

Saul's Hopeful Beginning

I Samuel 11:1-15

Introduction:

- When I was in high school, I remember one of my teachers starting out the year on a very hopeful note. She said, "As of right now, you all are starting off with an A." We all liked that. She continued, "But, it will be up to you whether it stays that way by the end of the year."
- Starting strong, and finishing strong!
- Chapter 11 is basically a response to the question posed in 10:27

I. THE AMMONITE ATTACK- V. 1-3

- a. Encamped against Jabesh-Gilead
 - i. History tells us Nahash was on a rampage terrorizing the region
 - ii. Encamped against Jabesh Gilead: The Ammonite enemy surrounded this Israelite city, and simply by doing so he made his demands clear. They must either surrender or be conquered.
 - iii. The people of Jabesh- Gilead should not have entered into a covenant with their enemies (Ex. 23:31-34) This showed a lack of trust in God- v. 1
 - iv. V. 2 Nahash the Ammonite wanted to humiliate and degrade them (reproach) and render them weak and ineffective in battle- the left hand held a shield which would cover the left eye leaving the right eye to view the enemy
- b. Make a covenant with us, and we will serve you: The men of Jabesh Gilead felt this was their only hope of survival. Either they must surrender to Nahash, or they would be killed and plundered.
 - i. Instead of confessing of their sin and crying out to God for help, they try and compromise with the enemy. See Judges 2:1-4

- ii. “We see here the sad effect of sin and careless living in lowering men’s spirits, sapping courage, and discouraging noble effort. Oh, it is pitiable to see men tamely submitting to a vile master! Yet how often is the sight repeated! How often to men virtually say to the devil, ‘Make a covenant with us, and we will serve thee!’” (Balike)
 - c. Satan’s strategy
 - i. The name Nahash means serpent or snake
 - ii. Satan attacks us but cannot do anything against us without our agreement. He asks for, and requires our surrender
 - iii. Satan wants us to serve him and will attempt to intimidate us into giving in to him
 - iv. Satan wants to humiliate us and exalt himself over us. Through humiliating one saint, Satan wants to bring reproach on all God’s people
 - v. Satan wants to take away our ability to effectively fight against him
 - vi. Satan wants to blind us and if he cannot blind us completely, he will blind us partially
 - d. V. 3- Nahash perhaps was so confident of victory that he allowed messengers to be sent out

II. SAUL DEFEATS THE AMMONITES- V. 4-11

- a. V. 4-5-The messengers arrive. “Coming behind the herd from the field...” This showed the humility of the king of Israel. Saul was already anointed and recognized as king, yet in a sense there was nothing for him to do. Israel knew nothing of setting up a royal court or bureaucracy. So, he just went back home, went to work in the field.
- b. The Spirit of God comes upon Saul- v. 6
 - i. This is clearly the climax of the chapter. The Holy Spirit always makes an impact!
 - ii. It rushed upon him is what the Hebrew literally means (also used in 10:6, 10). The Holy Spirit had come upon several judges equipping them for

service, but in the Hebrew the verb “tsa-lach” is only used for Samson, and now Saul up to this point. Interestingly, Saul and Samson have much in common! They both share very questionable testimonies, even after hopeful beginnings.

- iii. The role of the Holy Spirit in the O.T. vs. the N.T. (John 7:37-39)
- iv. Notice the Holy Spirit did not fill him for his own benefit or entertainment, but He equipped Saul for service! So if you don't plan on serving, why should God manifest His power in your life?
- c. Saul's righteous indignation- v. 6. We can be angry and sin not- Eph. 4:26
 - i. V. 7- Saul delivered a clear threat to the people of Israel. The manner of the threat seemed more from the Mafia than from a King over God's people, but Saul wanted it clear that failure to step up and defend the cause of God at this time was sin and it would be punished as sin. The message was received loud and clear
 - ii. V. 7- Reminds us of what happened in Judges 19- 20
- d. Saul's military prowess on display- v. 11
 - i. The people rallied behind Saul- v. 7-9
 - ii. V. 10-11- the Ammonites defeated in the morning watch (2-6 am until the afternoon)

III. SAUL CONFIRMED AS KING- V. 12-15

- a. The need for a Deliver and Conquering King- picture of Christ
 - i. In I Sam 11:3, they wondered if there was a Savior. God used Saul, but even Saul recognized ultimately the Lord is our Savior!
 - ii. V. 13- The victory always belongs to the Lord
 - iii. Salvation came not because Israel had a king, but because Israel's king had the Spirit! We should not miss this point!
- b. V. 12-13- The mockers confronted- I Sam 10:27
- c. V. 14-15- Kingship renewed

- i. V. 15- There was a sense in which Saul was not king until virtually all the nation recognized him as king, and here that recognition was given.
 - ii. King Jesus should be crowned and renewed in our lives on a regular basis, because sin and self sometimes creep their way onto the throne of our hearts
 - iii. The Christians life should be a series of renewals!
- d. “Jesus is our King. The Father hath anointed Him, and set Him on his holy hill; and we have gladly assented to the appointment, and made Him King. But sometimes our sense of loyalty and devotion wanes. Insensibly we drift from our strenuous endeavour to act always as his devoted subjects. Therefore we need, from time to time, to renew the kingdom, and reverently make Him King before the Lord... There is a sense in which we can consecrate ourselves only once; but we can renew our vows often.” (Meyer)
- e. Renew implies some form of prior deterioration. So, who’s kingship was to be renewed? Saul’s or God’s? Some commentators point out that ultimately it is allegiance to Jehovah God. Renewal of allegiance to God’s rule, and God’s divine plan of kingship (10:25) through Saul at this time. Ultimately, it is fidelity to God that matters.

Conclusion:

- If only Saul had maintained this attitude and spirit, things might have turned out a lot better for him.
- The Greeks had a race in their Olympic games that was unique. The winner was not the runner who finished first. It was the runner who finished with his torch still lit. I want to run all the way with the flame of my torch still lit for Him.