

Nevertheless

It's interesting to me how some sermons stand out in my mind. Some days I couldn't tell you what I preached about last Sunday, and some days I can recall a certain message that I preached years before. This past week as I was praying about what to share this morning, I felt the Lord remind me of a message I preached nine years ago. At the heart of the message was just one word: Nevertheless.

It's interesting the power of a word. Words bind us to each other, bind us to action, to behavior. Words solidify relationships, they inspire and empower us to believe, to trust, to hope, to persevere.

This word, nevertheless, has the power to effect our destiny and our days. Webster defines nevertheless as "notwithstanding; still, yet, that is in opposition to anything said or done." "The roads are impassible, nevertheless, we will journey on." "In opposition to what has been said or done or noted before, nevertheless, we will keep pressing on." I like this word. How many times in life do you look at a situation, something that looks impossible, and you think "What do I do? Turn around and go home, defeated, or do I decide, I know it looks impossible, nevertheless, in opposition to what has been said or done before, I will go on. I will do it."

Turn with me to the Old Testament book of 2 Samuel 5 and let me show you an example of the use of this word. Let me give you some background as to what is going on. The nation of Israel at this time was kind of a confederation of the twelve tribes of Israel. They people decided they wanted a king to be like the other nations of the earth and Samuel, under God's direction, appointed Saul to be king over Israel. Saul ruled but over time disobeyed the Lord and the kingdom was to be taken from him and given to a man after God's own heart, David.

David had been a military leader for Saul and David's men were loyal to David. Saul became jealous of David and tried to kill him and so began an ongoing battle with various tribes aligning with Saul and others with David. David is made king over the tribe of Judah in the south and made the city of Hebron his capital. Saul is killed in a battle with the Philistines and his son, Ishbosheth, becomes king of Israel in his place and reigns for a couple of years. Ishbosheth is a weak leader whereas David is gaining strength in the South.

There is all kinds of intrigue going on as Abner, the commander of Saul's army and the

power behind Ishbosheth, gets insulted and decides to make a deal with David to bring all of Israel over to him and help unite the nations. Joab was David's commander and his brother had been killed by Abner so when he hears that Abner is making a deal with David, Joab kills Abner. Then two men kill Saul's son Ishbosheth and bring his head to David who then has those two men killed. No doubt people would suspect David of being behind all of this, but the bible says because of the way David honored these men who had died, "...on that day all the people and all Israel knew that the king had no part in the murder of Abner son of Ner."

It is quite a sordid piece of history, but in the midst of it all, something miraculous begins to take place as the people recognize the need for a united kingdom and finally come together. That brings us to 2 Samuel 5. The bible says, **"All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron..." 2 Samuel 5:1.** Details of what that looked like are found in 1 Chronicles 12:23. **"These are the numbers of the men armed for battle who came to David at Hebron to turn Saul's kingdom over to him, as the Lord had said..." 1 Chronicles 12:23.**

Representatives from every tribe came to David at his capital in Hebron – a total of 348,222 men. Can you imagine the feeling of unity that began to arise in their hearts? The people of God were uniting, they were becoming a nation again instead of independent, warring families and tribes. They had been feuding and fighting for too long. Now they came to feast, to celebrate, to unite. **"All these were fighting men who volunteered to serve in the ranks. They came to Hebron fully determined to make David king over all Israel. All the rest of the Israelites were also of one mind to make David king. The men spent three days there with David, eating and drinking, for their families had supplied provisions for them. Also, their neighbors from as far away as Issachar, Zebulun and Naphtali came bringing food on donkeys, camels, mules and oxen. There were plentiful supplies of flour, fig cakes, raisin cakes, wine, oil, cattle and sheep, for there was joy in Israel." 1 Chronicles 12:38-40**

Joy in Israel. Hard feelings of the past are put aside for the sake of the common good. The people are uniting for a stronger presence among the nations. It is a testimony to the sovereignty of God and to the genius of David. He was a political genius, a military genius and a man of integrity who was described as a man after God's own heart. One commentary, speculating about how David pulled everyone together, wrote, "[It is] Enough to know that in those five years after Ishbosheth's murder David won the approval of all Israel, and that his

appointment to the kingdom was by the free choice of the tribes, acting in a legitimate manner, and sending each their elders to Hebron to notify to David their consent; and that their decision was ratified by this joyful gathering of a mighty multitude from all parts of the land.”

It is interesting the bible records three arguments used for convincing the people that David should be the king of all Israel. The elders said, **“We are your own flesh and blood. In the past, while Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And the Lord said to you, ‘You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler.’” 2 Samuel 5:1-2.** They essentially were saying:

(1)We are family – we are all Abraham’s children and we shouldn’t be killing one another. It is time for the killing to stop. Besides, you are a son-in-law of Saul.

(2)You are a proven leader. You are the one that brought us great military victories, even when Saul was king, you are the one who led us to victory.

Those are good points, but can I tell you they weren’t good enough. Being family hadn’t ever stopped them from fighting and killing each other before. Why should it stop them now?

Being a proven military leader wasn’t enough either. Helpful, but it was probably more of a reason to want to kill him than to enthrone him. So what was this all about? How could this miraculous unification take place? It takes place because God said it and God’s word is forever settled in heaven. It takes place because if God promises it, you can trust it will happen. God had found a man after his own heart. He had found a man of integrity and he was about to establish the throne of David, through whose lineage the Messiah would be born. God’s purposes will be established, you can count on that. Listen, if we can learn one lesson from all of this it must be this: **The fulfillment of God’s promise and the realization of God’s purpose is only a matter of time!**

Think about all the years that had gone by since David stood out in the back yard of his father’s house as Samuel anointed him with oil and told him God had chosen him to be Israel’s king. Don’t you imagine David had to wonder how? How could this come to pass? Running from Saul, the strife growing more bitter. How could he ever unite the people? How could he be king over all of Israel? How could this ever take place? Because God is faithful and God’s word is true. The fulfillment of God’s promise through the obedience of his servants is only a matter of time.

How could it happen? How could those elders choose David as their king? We hear them telling David, “You are our flesh and blood, you are a strong leader, but most importantly, (3)we know that Samuel anointed you to be king when you were a young man. We know this is ordained of God. You are to shepherd the people of God.”

“When all the elders of Israel had come to King David at Hebron, the king made a compact with them at Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel.”

“David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years.” 2 Samuel 5:3-5

God worked a miracle and David is now King over all Israel. It seemed impossible, certainly unlikely. **What do you do when everything seems at best unlikely and at the worst, impossible? You rest in God’s promise! You trust in his timing!** I know how it looks, but I know what his word says. It’s only a matter of time. David, you will be king. Some of you have been waiting for the fulfillment of a promise from the Lord and you’ve been waiting a long time. It seems unlikely, maybe even impossible. How will this ever happen? Do what David did. You rest in God’s promise. He didn’t force the promise. He didn’t try to kill Saul. He waited and trusted that in God’s way and in God’s good timing, God would honor his promise and make it happen. David is king and the people are united around him, just as the Lord promised.

That’s the background but where does the “nevertheless” part come in? Look at what happens next. David has become king, but he has to make a decision about where the capital should be. Hebron had been perfect for David as the king of Judah, but it was a tribal capital. It was too far south. He couldn’t afford to stay there, but he couldn’t afford to move too far North because he had stronger support in the south. David the politician knew that a new nation would require a new capital. The people had to start thinking of themselves as a nation rather than just a collection of twelve tribes with twelve capitals. There had to be a center of government. But where would it be?

There was one place that seemed perfect. The place had a long history of being an invincible fortress. In fact, it was the one place that David had not been able to conquer as he was driving out the Philistines and others from the land. At that time, in some references it was known as the city of Jebus, but it would also be called Yeru-salem (Jerusalem).

Looking back at Israel's history, Joshua 15 records the allotment of land for the tribe of Judah. The boundaries are recorded by clan and village with great detail. And one important footnote is included in that chapter. **“Judah could not dislodge the Jebusites who were living in Jerusalem; to this day the Jebusites live there with the people of Judah.” Joshua 15:8**

Joshua had conquered the Jebusites but he could not get them out of that city. Judges 1:8 tells us the men of Judah attacked the city and set it on fire, but it appears the Jebusites moved back in, rebuilt it, and remained there, untouched during all of the times of the judges. It may speak of the strength of the Jebusites, but it is more likely that it speaks of the natural strength of that city as a stronghold and fortress.

Years had gone by and no one had been able to take the city. But after David becomes King of all Israel, he looks to that city of Jebus and says, “That will be the new capital of Israel. As surely as God has chosen me to be king, he has chosen that city to be the capital.” It would be called Jerusalem and the city of David, the city of God, the city of the great king. The writer of Psalm 48 would declare, **“Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise in the city of our God, his holy mountain. It is beautiful in its loftiness, the joy of the whole earth. Like the utmost heights of Zaphon is Mount Zion, the city of the Great King. God is in her citadels; he has shown himself to be her fortress.” Psalm 48:1-3.** Jebus would be the capital.

And all of that sounds wonderful except for one thing: **No one had been able to capture the city!** It's wonderful that David says Jebus is supposed to be the capital city. It's great that he believes God has ordained this, but remember what Joshua 15:8 said? Judah couldn't dislodge the Jebusites who were living in Jerusalem. They had resisted every attack, every attempt at taking the city. Its' natural position made it too well fortified.

History didn't stop David. Instead, by faith, David took his men and marched to the city to attack the Jebusites. When he demanded that they surrender to him and his army, the Jebusites shouted down from their walled fortress, “You will not get in here; even the blind and the lame can ward you off.” They were telling David “Our city is so strong that we could put blind people and handicapped people on the city walls and they could defend this place. We don't need strong warriors to defend this city. The city defends itself. There is no way you can defeat us.” They were so sure, the bible says, **“They thought, ‘David cannot get in here.’” 2 Samuel 5:6**

It was impossible. It had never been done before. David could be thinking, “Maybe this

isn't the place after all. Maybe it's asking too much. Maybe I would be better off at Hebron. After all, I'm used to that place. There is no need to rock the boat like this, cause all of this trouble. Is it worth the challenge?" Mark Rutland wrote, **"With every new opportunity will come both change and challenge."**...Mark Rutland We know that to be true, don't we? Expect it. Get ready for it. Accept it.

What a challenge. It looked impossible. It hadn't been done before. It looked like it would take a miracle and that made it the perfect place from which to rule the nation of Israel. This was the place. This was God's place. This was what God had ordained to be. Though the years had gone by and no one had conquered this stronghold, David knew this was the place and this was the time. All he needed was faith and a miracle!

What did I tell you earlier? **The fulfillment of God's promise and the realization of God's purpose is only a matter of time!** The time had come! God's promise, the right person, the right time.

The doubters are there to tell David it can't be done. They had been there years ago to tell the boy David he couldn't kill a lion and a bear to protect his flock. They had been there to tell a young David he couldn't defeat a giant like Goliath. They had been there to tell a kid playing a harp and writing poetry and songs that he couldn't lead an army. No doubt some of those same doubters were there to say a man like David couldn't unite the tribes into one kingdom. And some of those same doubters were there to tell David you might as well start looking for another location for your capital because Jebus can't be conquered.

The doubters see defeat - "it's never been done" – the faith-filled see that it's only a matter of time! You see, this is God's man. This is David, a man after God's own heart. And this is God's city. Call in the doubters, check with all the odd's makers in Vegas, visit with all the military strategist that tell you why it can't be done and then after all of that, read verse seven. **"Nevertheless, David captured the fortress of Zion, the City of David."** 2 Samuel 5:7 What was that? It's an impenetrable fortress! Nevertheless, David captured the fortress. It can't be conquered! Nevertheless, David conquered the city. It can't be done, nevertheless, David did it. In opposition to anything that has been said or done, nevertheless, David captured the fortress of Zion. It has been Jebus, the city of the Jebusites for generations, nevertheless, it is called the City of David now! **"David then took up residence in the fortress and called it the City of**

David.” 2 Samuel 5:9

Listen to me, for every challenge, there are a list of reasons why you can't do it, why you can't succeed, why you shouldn't even try. Satan loves to point out the impossibilities of the challenges before us and he delights in trying to convince us our faith is futile, our plans are worthless, God isn't listening because he just doesn't care. You can't do it.

For David and his men, it seemed there was no way into the city. Everything looked hopeless. But in the face of hopeless odds, remember God has a plan and he makes a way where there seems to be no way. **Fear and doubt close our eyes to God's possibilities, but faith opens our eyes to see what others cannot see.**

I believe David had a God-given plan. David said, “Anyone who conquers the Jebusites will have to use the water shaft to reach those lame and blind who are David's enemies.” (V8) The Jebusites felt safe and secure because not only was the city elevated on a hill with valleys around them, and surrounded by a ten-foot-thick wall, but in case of a long siege, they had a secret supply of water. There was a hidden water shaft from the Gihon spring up to the city. If you go to Israel with us next year, you can see what archaeologists believe to be that water shaft that Joab climbed up to reach the city. David said who ever is willing to lead the attack on Jebus and can find a way into the city, he will become my commander in chief. 1 Chronicles 11 tells us Joab was the first to volunteer. Somehow he managed to climb up the shaft (more than 50 feet) and slip into the city and then open the gates of the city to David and his men. What the Jebusites thought was their strength (having a hidden shaft to bring water into the city), David recognized as a weakness, a vulnerable spot that could lead to his victory and their defeat.

What was thought impossible becomes possible as David takes the city. Look around with eyes of faith. When God is in it, there is a way in. There is a way out. There is a way through. Trust God.

Some of you are facing impossible odds, impossible circumstances. Like David, you've waited, wondering how could God ever work this all out. And over time, it seems like some of the pieces have come together. Impossible things have happened. Relationships that were so bitter and splintered have been mended – just like the twelve tribes coming together and making David their king. But there still remains that last piece – and looking up at it, it looms over you, as frightening and impenetrable as the city of Jebus appeared to David.

How can you find your way? How can this obstacle be overcome? How can this fortress be conquered? It looks so huge, so overwhelming. There just doesn't seem to be a way. And then you see it – it looks like a little hole in the ground, just an opening. It's not too big. It just might be big enough for a person to slip through and wind their way along until you could be inside the walls. You can stare at the walls and ponder your defeat or you can look at that water shaft with eyes of faith and see victory ahead.

Jebus was unbeatable, unconquerable, impenetrable. “Nevertheless, David captured the fortress of Zion, the City of David.”

I don't know what impossible things you are facing, but with faith in God and trust in his timing, his plan, his purpose, his ways, it can be said of you, nevertheless, you conquered, nevertheless, you won the battle, nevertheless, you saw the answer come, nevertheless, you obeyed God, nevertheless your children were saved, nevertheless, you kept on serving the Lord in spite of the circumstances, nevertheless, in spite of what saw or heard, you found victory through Christ!

What the world, the devil, your past, have told you cannot be, just like the history of Jebus told everyone it couldn't be conquered – nevertheless, when God says it shall be, it shall be! Keep trusting. Keep believing. Keep obeying. It's a matter of trust and time! Nevertheless, the victory is on its way!