

MESSAGE - Seeking God's Kingdom - Part 12 - Help Me to Move - 2.15.26

Last week we talked about *pressing on after the battle*.

We saw that in James and in 1 Samuel.

Today we'll expand on those passages in an important way.

Look at James 1 again:

[SLIDE 1] James 1:2-4 - Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

We saw that perseverance doesn't come from our strength — it comes from the work Jesus does during the trial... *and* long after the trial.

But there's another word in that passage that carries weight: “**Let.**”

[SLIDE 2] James 1:4 - Let perseverance finish its work...

That word matters, because *that's our part in the process*.

We're not meant to force perseverance.

We can try — but we'll eventually burn out.

So instead, we *let it happen*.

We allow perseverance to do ITS work in us.

But in order for that to happen, we have to stop trying to control our circumstances and let Jesus lead—*let Him* finish what He started in us.

So... how do we do that?

Here's where we expand on last week:

[SLIDE 3] Letting perseverance finish its work means listening to His voice.

Look at what James said next:

[SLIDE 4] James 1:5 - If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

Notice the order.

James tells us to **let** perseverance finish its work...
and then he immediately tells us to **ask** God for wisdom.

Perseverance isn't passive — we do play a part.

When we don't know what to do, we don't panic.
We pray. We **ask**.

And when we pray, we remember this isn't a one sided conversation.
We're not leaving a voicemail for God.

We ask... and then we listen.

We trust that the Holy Spirit will guide us through the wisdom of His Word...
And we trust Him to do it in His timing.

Because even if we're still unsure of where the LORD is leading,
we press on... knowing that He's with us every step of the way.

But what does that look like in real life?

Because sometimes the trial is unbearable...

[SLIDE 5] [So] What happens when our fear speaks louder than our trust in Jesus?

Well, **that's exactly where Israel found themselves in our 1 Samuel passage.**

Last week we saw a divided Israel come together.
One of their cities was surrounded by an enemy stronger than them.
But the LORD showed His strength by empowering Saul and rescuing Israel.

That's where we hit the pause button in Israel's story.
We were left to wonder how Israel would respond to the LORD.

If we were to read the end of chapter 11 we'd see that...

- Saul gave the LORD all the credit for rescuing Israel.
- Then Samuel invited everyone down to Gilgal.
- Because now that Israel was united, it was time to reaffirm Saul as their king.

This was a high point for Israel!

Saul was now recognized by everyone as Israel's king.

And to honor the LORD, they offered fellowship sacrifices in His presence. That always involved sharing a meal together. And in that moment, the Hebrew text says that they *“rejoiced exceedingly!”*

Their rejoicing flows straight into chapter 12.

Picture the meal winding down... celebration still in the air... and Samuel stands up to speak.

He said to them...

[SLIDE 6] 1 Samuel 12:7 - ...stand here, because I am going to confront you with evidence before the LORD as to all the righteous acts performed by the LORD for you and your ancestors.

He was making an undeniable case that the LORD has always been faithful to His promises.

He reminds them:

It was the LORD who rescued your ancestors from Egypt.

It was the LORD who delivered you from your enemies.

Your safety — your survival — has always been because of Him.

But this is where Samuel's speech takes a turn.

— You can almost feel the celebration grow quiet.

Look at verse 12...

[SLIDE 7] 1 Samuel 12:12 - But when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites was moving against you, you said to me, ‘No, we want a king to rule over us’—even though the LORD your God was your king.

There it is.

We've been told in previous chapters that Israel rejected Yahweh as their King. We were told that they wanted a king like the other nations. But we haven't been told *why*... until now.

The reason they demanded a king in that moment was because...

[SLIDE 8] Their fear of Nahash grew louder than their trust in the LORD.

Remember who Nahash was.
He was the king of the Ammonites—a ruthless ruler.
He made it his mission to break the spirit of the Israelites.

And, if you remember, we're *meant* to see how *evil* this guy is.
His name is the same Hebrew word used for the serpent in Genesis 3.

That doesn't mean Nahash is Satan.
But it does remind us of something Scripture makes very clear:

There is a very real spiritual battle for our trust.

[SLIDE 9] From the Garden of Eden until now, the enemy's strategy with fear has been the same: distort reality, magnify the threat, and slowly erode our trust in God over time.

And when that happens, fear grows louder than trust.

That's what happened here with the Israelite's fear of Nahash.

But the LORD didn't abandon them in their fear—He stepped into it.

When Nahash surrounded them... they felt trapped.
Out of an overwhelming fear, they demanded another king.

And what did the LORD do?

He empowered Saul.
He united the people.
And *He defeated* their enemy.

Even though they asked for the wrong thing, the LORD still rescued them.

And now, Samuel says they have a choice...

[SLIDE 10] 1 Samuel 12:14-15 - If you fear the LORD and serve and obey him... if both you and the king who reigns over you follow the LORD your God—good! But if you do not obey the LORD, and if you rebel against his commands, his hand will be against you...

Samuel is saying:

Fear the LORD with reverence and awe—recognizing Him as the true King.
Serve the LORD — respond to the LORD’s voice from a heart of worship, not out of obligation.

And...

Obey the LORD.

The Hebrew word for ‘obey’ means ***to heed His voice***.

In other words:

[SLIDE 11] (“obey” means to) *listen and respond to the LORD’s voice above all other voices.*

So Samuel is saying:

*This **cannot** happen again.*

Either give yourselves fully to the LORD — and He will be with you.

Or turn from Him — and you will feel His hand against you.

And just in case the people weren’t yet convinced of the LORD’s power, look at verse 16:

[SLIDE 12] 1 Samuel 12:16 - “Now then, stand still and see [witness] this great thing [*dabar* = event / word] the LORD is about to do before your eyes [in your presence]!”

The phrase “great thing” is interesting. It’s accurate... but there’s a nuance here. The LORD *is* about to DO a “great thing” — something amazing is about to happen...

But the LORD’s actions are often closely tied to His *word*.

- Psalm 33:6 - The heavens were made by His **word** [*debar*]
- Psalm 33:9 - For **he spoke**, and it came to be
- Psalm 29 even describes the Lord's **voice** as thunder

And so when Samuel says:

“Stand still and witness what the LORD is about to do...”

Then the LORD responds — not with a whisper, but with **thunder**.

He made His voice unmistakable.

And notice how the people responded in verse 19.

They realized the weight of their sin and were afraid they might die.

So Samuel says:

[SLIDE 13] 1 Samuel 12:20 - “Do not be afraid...

The same fear that Israel had about Nahash and his army has now shifted to Yahweh. So — this isn't a mature, faithful fear. They're afraid of judgment.

But Samuel reassures them — ***Do not be afraid.***

Why? How can Samuel be so confident?

Because of the LORD's *great name.*

Look at verse 22:

[SLIDE 14] 1 Samuel 12:22 - For the sake of his great name THE LORD WILL NOT REJECT HIS PEOPLE, because the LORD was pleased to make you his own.

“For the sake of His great name...”

In other words: **God's faithfulness does not rest on your perfection. It rests on who He is.**

Samuel is saying:

You sinned. Your fear was misplaced. You deserved judgment. Yet — He is merciful. The LORD will not reject you.

So do not turn away from the LORD.
Instead, serve the LORD with all your heart.
Because you are His people — You belong to Him.

That's the choice Samuel set before Israel.
And it's still the choice before us.

When fear speaks... When trials feel unbearable...
 When we don't know what to do...

[SLIDE 15] Will we turn away... or will we trust?

James says:

Let perseverance finish its work.
When panic sets in — pray for wisdom.

Samuel says:

When fear speaks loudly, listen for His voice.
Remember, You belong to the LORD.

And Proverbs says it like this:

[SLIDE 16] Proverbs 3:5 - Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding...

Israel leaned on their own understanding when Nahash came.
 They interpreted the situation through fear.
 They saw the threat... and assumed God wasn't enough.

That's what *leaning on your own understanding* looks like.

It's panic taking over and letting it speak louder than God.

But Proverbs says:

Trust the LORD with all your heart...
— our whole inner self...

Lean not on your own understanding...
 — let's not rely on our own capacity to interpret our moments of trial...

Instead...

[SLIDE 17] Proverbs 3:6 - in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

In all your ways...

— in every area, every moment of our lives...

Submit to Him...

— listen for His voice

— remember that Jesus is King over all our moments...

And He will make your paths straight...

— we don't have to let fear drive us forward...

— instead, we let Jesus guide the direction our life is taking...

But how do we do that?

[SLIDE 18] How do we trust the LORD with all our heart when we face moments of devastating fear?

Well...

Have you noticed what the Word of God has been showing us this morning?

James, Samuel and Proverbs are all singing the same melody...

When fear begins to speak louder than our trust in God...

[SLIDE 18.1] *We pray.*

[SLIDE 18.2] *We listen.*

When we start to fear the road ahead...

[SLIDE 18.3] *We trust.*

And in the Lord's wisdom...

[SLIDE 18.4] *He guides.*

During the trial and long after...

[SLIDE 18.5] *He strengthens.*

— He helps us to move forward in His will.

But it all begins with prayer.

This is why I wrote a song earlier this week called ***Help Me to Move***.

It's a song of lament and hope that reflects the prayer of those who have been through hard times and are now on the other side, seeking God's strength to press on in the aftermath of the trial.

[SLIDE 19] Verse 1 is the lament.

It admits real feelings that could drown in fear.
It says:

**When the night's been long,
And the weight remains,
After the battle,
Nothing stays the same.**

But like the Psalms, it doesn't remain the fear.
In the second half of the verse,
it remembers the LORD's faithfulness.
It says:

**[SLIDE 20]
But You were with me in the storm,
You were faithful all along,
Now I press on in Your presence,
But still unsure of what's to come.**

There's still uncertainty.
There's still the potential of fear.
That's when the song shifts into the posture of trust:

**[SLIDE 21]
And so I pray...
Lord help me to move,
Help me to move,
Help me to persevere in the unknown.**

The repetition is on purpose.
We *continually* go to the LORD in prayer.
We return to Him again and again, especially in the unknown.

Then we wait — we listen:

[SLIDE 22]
Lord I'm waiting on You
I'm waiting on You,
Help me to trust in your faithfulness...
So I can press on.

This is a prayer that admits we can't move forward without the guidance and strength of the LORD.

And so, in a moment, we're going to play the song for you.

The lyrics will be up on the screen.
You don't need to sing along...
You can simply listen.

But I would encourage you to let this song guide you in a time of personal prayer and reflection.

Maybe there's something you're struggling with.
Maybe fear or uncertainty feels overwhelming right now.

Let's use this time to lay all of it out before the LORD.

After the song finishes, we'll close in prayer,
and the worship team will lead us with a response song.

Let's pray...

[SLIDE 23] SONG — Help Me to Move