

'The Rise of the Kings Series'

Sermons in the Book of 1 Samuel

Message 16 - 'A Promising Start' 1 Samuel 11



Israel's desire had been to have a king so that the nation could unite between one visible leader as they faced their enemies. Graciously, the Lord had granted them their royal request, even though their motivation was wrong, and in doing so, the Lord reveals again His sovereignty. He was willing to accommodate their unbelief, but His purposes would still be fulfilled. The king He gave them looked every inch the king they could unite behind, and in the episode we considered here, Saul establishes his leadership under the Lord's hand. There were those who had despised Saul and said, '*How can this man save us?*' The overwhelming answer given in the verses is, by the power of God's Spirit. Two things:

1. The Challenge (v1-3) - The narrative takes us into a terrible situation with threatened oppression of the Lord's people from the Ammonites. The threat to the Jews is very clear, and is personified in the form of the tyrant Nahash (his name means 'snake'). Nahash had taken an aggressive stance and was now encamped around, and about to besiege Jabesh Gilead. Nahash took great delight in looking to bring much disgrace upon Israel, especially as the peace terms he offered would see the men of Jabesh Gilead having their right eyes plucked out. Nahash in his arrogance granted them a requested delay, confident that Israel would not be able to do anything to stop him, or oppose him, whether it was then or in a weeks time. Such was his arrogance that he probably enjoyed thinking that he was allowing the Jews to squirm and sweat as they tried to get help. In his eyes, they were only delaying the inevitable. The arrogance he displays is typical of the world's attitude towards the Lord's people. The hatred of the Lord's people will never cease until the Lord comes again. This mind of oppression is promoted by the enemy, and the aim is to destroy, strangle, and maim the Lord's people. The people at Jabesh Gilead did not deserve any intervention, yet the Lord would use Saul to deliver them. On a far grander scale, we do not deserve any intervention in our sin, we do not deserve any intervention or help from Him, and yet in His grace, He has sent forth a Saviour to intervene on our behalf that we might be saved from our sin, and brought into a right relationship with Him.

2. The Conquest (v4-15) - Messengers are sent out from Jabesh Gilead to seek help. The messengers should have gone straight to Samuel and Saul who could have interceded and intervened. It reveals a common trait that we possess when we have to face problems. We know where we should go, and yet how often do we try to sort things out ourselves. The Lord has given an immense privilege of prayer and through the Lord Jesus Christ taking all the things we face to the throne of grace. No matter what we face, how insurmountable we think the issue is, the first place we must go is to the Lord. For He is able to intervene and deliver in ways that we could never imagine. In Saul's response we saw once again the empowering of the Spirit on the life of Saul. As God's hand moves upon him, he is filled with righteous anger that should a thing should happen to the Lord's people. It would be the empowering of God that would make the difference. The difference that the Spirit makes is clear. Undoubtedly, Saul had been anointed by the Lord, made king, and given authority, but this occasion gave the people confidence in him as their leader, as he lead powerfully under the Lord's hand to defeat the foe. For Saul this was a defining victory. Victory had come, not because of Saul as king, but because the Lord had given Saul the victory through the power of His Spirit. Do you see the application? It is the Old Testament proclaiming a truth that is explicitly underlined by our Saviour in the New Testament, '*for without Me you can do nothing*'.



Penzance Baptist Church

'Upholding the Ordinary Means of Grace'

Pastor Jonathan Stobbs