

The power of one word

Opening Text: Numbers 13:17-20, 26-33

I am sure that most of us are familiar with this great story of the Bible. God made a promise, the promise was good, the spies brought back evidence of how good it was but, in the end, God's people failed to enter the land and possess the promise.

V.26 says that *they brought back word to them.*

I want to call your attention today to a word that is absolutely crucial in this story, a word that became the decisive factor, a word that changed the direction of their lives from what should have been a short journey, to a long march of 40 years in the desert.

*27 Then they told him and said: "We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. 28 **Nevertheless** the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large; moreover, we saw the descendants of Anak there.*

That word is '**nevertheless**'!

Nevertheless, is what is known grammatically as a 'sentence connector'. Inserted in the middle of a sentence, it connects two different thoughts.

In our passage they were saying, '*yes the promise is true, and it is good, nevertheless we can't go in, there is a problem*'.

Nevertheless: *in spite of that, however, yet...* (these are all 'sentence connectors') We often also hear people say, '*yes but*'...

1. The danger of a 'nevertheless' mindset

I want to talk to you about this because there is a mindset that instead of receiving the promise with an amen, adds a *nevertheless* – a proposition that is going to explain it away. That is sophisticated form of unbelief.

It is interesting that **Hebrews 3:19** says that *they did not enter [the promised land] because of their unbelief.*

The word '*nevertheless*' was a clear expression of their over-cautious, fearful mindset and unbelief.

Yes, God's promise is good but..., yes God's promise is true...

- *Nevertheless, there are enemies*
- *Nevertheless, there are giants*
- *Nevertheless, we're just grasshoppers in their sight anyway*

They should have added an exclamation mark to the word of the promise, instead of putting out an argument about how it couldn't happen.

That is the mindset that kept them from receiving from God. We do that often:

- *Yes, God promised to supply my needs, nevertheless the economy seems to have taken a turn for the worse*
- *Yes, God is my healer, but Dr Google said it is expected that this will only get worse*

2 Corinthians 1:20: *For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.*

2. The danger of “nevertheless” kind of people

Nevertheless, that one word, kept them from the best God had for them. It is so discouraging to talk to pessimistic, ‘*nevertheless-kind-of-people*’:

Caleb mentioned that whole episode, some 40 years later:

Joshua 14:6-8 - *6 Then the children of Judah came to Joshua in Gilgal. And Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him: “You know the word which the Lord said to Moses the man of God concerning you and me in Kadesh Barnea. 7 I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh Barnea to spy out the land, and I brought back word to him as it was in my heart. 8 **Nevertheless** my brethren who went up with me made the heart of the people melt, but I wholly followed the Lord my God.*

That negative word spoken there that day, brought great discouragement to the people and as a result they never entered the land – only their children.

Hebrews 4 speaks of them like this:

Hebrews 4:2 - *For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.*

The promise was good, the evidence was there for all to see but the word did not profit them because it was not mixed with faith – it was polluted with the caution and scepticism encapsulated in that one word “*nevertheless*”.

Could it be that we do the same sometimes? – instead of saying yes and amen, we render the promise of no effect because we argue *nevertheless*.

3. A good way to use the word “nevertheless”

Luke 5: 4-6 - *4 When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, “Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.” 5 But Simon answered and said to Him, “Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; **nevertheless**, at Your word*

I will let down the net.”⁶ And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking.

Simon Peter had tried to fish all night and caught nothing. He could have used *nevertheless* to reinforce his *hopelessness*.

He could have said,

- *Yes Jesus that is a good word but...*
- *That is good promise, nevertheless I have experience at this, I know what I am doing, I know this business and there no chance this will happen*

But He said instead: “*Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless, at Your word I will let down the net.*”

- *I will let down the net,*
- *I will try again,*
- *I will act on your word!*

We need to start using the word “*nevertheless*” not to express unbelief but to declare our faith:

- *I know I have these symptoms, nevertheless by His stripes I am healed*
- *I know Nebuchadnezzar has heated up the furnace 7 times, nevertheless our God is well able to save us*
- *Or like the ruler of the Synagogue that came to Jesus in Matthew 9:18 and said, my daughter has just died. But come and you lay your hand on her, and she will live*

He didn't say, well Jesus is powerful but its too late. No! ... But you lay your hand on her and she will live

The spies should have said, *yes there are giants in the land, nevertheless we can overcome.*

No. That is not what they said.

Caleb spoke differently, he agreed with the promise. He said,

Numbers 13:30: ... “*Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it*”

We need to start using our words to agree with what God said. We need to start using *nevertheless* to affirm the promises of God.

- *The economy isn't great, nevertheless my God shall supply all my needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*
- *I have run out of ideas and I don't know what do, nevertheless at His word, I will hope again.*

Attack your hopelessness with *nevertheless*!

I love what Job said in his affliction:

Job 19:26 - “*And after my body has decayed, **yet** in my body I will see God!*”

‘Yet’ or **‘nevertheless’** I shall see God!

I love what David said,

Psalms 27:13 - *I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord In the land of the living.*

Let us be people that although we experience trials in this life, nevertheless believe – believe the promise, believe that we will see God, believe that we will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living!

Conclusion:

The power of one word! One word kept them out of the promised land for 40 years. A word that expressed hesitation, caution and doubt.

When God speaks a word, we should say *yes*, or like Mary: *be it unto me according to your word*.

When He speaks, let us add an exclamation mark, not a question mark, not our own twist and explain it all away!