

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPTEMBER 30TH-OCTOBER 1ST, 2023 // 1 SAMUEL

LONG LIVE THE KING (1 SAMUEL 10:17-27)

In order to present Israel with their new king, Samuel called for a convocation of the people at Mizpah (vs. 17).

- Samuel pulls no punches---the reason the people have been given a king is because they have rejected their God (vs. 18-19).
- Only the Lord and Samuel knew that the king had already been selected and anointed.

However, Samuel wanted the tribes of Israel to recognize that God was in charge of the selection process.

- Even though the people had rejected the rule of God over them as their king, the Lord was still sovereign over Israel.
- Samuel has the tribes of Israel present themselves before the Lord by their tribes and clans (vs. 19).

The tribes and clans of Israel may have been selected by casting lots (1 Sam. 14:40-42), or one of the priests may have used the Urim and the Thummim to determine God's will.

- However it was done, God chose the tribe of Benjamin, the clan of Matrite, the family of Kish, and finally, Saul, the son of Kish (vs. 20-21).
- But when Saul's name is called, he's nowhere to be found (vs. 21).

The people can't find their newly appointed king, so they have to inquire of the Lord again to see where he'd gone. Finally, they find him hiding amongst the supplies, baggage, and equipment the people had brought to this assembly (vs. 22).

- Why was Saul hiding? Was it because of humility and a healthy embarrassment at the potential of sudden celebrity?

Maybe Saul is simply shunning his God-given responsibility.

- Maybe Saul's refusal to step forward foreshadows his later lack of commitment to take up the responsibilities required of a godly ruler.
- The idea and novelty of leadership is a completely different thing than the reality and responsibility of leadership.

The idea and novelty of commitment to obedience to God is a completely different thing than the reality, responsibility, and sacrifice that the Christian life requires.

- Too many of us hide away and neglect our God-given responsibilities when the reality of what it will cost us begins to set in.
- Hiding away out of fear only leads to missing all the good things God has in store for us.

Perhaps hoping to salvage the embarrassing situation, Samuel presents Saul before the people as God's chosen king, pointing out Saul's impressive physical characteristics (vs. 24).

- Because Saul looked like the king Israel had in mind when they asked for one, they were willing to ignore Saul's cowardice, lack of character, and instability and cried out, "Long live the king!"

The monarchy of Israel is established, as Samuel tells the people the rights of the king and creates an official document that serves as a kind of constitution (vs. 25).

- As Saul returned to his home in Gibeah from the assembly, a group of brave men whose hearts God had touched went with him and likely became his officers and inner circle (vs. 26).

BUT NOT ALL OF ISRAEL WAS A FAN OF SAUL...

Some wicked men doubted Saul's ability to lead them and refused to pay homage to him and give him a gift (vs. 27).

- As king, Saul could've dealt harshly with them, yet he held his peace.
- Saul is an incredibly complex, emotionally unstable leader. One moment, he responds mercifully; the next, he's harsh, angry, and tyrannical.

As long as we trust our abilities and qualifications rather than the Lord's calling and anointing on our lives, we will waver between extreme arrogance and extreme insecurity.

- We will struggle with being unstable, moody, and paranoid/antagonistic of others because we'll find our worth based on our performance.
- True humility is thinking of ourselves less and finding our confidence in Christ.

A CHALLENGE (1 SAMUEL 11:1-5)

NAHASH ("SNAKE" OR "SERPENT") THE AMMONITE.

The Ammonites were descendants of Abraham's nephew Lot and were a pagan people who opposed the Jews (Deut. 23:3-4).

- The Ammonite ruler Nahash laid siege to the city of Jabesh-Gilead (vs. 1, 50 miles from Saul's home) and proposed to the people a rather odd peace treaty (vs. 2).

Rather than go to war and suffer through a long and costly siege of the city, the people of Jabesh-Gilead would be allowed to live if they all agreed to have their right eye gouged out.

- This was to humiliate and mark the residents of the city as defeated prisoners, but also, it was to prevent these Israelites from rebelling against Nahash (archers and swordsmen with one eye aren't very effective).

The city elders asked for a week's delay, hoping they could get military aid (vs. 3).

- If no one stepped in to save them, they'd be forced to yield to Nahash and his cruel terms of surrender.
- News of the situation reached Saul in Gibeah as he was out working in a field.
- The people wept loudly as the situation in Jabesh-Gilead was described (vs. 4-5).

It's interesting to note that the one setting up an attack against the people of God is called "serpent."

- Like Nahash, the enemy of God's people (Satan) attacks us with fear, intimidation, and threats.
- Satan wants to humiliate the people of God through strategic attack. If he can bring down a leader, a church, a ministry, or a family, he knows that will bring shame and reproach to God's people.

Like the residents of Jabesh-Gilead, when our enemy lays siege to our lives, we have a need to call for reinforcements.

- We need other believers to help us fight our spiritual battles through prayer, accountability,

community, and encouragement.

- Satan attacks us but can't really do much without our agreement. He asks for and wants our surrender. But we must be willing to fight!

VICTORY (1 SAMUEL 11:6-11)

When Saul heard these words, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him powerfully, and Saul's own spirit was filled with righteous anger over the fact that the enemies of God's people would have such audacity (vs. 6).

- There is such a thing as godly anger (when we're angry at the devastation of sin/wickedness in our lives and the enemy's work, Eph. 4:26), but most of our anger is selfish.

It should make us mad when we give in to the same kinds of destructive patterns of sin over and over again.

- It should make us mad when we see things like broken marriages, substance abuse, domestic violence, generational poverty, etc.--but we should be mad enough to DO SOMETHING.
- If we're not mad enough to DO ANYTHING, then it's wasted, futile, often sinful, and pointless energy.

In a fit of spirit-empowered rage, Saul cuts up his team of oxen and sends the bloody parts of the oxen out across the territories of Israel with a message---if you don't step up and defend the cause of God in Israel, you will be punished (vs. 7).

- The terror of the Lord fell upon the people. They saw that if they chose not to act, it would be counted as a sin against God.

As a result of Saul's dramatic and bloody display, the people united and formed an army of 330,000 soldiers (vs. 8).

- They gathered at Bezek (about 20 miles from Jabesh-Gilead), and Saul sent a message to the city that deliverance was coming by mid-day tomorrow (vs. 9).
- Then, the citizens of Jabesh-Gilead told Nahash they'd surrender the next day (vs. 10).

Saul showed tremendous military genius as he divided his army into three parts and attacked the Ammonite camp during the morning watch (2:00-6:00 am).

- It was such a decisive victory for Saul and Israel that there were no survivors, and all of Nahash's army was completely scattered (vs. 11).
- The city was saved, and God gave Saul a total victory over his enemies.

CONFIRMATION (1 SAMUEL 11:12-15)

After this great victory, the supporters of Saul wanted to find and kill those who had formerly ridiculed and criticized him (vs. 12).

- Saul behaves in a manner that's admirable and wise. Instead of using his victory and popularity with the people for his own advantage, he gives glory to the Lord (vs. 13). Godly leadership uses authority to honor God and build up people.

Self-centered, unspiritual leadership uses authority and people to simply platform leaders.

- Saul will eventually fall into this trap (and it will lead to his failure), but for now, he gives honor to the Lord and shows mercy to the people.
- After this great victory, Samuel calls the people together to give thanks to the Lord and officially confirm Saul as the king of Israel (vs. 14).

The people gathered in Gilgal for Saul's official coronation and to enter into a renewed covenant with the Lord (vs. 15).

- This was a time of great rejoicing and blessing to be under such a noble, strong, and courageous king!
- This was a time of unity for God's people and spiritual revival as they renewed their commitment to God together in Gilgal.

Saul had passed his first big test as king---he'd won the battle against Nahash and the Ammonites, but he'd also won the battle against his pride, insecurity, and selfish revenge.

- Saul was only able to win these battles because of the Spirit of the Lord that came upon and gave him the strength, wisdom, and character to have victory.
- If only Saul would've stayed this way...

THE NECESSITY OF CONSISTENCY.

- Saul had some noble, admirable moments in his life and leadership, but he also displayed some absolutely horrendous behaviors and attitudes that led to his failure.
- The reason we are so often inconsistent in our Christian life is because of our lack of focus on Christ, our distractions, and our lack of commitment to the Lord, God's values, and others.

THE NECESSITY OF CONFIDENCE.

- It's a pathetic sight to see a king hiding underneath suitcases at his own pronouncement!
- As long as we trust our abilities and qualifications rather than the Lord's calling and anointing on our lives, we will waver between extreme arrogance and extreme insecurity.
- True humility is thinking of ourselves less and finding our confidence in Christ.

THE NECESSITY OF CHARACTER.

- Saul looked the part---but ultimately, Saul never learned self-mastery with God's help over the destructive parts of his character (pride, jealousy, compromise, self-sufficiency, etc.).
- Who we are when no one is looking is who we really are. No matter how impressive our outer appearance may be, our true character will always be revealed eventually.

THE NECESSITY OF COMPLETION.

- Saul begins his reign on a strong note, but he finishes it as a frustrated, paranoid, angry, bitter, and emotionally unstable man who falls on his own sword (1 Sam. 31:4).
- Eccl. 7:8 says that finishing is better than starting, and being patient is better than being proud.
- What spiritual adjustments do you need to make to finish your race well?

WHERE ISRAEL'S FIRST KING (SAUL) FAILED, ISRAEL'S ULTIMATE KING (JESUS) SUCCEEDED.

- Jesus was consistent (Heb. 13:8). Jesus was confident (Jn. 6:37-38). Jesus had character (Phil. 2:5-8). Jesus completed the work He was sent to do (Jn. 19:30).
- It's only in Jesus, His imputed righteousness, and His strength that we can be who we're called to be.