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Renewing the Kingdom

I Samuel 11

Intro: After all the fighting & dying, the misplaced trust in idols & rejection of YHWH in the previous chapters, this is a breath of fresh air! Like the 1st day of school when all your supplies is new & fresh, we sense a bright, new beginning 4 this brand new monarchy. Saul's military debut kindles a hope in Israel. The theme of ch11 is "salvation." The word appears in different forms 3Xs (vs3, 9, 13). This is the response 2 the question posed by the rebels at the end of ch10, "How can this man save us?" Answer: By the power of the Spirit of God!

1-2- Nahash- (Serpent) There's a bad moon rising in the east. The Ammonite king has surrounded & besieged Jabesh-Gilead, a fortified Israelite town located east of the Jordan River. It appears, from extra-biblical records, that he had been attacking & terrorizing the tribes of Gad & Reuben 4 some time now, gouging out right eyes & heaping shame upon Israel. In fact, Nahash tactics may've been the motivation behind the elders' original demand 4 a king!

The Ammonites were actually distant relatives of Israel – descended from Lot. But that didn't seem 2 prevent them from attacking Israel. Their 1st invasion of Israel's territory was in Judges 11, where they were soundly defeated by Jephthah. While this was decades or even centuries b/4; apparently, they hadn't learned their lesson. Now Nahash is coming against Jabesh Gilead w/ the intention of making them his servants or his victims; either way = spoils of war.

The men of Jabesh looked over the wall & instantly knew the score: there was no way they could defeat Nahash so they decided 2 sue 4 peace. "Let's have a gentleman's agreement & everybody gets what they want: you get servants & we get 2 live." Unfortunately, they soon discovered that Nahash was no gentleman. He would only accept their surrender if every man in Jabesh agreed 2 lose their right eye! While this punishment is extremely harsh, it's not random. Nahash had 2 very good reasons 4 making this demand: **1) never-ending subservience** – losing the right eye made most men unfit 4 military service. In battle, the left eye was usually covered by the shield & w/ the right eye gone – swordsmen would be handicapped & w/o depth perception, archers & sling throwers would be ineffective. But this wasn't his primary purpose. No, what Nahash took delight in was **2) heaping disgrace upon Israel**. If the men of Jabesh submitted 2 this punishment, would make all of Israel look weak & unable 2 prevent such an atrocity. Nahash exalted in the prospect of slowly turning the screws of humiliation on Israel. He liked 2 watch them squirm.

B/4 we move on, let's not overlook the spiritual application here. The king is not named Nahash by accident. The tactics he used against Israel closely parallel the tactics that old Serpent Satan uses against God's people today.

1) Satan may besiege us but he has no real power against us w/o our agreement. He asks 4, requires our surrender! Yes, he is a roaring lion but he has no teeth or claws 2 use against us. He wants us 2 serve him so he attempts 2 intimidate us into giving in 2 him. That's why James exhorts us 2 resist the devil b/c all he can do w/ that is flee!

2) Satan wants 2 blind us: take away our spiritual perception; our ability 2 perceive, discern, 2 make godly decisions. If he cannot blind us completely, he'll settle 4 partial blindness. Satan wants 2 take away our ability 2 effectively fight against him. That's why we need 2 grasp & hang on to that eternal perspective that Paul expressed in Phil 3:12-14. If we keep our eyes on Jesus, our nose in His Word & our ears tuned 2 His calling, we can't be blinded by Satan.

3) Satan wants 2 humiliate us. Thru the humiliation of just 1 saint, Satan wants 2 bring reproach on all God's people.

3- hold off- Quite naturally, the men of Jabesh Gilead balk at Nahash's terms 4 surrender. They ask for a 7 day respite 2 see if there is anyone 2 save them in Israel. Obviously, they didn't know 4 certain if there was or not. But, in a way, the men of Jabesh were in a good position b/c there were 2 important things that they absolutely knew 4 sure:

1) they needed 2/b saved, 2) they could not save themselves. What a blessed place this was 4 them 2/b b/c it was this knowledge that compelled them 2 seek out a savior! Many today don't know what these men knew. They don't know that they need 2/b saved, rescued from the righteous judgment of God against them & their sin. There are just as many that don't really know that they cannot save themselves. They mistakenly believe their good deeds will out weigh their bad & it will all wash out in the end. They foolishly believe they can save themselves – no way!

Apparently, Nahash let's them send out messengers. Was he being magnanimous? No, he was being arrogant. He let's them go b/c **1) he's confident of Israel's disunity & believes they'll be unable 2 find a savior & 2) all publicity is good publicity.** Allowing the messengers 2 go thru all Israel makes his name great & his reputation fearsome 2 all.

Now, Nahash will shortly become a by-word but this arrogance, this hatred never stops. The Ammonite mindset: 2 maim, strangle & destroy God's people is always w/ us. John 15:18, "If the world hates you (not it might but it will...) you know that it hated Me b/4 it hated you." Is this really what You want 2 go w/ on Your recruitment poster? Who's going 2 want 2 sign up 4 that? Well, we need 2 move up & read vs14-15. That makes a difference. We can face the arrogance of the world as long as we have the friendship of J, the 1 Who created the world & controls the universe!

4-5- wept- Why such a response? Gibeah (Benjamin) had a close connection w/ Jabesh Gilead. In Judges, when Israel engaged in civil war w/ Benjamin (b/c of the sin of Gibeah), they nearly wiped them out (600 men & 0 women).

Israel's solution 2 repopulate Benjamin was 2 go 2 Jabesh, kill all the men & married women & give the surviving virgins 2 Benjamin as wives. It's quite possible that Saul's own great-grandmother could have been from Jabesh.

6- Spirit...came- (rushed) & made all the difference in the world! Note: the Spirit didn't rush upon Saul 2 entertain or 2 thrill him but 2 equip him 4 service. The Spirit rushed upon him 2 enable him 2 accomplish something 4 the Lord!
anger- Saul's 1st response 2 the Spirit rushing upon him. Anger itself isn't a sin. in fact, Paul says 2 **be angry & do not sin** (Eph 4:26) = righteous indignation. There is a necessary time when the proper response 2 injustice is anger. It was this filling of the Spirit working thru this righteous indignation that spurred Saul 2 immediate & decisive action.

7-10- cut- we've seen this b/4 only then it was a Levite & he was cutting up his murdered concubine. Saul's message was clear: **"Show up 4 battle or I'll wreck your tractor!"** His bloody threat worked. When UPS brought those hunks of ox-flesh special delivery, the whole nation knew there was a leader in Israel who meant business. Oddly enough, the people showed up, not b/c they feared Saul but **the Lord!** They knew **YHWH** was calling them 2 do something.

help- (salvation) being able 2 muster 330K troops, Saul sends a message back 2 Jabesh telling them not 2 despair, deliverance was on the way! They were glad 2 hear it! They even assured Nahash that they would come out 2 him the next day & he could do **whatever seems good**. Of course, what seems good 2 Nahash may change when he's being attacked by 330K highly motivated Israelites. Were they lying? Not at all! Their message was cleverly ambiguous, giving the impression that their surrender was inevitable, effectively causing Nahash 2 lower his guard.

11- killed- Saul divided his troops, smashed into Nahash's camp in the wee hours & surprised the daylights out of the Ammonites & totally routed them! How's it possible 4 a shy, hesitant farmer 2 become a brilliant tactician & dynamic leader of men? He was filled w/ the Spirit of God! Saul's success only came about by the Spirit's power.

That's the difference the Spirit makes! Saul goes from a shrinking violet (hiding) 2 a highly motivated warrior! The Spirit turns Saul into a super-judge. There are shades of Samson & Gideon; even Othniel & Ehud (called saviors). The Spirit will take someone who is incapable & equip them 2/b capable 2 do the work God is calling them 2 do.

12-13- death- Saul had won a great victory & he gained stature in the eyes of the people. So much so that they wanted all those who rebelled against Saul's authority 2/b rounded up & executed. **"We're in a killing mood & we're fresh out of Ammonites!"** They wanted 2 expose & then dispose of any who failed 2 support Saul as a rightful king.

salvation- Saul's having none of it. This was no time 4 revenge. The Lord had given victory, no need 2 spoil it by spilling Israelite blood. Saul knew it wasn't he that brought salvation 2 Jabesh Gilead, it was **YHWH** alone. Israel can't afford 2 miss the point: Salvation didn't come b/c Israel had a king but b/c the king had **YHWH's** Spirit! It's not the institution of royalty but the power of the Spirit that brings deliverance – as true today as it was at that time.

14-15- renew- Samuel calls Israel 2 assemble at Gilgal 2 **"renew the kingdom"** but what does that mean? Make Saul king b/4 the Lord? Samuel's stated objective was 2 renew the kingdom, not complete it. Renew implies some type of previous deterioration. I guess the question really is, **Who's kingdom is being renewed**, Saul's or **YHWH's**?

The answer's clear when we notice the location: Gilgal (mentioned by name **3Xs** & referred 2 w/ "there" **4Xs**). 7Xs in 2 vs., the writer's making his point. Gilgal is where **YHWH's** power worked 4 Israel against hopeless odds (crossed Jordan). It's also a place of consecration, where a new Israel came into being after the rebellious yrs in wilderness. It was a place of memorials, remembering all of **YHWH's** work 4 Israel in bringing them into the Promised Land. The evidence is clear, Samuel's call 2 assemble in Gilgal was so Israel could renew their allegiance 2 **YHWH's** rule.

Thus, in **ch11**, we're confronted w/ the greatest crisis / need of the Christian life. Not the attacks of Satan or the arrogance & hatred of the world. No, the Lord can protect us from all that. Our greatest challenge, our greatest need is 2 realize that we face the same demand the Samuel placed on Israel: renew our allegiance 2 the kingdom daily. Is this not the demand that a greater than Samuel places on us in **Matt 6:33**? But what does that look like? What does it mean 2 seek 1st His kingdom & righteousness? He's pretty much spelled it out 4 us in **Matt 5:17-6:34**. **5:17-48** deals specifically w/ living up 2 the spirit of the law. The Law is God's standard of living 4 people redeemed from sin. Its how free people ought 2 live. That involves **obedience** but understand that the law is summed up in 1 word: **love**. Obedience = love & love = obedience. **6:1-34** involves **trust**. When you **give** (1-4) you're taking the Lord at His Word, trusting that He will provide 4 your needs. When you **pray** (5-13) you're trusting that the Lord hears you & will respond according 2 His will. When you **forgive** (14-15) you're trusting the Lord 2 change your heart & give you strength. When you **fast** (16-18) you're trusting the Lord 2 sustain you as you make Him more important than your own legitimate physical needs. **Vs.19-34** all point 2 the need 2 trust in the Lord instead of worrying over things you can't control. The Christian life is a life of continual repentance, always in need of renewing its allegiance 2 the rule of Christ in our hearts. If you read thru Matt 5:17-6:34 & see you're lacking in any area, its time 2 renew your allegiance. It's time 2 start seeking 1st the kingdom of God & His righteousness.

Ultimately, this is where Saul trips up. He fails 2 realize he's only successful when he's filled w/ the Spirit of the Lord, walking in the Spirit & under the leadership of the true King of Israel. Saul failed 2 regularly renew his allegiance 2 **YHWH** & b/c of this, the kingdom will eventually be stripped from him & given 2 a man after God's own heart. The possibility of failure is no less 4 us. If we fail 2 renew our allegiance 2 the Lord daily then we may eventually find

ourselves disqualified from service, not useful 2 God or men.

