

## Nevertheless!

- As a kid, were you ever tormented by a verbal bully who was wittier and faster than you? Then you have probably used these two words, when your slower mental faculties couldn't come up with a comeback for the deluge of insults, teasing or name-calling: **OH, YEAH?**
- Have you ever longed for a Biblical "OH, YEAH?" that you could throw back in the face of the devil when he comes to assault and accuse? When you are stupefied and without argument in the face of his demonic bombardment, have you ever wish for a final, unstoppable "OH, YEAH?" that could shut the mouth of hell?
- There is a word, a great word, just one word: **NEVERTHELESS!**
- **NEVERTHELESS is a word bridge connecting two ideas, the first of which has no power, even if it is factual, to lessen the greater truth of the second.**
- "My teacher said that Saint John is the capital of New Brunswick." She may have said it – nevertheless, Fredericton is NB's capital.
- "I don't believe that you own a Chevrolet Cavalier." That is your opinion – nevertheless, my car is still sitting out in the parking lot.
- NEVERTHELESS builds a firewall between TRUTH and mere FACT (they are not the same!). Nevertheless says, "That may be so, it may be exactly as you have stated it, but it utterly lacks the strength to erode the unassailable truth it hopes to diminish!"
- NEVERTHELESS is the most efficient rebuttal to any argument, and is the tool only of the utterly confident. You can state whatever FACTS you want, but I cannot be shaken from the TRUTH I know!
- Learn how to use this one Bible word, and in the face of life's most baffling circumstances you will never be defenseless!
- **Let's examine the power of this Biblical "OH, YEAH?" ...**

## The Nevertheless of a Hard Thing

- The great prophet Elijah had finished his work, and his assistant Elisha sensed in his spirit that God was soon going to take his mentor to Heaven. The unknown future hung heavy in the air, almost more real than the present.

- "You stay here at Gilgal," Elijah said, "I'm going to Bethel." "As the Lord lives," Elisha retorted, "I will not let you out of my sight." That's the way it went all day; it was like Elijah was trying to lose him. Gilgal ... Bethel ... Jericho ... and finally the Jordan River, where the waters parted at the snap of the elder prophet's mantle.
- Finally, Elijah turns and says, "We both know what is about to happen, so ask what you will – what do you want me to do for you before I'm taken away?" Elisha's answer comes quickly: "Let a double portion of your spirit be upon me." Elijah's reaction is equally quick: "You have asked a hard thing."
- Never, not once in all their journeys, has Elisha heard these words. Blinding an army, praying down fire, holding back the rain, toppling the house of wicked King Ahab, none of these have been hard things. But a double portion – that's hard to do.
- **2 Kings 2:10** And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: **nevertheless**, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so.
- Suddenly, a terrifying sight comes straight at them – a chariot and horses of fire out of the sky! It drove right between them like a lightning bolt, but ELISHA'S EYES NEVER LEFT ELIJAH! Don't look away, Elisha! Your promise depends on it! Most Bible readers will tell you that the chariot of fire took Elijah to Heaven, but that's not true. Check it out – the Bible says that a whirlwind took Him away. THE CHARIOT WAS A DISTRACTION, but Elisha kept his focus.
- Elisha had indeed asked a hard thing, NEVERTHELESS, because he kept his spiritual energies focused, he received Elijah's mantle.
- Years later as he lay dying, Elisha was visited by King Joash, who was afraid of the Syrians. The prophet had him shoot an arrow out the window and declared it the "arrow of the Lord's deliverance." He then commanded Joash to take his other arrows and strike the ground, assuming he would realize this was a prophetic moment.
- When Joash only struck the ground three times, Elisha was angry. Here was a young man like many modern Christians who do not strike enough, seek, cry, pray, or ask big enough. When God says "HIT" then hit and keep on hitting until the "hard thing" happens!
- Don't be afraid to "ask big" – the Scriptural evidence indicates that God is more impatient with the timid than with the aggressive!

- **Hebrews 4:16** Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.
- With every great undertaking, there will always be Job's comforters around to tell you what is impossible, impractical, impulsive, imperfect, impetuous, improbable, impudent and imbecilic. There will always be a Sanballet and Tobiah at your elbow to tell you how unachievable your dream is. Such voices of discouragement are a dime a dozen – ask Nehemiah, the wall builder, who had the perfect answer in the face of an army of dream killers!
- **Nehemiah 4:9 Nevertheless** we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them.
- Pray hard, work hard, trust God to do the hard thing on your behalf – and don't listen to the critics!

## The Nevertheless of a Sure Foundation

- The words did not originate with a late-night comic, a sharp-witted politician or even an ancient philosopher. In their original form, they belong to Jesus, who knew that the enemies of truth run in packs ...
- **Matthew 7:15** Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.
- Paul also anticipated an onslaught of liberalism against the infant church after his death, false brethren armed with personality, education, charisma and intellect, but mostly with ravenous appetites to devour the faith of defenseless lambs ...
- **Acts 20:29-30** <sup>29</sup>For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. <sup>30</sup>Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.
- They are cowardly for the most part, waiting to lure the young and innocent away from the fold so they can pounce on them with their mockery, arguments and intimidation. And our amoral society loves these tolerant, liberal and sophisticated "christians" because their lax lifestyle doesn't create conviction, break the status quo, or disturb their comfort zone.

- Youthful, innocent, brand-new converts are lacerated without pity and even made to feel guilty for their holy and separated lifestyle by these liberal "christians" with their pseudo-freedom. And in such an antagonistic religious atmosphere, believers – especially young believers – need an irrefutable, undebatable answer that dismisses these adversaries and strengthens their faith.
- That answer – which, by the way, infuriates the new breed of pseudo Christians – is found in the clear calm syllables of NEVERTHELESS.
- You may find yourself at the end of your own intellect when attempting to defend your faith against those who have spent years honing their arguments to a fine edge. No matter how bright or well-prepared you are, you may eventually come up against a brighter and better-prepared opponent. But arm yourself with the ultimate answer, and you will never be defeated!
- Wait until they have spent all their energy, used up all their intellectual ammunition, and stand triumphant over what they expect to be your whimpering, defeated form.
- "There, what do you have to say about that?" "Just one word," you say without a hint of panic, "NEVERTHELESS!" After all your arguments, and despite your obvious intellect, you cannot tear down the foundation of God in my life ... I don't even need to defend it."
- **2 Timothy 2:19 Nevertheless** the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

## The Nevertheless of Trials

- Nowhere does the Bible promise Christians a life of ease; in fact, many Scriptures say the exact opposite ...
- **Psalms 34:19** Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.
- We sometimes try to impose on God our limited understanding of "FAIRNESS" and we quickly find out that He will not submit. A mother of three must have three equal candy bars, or else she will painstakingly divide the one she has into three equal portions. Never would she give the candy to one child and ask the other two children to rejoice while they watch him eat!

- Yet that is precisely what God does! He lifts one Christian to public prominence and bountiful blessing before the eyes of the world, while another is allowed to pour out their life in service and die in obscurity, hardship and suffering. **God's dealings with humanity defy our cozy explanations and tidy little formulas of faith!**
- Only one word can ever make sense of it all, and bring a sense of joy and victory to every life, no matter how much suffering or blessing it contains ... NEVERTHELESS!
- Satan has practiced his arguments for thousands of years and learned his lines well, and he never misses an opportunity to accuse God and His dealings. "There is your God for you! He lets you work like a slave, pray without ceasing, pour out your heart, and give till you drop, and then He rewards you with trials and suffering. Do you deny these facts?" "NO." Well, what do you have to say to this fine mess?" "Just one word ... NEVERTHELESS!"
- Remember the definition? Nevertheless is a bridge between two opposing sets of facts, the first of which (my suffering) cannot invalidate or even dilute the latter (God's goodness).
- **2 Timothy 1:12** For the which cause I also suffer these things: **nevertheless** I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.
- Paul balanced out his suffering with two unassailable facts:
  - I know **WHOM** I have believed – even though I do not understand, I do trust God, and that is enough for me.
  - I am persuaded that he is able to KEEP – nothing I have ever done for God is lost, because He is the one keeping the records, and He promises that eternity will be the great equalizer.
- If you've ever felt unappreciated or even unnoticed, here's the one word that will keep your spirits up ... NEVERTHELESS!
- All right, he will do it. He will cast the nets out one more time – but not without letting everyone know he thinks it is a stupid idea. If this carpenter wants nets, he'll get nets – wet, heavy, empty nets. But in spite of his reluctance (and maybe even a bit of rebellion), Peter decides to acquiesce with one powerful word ...
- **Luke 5:5** And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: **nevertheless** at thy word I will let down the net.
- And suddenly, Peter is stunned. Never, not on his greatest night of fishing, had Peter ever made a haul like this. So many fish!
- **We often labor under the illusion that all obedience must be joyful.** Don't be absurd! There may well be burdens or demands placed on us by the Lord that make no more sense that fishing in the daylight did to Peter. And it is permissible to tell God that you do not understand. He will let you talk – He is sovereign, not rude!
- God is not upset by your explanations as to why the situation is impossible. So let Him hear it all – I'm sure He will appreciate your help! ☺ However, when you are finished telling Him why it makes no sense and He answers with silence, be sure to obey with the one word that will unlock the miraculous in your life: NEVERTHELESS!
- Miraculous, supernatural, abundant blessings await the exhausted workers who will, despite their own common sense, cast their nets just one more time in obedience to the Lord! **The more unlikely the command, the greater the miracle!**
- **FIRST COMES THE "NEVERTHELESS" – THEN COMES THE MIRACLE!** So when you are too tired, too young, too old, too poor, too unknown, too burdened, too imperfect and too unspiritual to obey God's voice, tell Him all about it, let Him know all your complaints. And then answer with the word He waits to hear: NEVERTHELESS!
- **Galatians 6:9** And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

## The Nevertheless of Obedience

- Jesus' command seemed like mockery to the sweating, exhausted fishermen. It was broad daylight, and even a carpenter should know that you can't catch fish on the Sea of Galilee in broad daylight! Peter and the others had labored all night, and now they were tired. And now, this prophet from the land-locked village of Nazareth is spouting off directions as though he knew something about fishing! Peter has the right to feel fatigued and more than a little frustrated.

## The Nevertheless of Calvary

- Howling demons dance around Him in His agony as He tries to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane, and torturing mental images of what lies ahead rip at His soul. Soon will come the crucifixion that will deliver Him to hell at the hands of others.

- He looks between his hands where they claw at the massive rock where He prays. Is it raining? No, it's blood. Is it raining blood? No, at last He realizes that the blood is His own, dripping as it marks the agonizing passing of time. Tick, tick, tick, drip, drip, drip. His voice quavers and raises its pitch to a near wail as He prays ...
- **Luke 22:42** Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: **nevertheless** not my will, but thine, be done.
- Then the demons do their worst. Having shown Him all the pain that awaits Him, having gleefully displayed before Him the humiliating picture of His naked body suspended cruelly for all to see, having tormented His imagination with images of Hell itself, they now show Him the most horrible thing of all ... MY SINS.
- **“Would you die for HIM?”** My depraved indifference, my lying tongue, my blackest deeds, my arrogant self-worship paraded before His pleading soul must surely have been the worst torture of all. To die, to sacrifice, to lay down one's life for the great or even the good is one thing. But to fling one's life into the sewer for perverted, sinful flesh, to die in the very arms of Hell for a degenerate, hell-bent wretch is nothing but a reckless waste that must have completely boggled the minds of the horrified angels looking on.
- So He prays: “Take it away. Please don't make me drink this.”
- Can you hear the other prayer in Gethsemane? It's hardly audible, merely a whisper, almost entirely drowned out by the howling of the demons and the sobbing of Jesus. But if you listen close, you can just make it out ... it's MY prayer.
- “Please, Jesus, don't listen to the devil. Please, Jesus, don't even ask to be excused from Your dreadful destiny. For if this cup passes from Your lips, it passes to mine where it belongs. And I must drink from its torments for eternity. Please, Jesus!”
- Satan shrieks, “Will You toss away Your life for garbage like THIS? You've asked that the cup pass from Your lips. Is that Your last word? Why squander all You are for HIM? Are You so great a fool?”
- With a sweep of his hand, the devil gestures dramatically toward the masses of humanity yet unborn ... “Look at them all. Do you really expect them all to repent, believe and obey? Most of them never will!” **And for once, Satan has told the truth** – and Jesus knows it.
- Most of the human race, most of US, will never be anything but what we are, and we won't believe anything but our own self-deceptions. What a waste, that Jesus will go through all of this agony, only to see millions, even billions, still cast into hell because they will not come to Him for the free salvation that has cost Him so much.
- The physical pain awaiting Him on the cross will be the least of His agony. You see, never – not even for a second – has sin ever entered the life of Jesus. But now, He knows that on the cross He must become all the sin that the human race has ever committed. It will rip His humanity from His deity in a soul-wrenching agony that even Heaven cannot comprehend. He will die ALONE, forsaken.
- Jesus Christ will not only BEAR our sin. He will BECOME our sin. What can that even mean? It has to be the worst fear of all! But, in spite of seeing all that lies ahead, Jesus lifts His weary voice one more time to pray. **And He says the one word that will save a race that deserves no saving ... NEVERTHELESS!**
  - Nevertheless ... and Heaven and earth rejoice.
  - Nevertheless ... and Hell's arguments are brought to nothing.
  - Nevertheless ... and the chasm between the horrible truth about me and God's incredible love for me is eternally bridged.
- **Psalm 85:10** Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.
- In that one word, Jesus says so very much about His love for me. He does not deny that I am a sinner, He does not gloss over my wickedness, He sees it all. But He says, as powerful as the stench of my sin is, it can never make God's love any less.
- Despite all the devil's rational arguments to the contrary, despite knowing the horror He will endure, despite humanity's rejection of their only Savior, despite our filthiness and rebellion, Jesus chooses the cross with one great word ... NEVERTHELESS.
- Remember the definition? Nevertheless is a bridge between two opposing sets of facts, the first of which (my sin) cannot invalidate or even dilute the latter (God's love). Jesus was not saving us FROM GOD when He died; He was saving us FROM OURSELVES. I don't have to wonder if God loves me ... He proved it with “nevertheless!”
- There is no epistle to the Athenians in the New Testament, because they were the only city that literally laughed at Paul's message when he preached at Mars Hill. Other cities experienced revival, or at least a good riot, when Paul preached; but here among the philosophers he was just ignored. It must have been incredibly discouraging to preach Jesus and get nothing ... it still is. And yet, there was a glimmer of hope among the hundreds of refusals ...
- **Acts 17:34** Howbeit (NEVERTHELESS) certain men clave unto him, and believed:
- The only question is: **After all Jesus has done, what will YOU do?**