

## 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel Ch 11

In our last gathering we saw Israel rejecting God's order and desiring their own. They wanted a king to rule over them like all the other nations. Now, they had a King already, God was their King, but they wanted someone who walked and talked and looked like a king, a physical person who would fight for them. They told Samuel that he was old news, and his sons didn't walk after him, or his ways and so they wanted a king. How often we want to meet the standards of the world instead of challenging the world to succumb to our standards, we want to be like the nations instead of demonstrating to the nations that we have what they need.

Well, God told Samuel to honor their request but they needed to know that their king would not give to them as God had given to them, wouldn't bless them as God had blessed them. But instead his legacy would be to take, take, take, take, take, and then take some more, they said that's ok we want him anyway.

So God gave them what they wanted, we know him as Saul, from the tribe of Benjamin this man looked like a king, he was the best looking man in all of Israel, head and shoulders taller than practically everyone else, and he was stout having worked on a farm all his life. Saul won the people's choice award, but he wasn't God's choice, and of course the lesson we discovered there was to be careful what you ask for, you just might get it. You want meat instead of manna, fine; it'll be coming out your nose. You don't want to enter the Promised Land, fine; you'll wonder the desert for 40 years, if we persist with God in our own ways, eventually God will give us over to them. How much better to just simply trust that God knows what's best for us and just cast ourselves upon His mercy and allow Him to care for us as He sees best.

But Saul had a private encounter with Samuel where God anointed him, and then he had his public ratification before the people, and God always deals with people in the secret before He deals with them in the open, whether it be for discipline, or a certain calling or whatever. God will speak to your heart, and tell you what He's got for you, or that you need to repent, before He exposes your situation publicly. And Saul started rather well, he was a very humble man, didn't know the Lord, but took off in the right direction having encountered the Lord and in many ways in the beginning he typifies the Lord.

He was anointed by God, surrounded by a band of men whose hearts God had touched, (which again packs so much potential it that it's mind blowing). Anytime you get a group of men together whose hearts God has touched there's no limit to what can happen. After we talked about this last time someone sent me an e-mail with a quote from John Wesley that said, "Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen, such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of God upon the earth." But you know I disagree with Wesley there, I don't think it would take that many, Jesus just chose 12 and I think they did a pretty good job.

But sticking with our type, though he was anointed by God, appointed to be their king, surrounded by a band of men whose hearts God had touched, he was rejected by others who in essence said (in vs 27 of ch 10) “We will not have this man to reign over us.” But notice, “Saul held his peace” he didn’t answer back. And though Christ was ridiculed, mocked, rejected by the people as their King, He held His peace, and as a Lamb that’s lead to the slaughter is silent so He opened not His mouth. And the fools brought Saul no gifts, but with Christ we realize that wise men bring gifts, they offer the Lord their lives and humble servitude. So Saul started well, but as we’ll see, he didn’t finish well, and unfortunately Jesus never said, “Well begun good and faithful servant,” He said, “Well, done good and faithful servant.” It’s not nearly as important how we begin (though no doubt a good start can set the pace for the whole race) but the important part is how we end.

It kind of makes you wonder if maybe Paul was thinking of Saul when he wrote to Timothy regarding the qualifications of overseers and he said, “*not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.*” They may start out real well Timothy, and no one is exempt from being ensnared by pride, but when they’re a novice, or a new believer they can be especially susceptible. Saul is a perfect example of that, and so maybe Paul had been contemplating the life of king Saul here, and he saw the fallacy of placing someone who was really a new believer in a position of spiritual authority, Saul just wouldn’t go the distance.

Vs1-3

So the men of Israel say, “You know, let us think this one over.” Now, Nahash (whose name means “Serpent”) this guy was a real snake. And we see here that he’s an Ammonite, why was he attacking Israel? Well, in Judges ch 11 you may recall a certain judge by the name of Jephthah. And Jephthah destroyed 20 cities of the Ammonites and so they probably figured they had a score to settle. So he took his troops and encamped against the men of Jabesh-Gilead and the men of Jabesh-Gilead came out to him (apparently way out gunned) and said, “Hey, lets make a peace treaty, I mean there’s no need for all this blood shed is there? Especially since it’ll be ours.” and So Nahash said, “You want peace, fine, the price of your peace is the right eye of all your men.” and So the Israelites in this part of the woods said, “You know, why don’t you give us a week or so to think this one over.”

Now the part that blows my mind is that Nahash said, “OK” if I were him I’d have said, “It’s now or never, your right eye or your life.” But what’s the deal with that, why the right eye? Well, not only would it be an incredible reproach to see thousands of eyeballs in a basket being given into the hands of your enemies. But the primary purpose was to in essence blind them, proclaiming that they were a defeated people. You see this one act would render them virtually militaryless the rest of their lives. Because in hand to hand combat you hold your shield on your left arm and your sword is in your right hand, so you’re covering the attack on your left side, which means you have to view the situation with your right. So if I’ve got my shield over the left side of my face, if I don’t have a right eye I’ll never be able to fight, because I can’t see what’s going on.

And the archers aimed with their right eyes as well, so he's defeating them permanently with this one act. And the men of Israel say, "Give us a bit of time here and we'll let you know" and there's 2 reasons, I believe, that he allowed them the time. #1 I believe he just thought he was that strong, that it didn't matter who he turned to, he wasn't worried about it. And #2 I believe that he may've been familiar with Israel's history and didn't think anyone would help these guys, why?

Do you remember the story there in the book of judges at the end when that Levites concubine was ravaged by a group of homosexual men of the tribe of Benjamin, which in the end caused all of Israel to rally against them and nearly annihilate the entire tribe? All but 600 men, and they vowed not to give any of their daughters to those men, but afterward they felt bad and thought, "We can't let this whole tribe disappear, they're our brothers." So they came up with a brilliant plan, they said, "Is there anyone who didn't help us fight Benjamin?" and So they took a census and found that the men of Jabesh-Gilead decided not to help them, and so they said, "Let's go up there and kill all of those men and give their daughters to the men of Benjamin." (How twisted we can get when we're trying to justify ourselves) but that's what they did.

Jabesh-Gilead wouldn't help the rest of Israel when they called upon them, so I suggest to you that Nahash expected that now, the rest of Israel wouldn't help them now that they're calling upon them.

But we see in this serpent (Nahash) many similarities to that of the serpent of old, Satan in regards to spiritual warfare. #1 Satan will encamp against you, but many times he can't do anything to you with out your agreement, he asks for your surrender through intimidation. (Now if you're Job sometimes there are extenuating circumstances) but for the most part he needs you to cooperate with him. #2 Satan wants to humiliate you, and exalt himself over you. And through humiliating one saint, he wants to bring reproach on all God's people. # 3 Satan wants to take away our ability to effectively fight against him. He wants to blind us, and if he can't blind us completely, he'll blind us partially. Why, because if one eye is out your perception of things can be off real easily, you can see something in a way that's not true and it can make for trouble personally, and corporately in the body of Christ.

And so either way we're going to be *seriously* if not *totally* rendered ineffective in warfare, we'll be defeated and disabled saints, unable to fight the good fight.

Vs4-8

Couple things here, notice how when all the people heard the news they all wept and got real upset about it, but they didn't do anything. How often (unfortunately) does this describe the people of God today? We hear about some tragedy, or something happening someplace and we all get real upset about it and we think, "Why doesn't somebody do something about that?" All the while we sit around and do nothing, and when confronted about it, "Why not you?" We're all, "Well, I have kids", "I've got a family to support", "I can't quit my job" or whatever, we're really bummed for those people, but we don't do anything about it either.

But when they told Saul what was happening, the Spirit of God came upon him and what was the result? He was stirred to action, the Spirit of God stirs us to action, when the Spirit of God comes upon you, you don't just sit around and do nothing, feeling real sorry for those people, the people in prisons, or the people who've not heard the gospel, or the people in your work place who need to know Jesus. But never really say anything or do anything about it, the Spirit of God stirs us to action, gives us the boldness we need to share, Jesus said, "*When the Holy Spirit has come upon you; you shall be witnesses to Me*" Acts 1:8 He will give you the boldness you need to share about Him, or the strength to lead your life so as to be an example of Him.

Now there's human responsibility to consider the old man dead, He won't make you not sin, that's your choice, you just have to decide who you love more, and who you're willing to let suffer. Do you love Christ more and let your flesh suffer as you starve it, or do you love your flesh more and let Christ suffer as you neglect Him and indulge your flesh? That's a choice you're responsible for.

But the point here is that everyone heard the same news, but when the Holy Spirit got involved and came upon Saul, there was action taken. And notice what it was that was stirred in Saul, it was anger, righteous indignation, we often just assume that when the Holy Spirit comes upon us that the overflow of that will be love, acceptance, and forgiveness. But that's not always the case, the bible gives place to anger, not sin, not a fit of rage in the flesh, but that which is offensive to God, should be offensive to God's children. In the book of judges nearly every time the Spirit of God came upon Samson he was moved to anger, and he would come against the enemies of Israel. The Spirit came upon Jesus and He overturned the tables in the temple of the moneychangers, Eph 4:26 tells us "*Be angry, and do not sin*". The point being that there is an anger that's not sinful, we call it righteous indignation, it's not centered in self, but it does come to the defense of others who are being done unjustly.

Jesus never got angry when people would come against Him, but He came to the ready defense of others. And here Saul was moved by the Spirit to anger, and the result was to take action against Israel's enemies. To take the offense, to the glory of God, the Spirit of God will stir us to action.

So Saul sends a body gram so to speak to the nation, again you remember that Levite sent his concubine to the 12 tribes in 12 pieces to deliver a message after she'd been killed.

And here Saul in a lesser yet similar fashion sends a message that's loud and clear to the nation. Because they were in the season of their harvest time (as ch 12 will reveal to us) and their oxen were their lives. No oxen, no work, no work, your family starves, so Saul was saying in essence you can come and take your chances with me, most certainly sparing your families at the very least. Or you can meet your *certain* end when I put you out of business, so it was a pretty good incentive for them, and some 330,000 men showed up.

Vs9

I'll bet they were, because they probably had a somewhat despairing lump in their gut when they realized what they were up against as well. They're thinking, "You know, it wasn't that long ago when we were asked for help and didn't give it, now what do you think these people are going to do when we ask for their help?" But in this little scenario lies a great principal for you and me, now the practical lesson in the broad scope is this, we read in 1 Thess 5:15 "*See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.*" Rom 12:17 puts it like this, "*Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.*" 1 Peter 3:8-9 has this to say about like situations, "*Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.*"

Turn to the gospel of Luke ch 6:27-36, in other words look for opportunity to extend grace over justice, James would say that "*Mercy triumphs over judgment.*" James 2:13 and I think that the Holy Spirit through Paul the apostle summed it all up nice and tight when He said in Rom 12:21 "*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*"

Yeah, maybe the men of Jabesh-Gilead deserved to have people turn their backs on them, maybe they weren't there for people when they were needed, and so now people shouldn't be there for them when they're in need of others. But Saul's not going to render evil for evil to them, but rather he's going to pursue what's good, why? Is it because Saul was such a godly man in and of himself? No, it takes us back to verse 6, it's because the Spirit of God has come upon him and is stirring him to do the *good and merciful* thing over the "eye for an eye" type thing.

And the Holy Spirit stirs us the same way, sometimes it would be so easy to hang certain people out to dry. They've done you wrong; maybe they've set you up, or made you look bad to others unjustifiably, and something comes up and now the shoe's on the other foot, and you've got them in your sights, and you're thinking man this is going to be sweet. You know, that sweet taste of revenge, and then those scriptures start haunting you, "*If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.*" Luke 6:33 "*Be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.*" Luke 6:36 "*Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.*" Col 3:12-13

And the part that really stabs you is that “must do” part, you think “I have to?” and That part in Matt pops in your mind "*For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*" Matt 6:14-15

And what's happening is the Holy Spirit is stirring you to do the *good and merciful thing*, vs the “eye for an eye” thing and you think “Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy” and you think I know I need lots of mercy so I'm going to act in mercy. Now that's the work of the Holy Spirit in your life, Jeff Kingery doesn't like to forgive, he likes to hang on to grudges and just really work his victims over and wring them out to dry by them. But the Holy Spirit in Jeff makes him act in kindness and grace, even when his flesh is screaming “Kill this guy, this is the moment you've been waiting for, remember what he did to you?” and The Lord whispers to your heart, “Yeah, but remember what *I* did for you?” “Don't go grabbing him by the throat for that small debt he owes you when you've been forgiven so much.”

And that's what's happening here, Israel could've abandoned Jabesh-Gilead and hung them out to dry on the basis of what they'd done to them in the past, but instead they decided to do good and bless them. That's the broad application for us.

Now on a little bit deeper and maybe more personal level, remembering that the name Nahash means “Serpent” or “Snake” speaking to you and me of Satan, this is always what he seems to do. He encamps around you, knowing that you've blown it, you've let some people down, or you feel as though, “Man, I've really hurt the Lord this time.” and When you're in a vulnerable position he comes and encamps against you and when you feel as though you need to reach out for help; you need to cry out to the Lord to come and save you, or to share your problem with another brother or sister so that they can bear your burden with you. He says, “Go ahead, *cry* all you want, turn to *whoever* you want, seek the Lord if you dare, no one is going to come to your rescue. No one's going to help you out, no one is going to deliver you now, you've gone to far, you're beyond help, and besides that no one would want to help you after what you've done.”

And he seeks to rip you off for what good things God wants to bring into your life, he feeds you condemnation, and he whispers in your ear that past failures prevent future rescues. Past *breakdowns* prevent future *blessings*, and it's not true he's been a liar from the beginning and in him there is no truth. Nahash made a mistake, he took for granted that no one would help them because of how bad they failed in the past, but he was wrong, God came straight to their rescue.

Vs10-11

It seems as though Saul was familiar with Gideon because much like what Gideon did, he used the strategy of a forced march all night, divided the men into 3 companies and attacked the men in the morning watch which was from 2:00am to 6:00am and they slaughtered them until the heat of the day such to the degree that when they were fleeing there were no 2 of them together.

God's will, will never lead you where His grace won't keep you, and use you for His glory.

Vs 12-13

Good for you Saul, again there was such potential in the beginning, effective leaders will always use their authority to glorify the Lord and build up their people. But ineffective leaders use the people to build up their authority, and that will be his ultimate legacy. But for now he starts off right, Saul knew that the *LORD* had accomplished salvation in Israel. It was the LORD who did the saving, and Saul was humble enough to know it, and wise enough to acknowledge it. No doubt the temptation was there to receive that glory, and this phrase here "the LORD has accomplished salvation in Israel" points us to Jesus, why, because His name means *the LORD is salvation*. Whenever salvation is accomplished, it is through Jesus. Always, with out exception.

Vs 14-15

Well begun Saul, well begun.