you. That’s how you deal with sin’s work in your life. Pray. Pray. Pray. Then, trust and obey.

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Prayer involves struggle. Which may be why many people avoid serious or extended prayer; they just don't care that much. But we have help!

*"God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, Whom He has given us."* (Romans 5:5). We access it and communicate it by our faith in Jesus.

Living faithfully also involves struggle. There are three other enemies of the life of faithfulness: isolation, weakness, and weariness. Each of these require intentional self-care.

Isolation is widespread today. Screen devices and ear buds commonly isolate us from one another. Add to that three years of COVID 19 warnings, masking, and lockdowns. Social intimidation contributes to isolation, including bullying, ranting, stalking, vulgar language, hate speech, and slanderous accusation.

But Christians are called to, and made for, community in the Spirit. That's the opposite of isolation. It is giving yourself away to others in loving acts of compassion and care.

But we also have natural inward tendencies toward isolation: weakness and weariness. Weakness activates shame, and moves us away from others.

Weariness retreats from the normal demands of relationships. And then, weakness and weariness are further aggravated by isolation. It's a vicious circle!

People tend to withdraw when they most need community/fellowship. That doesn't necessarily mean a physical separation. Many experience isolation in the midst of a group (hiding behind alcohol or drugs or simple shyness, or pretending to be someone they're not).

We do require periods of rest and recuperation after great struggle, whether it's physical, mental, or spiritual, and these are best afforded in community, where someone keeps you company and covers for you while you recover.

Others may pray for you—even agonize in prayer for you—but that will never be enough. Self-care is required, because no one else can get inside your head to know just what you're thinking and feeling.

Self-care is where you *agonize* (go to war, do battle) to sustain and increase your spiritual vitality. And we have been given special weapons for this battle! And they are EFFECTIVE!

They tear down strongholds!

They dismantle arguments!

They overcome obstacles!

They elicit obedience to Christ!

*2 Corinthians 10:3 NET For though we live as human beings, we do not wage war according to human standards, <sup>4</sup>for the weapons of our warfare are not human weapons, but are made powerful by God for tearing down strongholds. We tear down arguments <sup>5</sup>and every arrogant obstacle that is raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to make it obey Christ.*

Here are three other translations that add clarity:

*2 Corinthians 10:3 NJB For although we are human, it is not by human methods that we do (go to) battle.*

*2 Corinthians 10:4 AMP For the weapons of our warfare are not physical [weapons of flesh and blood], but they are mighty before God for the overthrow and destruction of strongholds, <sup>5</sup> [Inasmuch as we] refute arguments and theories and reasonings and every proud and lofty thing that sets itself up against the [true] knowledge of God; and we lead every thought and purpose away captive into the obedience of Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One).*

*2 Corinthians 10:5 MSG We use our powerful God-tools for smashing warped philosophies, tearing down barriers erected against the truth of God, fitting every loose thought and emotion and impulse into the structure of life shaped by Christ. <sup>6</sup> Our tools are ready at hand for clearing the ground of every obstruction and building lives of obedience into maturity.*

What are these weapons? Prayer and praise, offered in the power of the Holy Spirit!

When you feel surrounded or overwhelmed don't just "white knuckle" it; (There's no joy there; you're just fixated on trying to survive.) Instead, pray and lift up your praise to the Lord! That's how you will THRIVE!

Prayer and praise are your keys to victory and peace. Like the song says:

*I will bring praise, I will bring praise  
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Let's stand firm in our confidence that Jesus has won this cosmic war *for us*. And He makes us "more than conquerors."

*Romans 8:37 No, despite all these things (that we may battle), overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, Who loved us. <sup>38</sup> And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. <sup>39</sup> No power in*

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Let's celebrate Him with praise! For praise and worship are the voice of your faith. Let them fill your mouth. Let them fill your mind. Let them fill your life!

King David sang:

*Psalm 32:7 You are my hiding place; You protect me from trouble. You surround me with songs of victory.*

Whether you're in a desert place, or facing a fiery trial, or in a dangerous battle—BRING GOD PRAISE! This is your mission, to give voice to your faith, no matter *what* comes your way.

At the conclusion of this service, you will leave this building and enter YOUR mission field. Will there be struggles? Will there be battles? Of course. But who's the victor? Don't just prepare yourself for a battle; PREPARE TO WIN!



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Prayers of confession are normal; don’t be ashamed of them. And, certainly, don’t pretend you don’t need them. Instead, be eager to throw off the sin that so easily entangles you. Plead the effectiveness of Jesus’ blood, which was shed for you. That’s how you deal with sin’s work in your life. Pray. Pray. Pray. Then, trust and obey.

## **Lack of Spiritual Self-Care**

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Prayer involves struggle. Which may be why many people avoid serious or extended prayer; they just don't care that much. But we have help!

*"God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, Whom He has given us."* (Romans 5:5). We access it and communicate it by our faith in Jesus.

Living faithfully also involves struggle. There are three other enemies of the life of faithfulness: isolation, weakness, and weariness. Each of these require intentional self-care.

Isolation is widespread today. Screen devices and ear buds commonly isolate us from one another. Add to that three years of COVID 19 warnings, masking, and lockdowns. Social intimidation contributes to isolation, including bullying, ranting, stalking, vulgar language, hate speech, and slanderous accusation.

But Christians are called to, and made for, community in the Spirit. That's the opposite of isolation. It is giving yourself away to others in loving acts of compassion and care.

But we also have natural inward tendencies toward isolation: weakness and weariness. Weakness activates shame, and moves us away from others.

Weariness retreats from the normal demands of relationships. And then, weakness and weariness are further aggravated by isolation. It's a vicious circle!

People tend to withdraw when they most need community/fellowship. That doesn't necessarily mean a physical separation. Many experience isolation in the midst of a group (hiding behind alcohol or drugs or simple shyness, or pretending to be someone they're not).

We do require periods of rest and recuperation after great struggle, whether it's physical, mental, or spiritual, and these are best afforded in community, where someone keeps you company and covers for you while you recover.

Others may pray for you—even agonize in prayer for you—but that will never be enough. Self-care is required, because no one else can get inside your head to know just what you're thinking and feeling.

Self-care is where you *agonize* (go to war, do battle) to sustain and increase your spiritual vitality. And we have been given special weapons for this battle! And they are EFFECTIVE!

They tear down strongholds!

They dismantle arguments!

They overcome obstacles!

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*2 Corinthians 10:3 NET For though we live as human beings, we do not wage war according to human standards, <sup>4</sup>for the weapons of our warfare are not human weapons, but are made powerful by God for tearing down strongholds. We tear down arguments <sup>5</sup>and every arrogant obstacle that is raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to make it obey Christ.*

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What are these weapons? Prayer and praise, offered in the power of the Holy Spirit!

When you feel surrounded or overwhelmed don't just "white knuckle" it; (There's no joy there; you're just fixated on trying to survive.) Instead, pray and lift up your praise to the Lord! That's how you will THRIVE!

Prayer and praise are your keys to victory and peace. Like the song says:

*I will bring praise, I will bring praise  
No weapon formed against me shall remain  
I will rejoice, I will declare  
God is my victory and He is here*

Let's stand firm in our confidence that Jesus has won this cosmic war *for us*. And He makes us "more than conquerors."

*Romans 8:37 No, despite all these things (that we may battle), overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, Who loved us. <sup>38</sup> And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. <sup>39</sup> No power in*

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Let's celebrate Him with praise! For praise and worship are the voice of your faith. Let them fill your mouth. Let them fill your mind. Let them fill your life!

King David sang:

*Psalm 32:7 You are my hiding place; You protect me from trouble. You surround me with songs of victory.*

Whether you're in a desert place, or facing a fiery trial, or in a dangerous battle—BRING GOD PRAISE! This is your mission, to give voice to your faith, no matter *what* comes your way.

At the conclusion of this service, you will leave this building and enter YOUR mission field. Will there be struggles? Will there be battles? Of course. But who's the victor? Don't just prepare yourself for a battle; PREPARE TO WIN!



## MY BATTLE SONG

By Rev. Will Nelken

*Presented at Trinity Community Church, San Rafael, CA, on Sunday, January 15, 2023*

This month, we're taking a closer look at the lyrics of Desert Song, by Brooke Ligertwood, because it combines a number of potent Scripture images to make its point.

This is a song about prayer and worship—two constants in a life fully devoted to Jesus. And it is a song about the challenges and heartaches in life—two other constants in everyone's life.

We looked at the theme of the first verse—*This is my prayer in the desert*—to learn how to manage the dry seasons of life.

And we examined the topic of the second verse—*This is my prayer in the fire*—to reflect on how to walk through fiery trials in life.

Today, we'll consider verse three:

### Desert Song

Brooke Ligertwood

*This is my prayer in the battle  
When triumph is still on its way  
I am a conqueror and co-heir with Christ  
So firm on His promise I'll stand*

*I will bring praise, I will bring praise  
No weapon formed against me shall remain  
I will rejoice, I will declare  
God is my victory and He is here*

*All of my life in ev'ry season  
You are still God  
I have a reason to sing  
I have a reason to worship*

The pessimist says, "Life is hard, and then you die."

The realist says, “Life is hard, but also pleasant.”

The Christ-follower says, “This life is hard, but God is more than able! And the life to come is over the top!”

In many ways, it is true, life is a struggle. This is acknowledged by every religion in the world, for the aim of every religion is peace, effected either by conquest or conversion or evolution.

Our walk of faith with Jesus Christ also requires a struggle.

*1 Timothy 1:18 NET I put this charge before you, Timothy my child, in keeping with the prophecies once spoken about you, in order that with such encouragement you may fight the good fight.*

And what is this fight about?

*1 Timothy 1:19 To do this you must hold firmly to faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and so have suffered shipwreck in regard to the faith.*

This is the battle ALL of us are engaged in—the good fight of faith.

The arena where this fight takes place is your mind. There ARE physical tools and weapons, but the battle is mental—dealing with strongholds, arguments, and attitudes. Let me quickly define these terms:

- Strongholds—this is the spiritual aspect, a bondage that is deaf and blind to (a particular) truth
- Arguments—this is the rational aspect, supporting my bondage with reasons
- Attitudes—this is the emotional aspect, expressing my bondage, especially through pride

This is where your fight for faith in Jesus is won or lost.

How is our faith resisted and threatened?

- Satan
- Sin
- Lack of spiritual self-care

**Satan—our adversary, and a holdout**

*Ephesians 6:12 For we are not fighting [wrestling] against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.*

*1 Peter 5:8 NLT Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. <sup>9</sup> Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith.*

*Remember that your family of believers all over the world is going through the same kind of suffering you are.*

All that is needed in the battle against the devil is to stand firm, because Jesus has already stripped him of his weapons and announced his defeat and demise. Why does he keep on fighting if he's really been defeated? Because he doesn't like the conclusion he's been presented!

After Japan officially surrendered in August 1945, Japanese holdouts in Southeast Asian countries and Pacific islands, who either doubted the veracity of the formal surrender or were not aware that the war had ended because communications had been cut off, continued to fight local police, government forces, and Allied troops stationed to assist the newly formed governments. Many holdouts were discovered over the following decades, with the last verified holdout, surrendering on Morotai Island in Indonesia in December 1974. 29 years after the war ended!

The devil is a holdout, too.

You need a strategy for standing firm in the faith (so that you won't lose your confidence).

*Hebrews 10:35* *So do not throw away your confidence, because it has great reward.* <sup>36</sup> *For you need endurance in order to do God's will and so receive what is promised.*

The most difficult part of standing true is *waiting in faith* for the enemy to surrender (he lies, he threatens, he resists—he shrieks, throws people to the ground or into the fire or the water).

He is a real foe, and he may yet wound us, but he has been defeated, and our wounds will be healed. Let's stand firm in our confidence that Jesus has won this cosmic war for us. Let's celebrate Him with praise!

### **Sin—my old, familiar nature**

The devil's only access to you and me is through the sin that operates in our lives. He sets snares for us and then baits the traps with attractive lies or offensive incidents. When we bite, choosing un-truth or un-love, we slip back into sin and away from Jesus.

*Hebrews 12:3 NLT* *Think of all the hostility He endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up.* <sup>4</sup> *After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin.*



Our sins have been forgiven through the death of Jesus on the cross, and will not be held against us (you are FREE!). But sin is still operative within us, as long as we live in these mortal bodies. Holiness is a shield, but sin is the crack in our armor.

Sin creates debt—debt to satan, because “*you are slaves of the one you obey*” (Romans 6:16); and debt to God, because we have “forgotten that we were joined to Christ” (Romans 6:3) by covenant.

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