

1 Samuel 11:1-15 | “A New Beginning”

Preached on December 5, 2021 by Pastor Matt Brown

Turn in your Bibles this morning to 1 Samuel 11:1-15.

We have been progressively working through the excellent book of 1 Samuel.

Most recently, we have studied how Israel sinfully demanded a king like all the other nations.

It was then that God gave them what they wanted, and we heard all about the providential details that led a man named, Saul, to be anointed the first king of Israel by Samuel. *[pause]*

But after Saul’s anointing, no one knew that he was to be their king.

That led to the public disclosure of who their new king was going to be, as Saul’s name was chosen by lot, yet he was hiding in the baggage in fear.

Yet even through that interesting situation, the people of Israel still excitedly proclaim, “Long live the king!” *[pause]*

But not all is well, for there are some people who despise Saul and doubt if he can save them.

That is, not everyone accepts Saul as their king and submits under this new leader. *[pauseeee]*

So as we finished out last week, Saul was displayed as the king, Samuel sent everyone home, and there are mixed responses to God’s choice of their king.

This leaves you wondering about this new king and his new kingdom.

What’s going to happen now? Is it going to go well? Is everyone going to accept this new king or not?

That’s where our story comes into the picture, as Israel experiences a ‘new beginning’ with this brand new stage in their history. *[pauseeee]*

Have you ever experienced a ‘new beginning’?

It brings with it some excitement and hope for a better future.

Maybe it’s a new school year for a student as they get a clean slate and can get some better grades than last year.

Maybe it’s a new job or moving to a new town where you can kind of start anew.

Or maybe it’s just a new year like what we are coming up upon, and with it brings the hopefulness of a better year than this one. *[pause]*

We all like new beginnings and we desire for them to start off on the right foot, and thankfully for Israel, this new king and his kingship starts off on the right foot.

And with this new beginning comes a new hope. [pause]

But before there's a good start, there's first...

I. A “Hopeless” Situation (1-4)

Let's READ VERSES 1-4 to see that situation.

“Then Nahash the Ammonite went up and besieged Jabesh-gilead, and all the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, ‘Make a treaty with us, and we will serve you.’

But Nahash the Ammonite said to them, ‘On this condition I will make a treaty with you, that I gouge out all your right eyes, and thus bring disgrace on all Israel.’

The elders of Jabesh said to him, ‘Give us seven days' respite that we may send messengers through all the territory of Israel. Then, if there is no one to save us, we will give ourselves up to you.’

When the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul, they reported the matter in the ears of the people, and all the people wept aloud.” *[pauseeee]*

We have all experienced hopeless situations.

Maybe it's the sports team who is down by 30 points, and they feel as if that victory that seemed so promising before is now a hopeless cause.

Or maybe it's the person who hears the dreaded statement from their doctor, “You have 2 months to live...”

And now their hope for living longer has gone right out the window, and they are left feeling only despair. *[pause]*

It's a horrible feeling to be in a situation like that where you are helpless and hopeless.

Well that's the sort of feeling that the Israelites living in Jabesh-gilead felt.

They experienced a seemingly “hopeless” situation. [pause]

Their town was besieged by the powerful Ammonite army.

They knew they had no chance to defeat Nahash, and so all they could do was try to get a treaty made and become his slaves.

But Nahash wanted more than just more slaves to control - he had a bigger plan in mind, as he wanted to handicap the town and disgrace all of Israel. *[pause]*

His offer was a treaty, but right after gouging out their right eyes.

This was his way of humiliating them, and showing his dominance, but also his way of making sure that they could never rise up and fight back in the future.

For the loss of their right eye would hinder their ability to fight. *[pause]*

This scene that he wanted of a one-eyed, Israelite town under the control of the Ammonites would be an utterly disgraceful sign upon Israel as a whole.

And who knows if this kind of thing would move on to more and more Israelite towns and villages? *[pauseeee]*

So now what?

What can Jabesh-gilead do?

The only thing they can do - seek help outside of themselves. *[pause]*

They ask Nahash for 7 days to seek the help of the rest of Israel to come to their aid, and if no one can save them, then they would give themselves over to him.

Nahash, probably in his foolish arrogance, approves of this plan. *[pause]*

Now Nahash most likely did this because he thought that no one would come to their aid, for Jabesh-gilead's history isn't the greatest.

Back at the end of the book of Judges, it's Jabesh-gilead that's the only town that doesn't come and fight with everyone else against the tribe of Benjamin.¹

So who would come to their aid when they didn't come and help in the past? *[pause]*

But also, Nahash might be thinking, "Even if some of Israel comes to help, I will beat them, and that just means more of Israel conquered, and more spoil for me."

So Nahash is a pretty arrogant guy, as he thought he was big stuff. *[pause]*

Word gets out to Israel, and specifically, word goes to Gibeah where Saul lived and the people weep. *[pauseeee]*

This was a seemingly "hopeless" situation.

Jabesh was surrounded by a powerful army.

Not only that, but Jabesh's history doesn't help endear them to the rest of Israel, plus the Philistines were always a threat on the other side of the country.

¹ See Judges 21:8-12.

So would they actually receive help, and would they receive help *in time*? [pause]

Even the Israelites of Gibeah know how bad it is, as they are weeping for their fellow Israelites when word comes to them. [pauseeeee]

When you consider the plight of Jabesh-gilead, and think of it through the lens of the big story of the Bible, it reminds us of our situation before Christ.

And what's very interesting is that Nahash's name actually means "snake" or "serpent".

Those reading this story in the original Hebrew would have picked up on this right away.

And so I believe this is an example of the enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent prophesied by God back in Genesis 3.² [pause]

Like Nahash, Satan wants to destroy and disgrace God's people.

And if he can bring disgrace upon one person or smaller group of Christians, this usually brings disgrace upon all of God's people. [pause]

Also, like Nahash, Satan wants to blind us and make us his slaves. [pause]

This situation makes sinners without Christ feel hopeless and helpless, doesn't it?

In our sin before Christ, Satan could point the finger and threaten us with death, as we were condemned in our sin.

Without Christ, we are utterly helpless and hopeless in ourselves, and we could only weep in despair...

...But that's why, like Jabesh-gilead had to do, we have to look for help outside of ourselves.

That's the only hope for sinners, salvation outside of themselves. [pause]

We can't save ourselves, for we were slaves to sin, unable to fulfill the Law's demands.

We could try our hardest, but never measure up to God's perfection, as our sin constantly proved that we fell short of the glory of God.³ [pause]

But that's not the end of our story, or even the story of the people of Jabesh-gilead.

There's a reason I put "hopeless" in quotation marks in this first point.

Because though it seemed hopeless to the people, it wasn't *truly* hopeless. [pause]

No situation is ever truly hopeless when God is in the picture.

² See Genesis 3:15.

³ An allusion to Romans 3:23.

For God has declared war on the serpent back in Genesis 3, and so even Nahash, the serpent, is about to feel the ramifications of the promised defeat of Satan upon his own head.

And what did God promise all the way back in Genesis 3:15?

A crushed head by the offspring of Eve.

And guess who is about to come to the rescue of Jabesh-gilead? An anointed king.

And that's what we find in verses 5-11...

II. A Spirit-Empowered King Brings Deliverance (5-11)

Let's READ VERSES 5-11...

“Now, behold, Saul was coming from the field behind the oxen. And Saul said, ‘What is wrong with the people, that they are weeping?’ So they told him the news of the men of Jabesh.

And the Spirit of God rushed upon Saul when he heard these words, and his anger was greatly kindled.

He took a yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces and sent them throughout all the territory of Israel by the hand of the messengers, saying, ‘Whoever does not come out after Saul and Samuel, so shall it be done to his oxen!’ Then the dread of the Lord fell upon the people, and they came out as one man.

When he mustered them at Bezek, the people of Israel were three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty thousand.

And they said to the messengers who had come, ‘Thus shall you say to the men of Jabesh-gilead: ‘Tomorrow, by the time the sun is hot, you shall have salvation.’” When the messengers came and told the men of Jabesh, they were glad.

Therefore the men of Jabesh said, ‘Tomorrow we will give ourselves up to you, and you may do to us whatever seems good to you.’

And the next day Saul put the people in three companies. And they came into the midst of the camp in the morning watch and struck down the Ammonites until the heat of the day. And those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together.” [pauseeee]

We find Saul just working in the fields, and this shows us the humility of Saul at this point, as he's just working the fields, instead of flaunting his appointment to kingship.

But it also shows us that the kingship wasn't really fully established yet.

So even though Saul was appointed publicly as king, Israel is still in a transitional time. [pause]

Nevertheless, Saul hears the weeping, and finds out about the situation in Jabesh.

That's when the Spirit of God rushes upon him and his anger is greatly kindled. *[pauseeee]*

Here it's a righteous anger, where Saul wants to defend God's people from their enemies.

And he takes some oxen, cuts them up, sends the pieces throughout Israel, and tells the people if they don't come out and help, then they will end up like the oxen. *[pauseeee]*

Does this remind you of anything?

This is kinda what happened back in the end of Judges, where a Levite cuts up his dead concubine and sends the pieces throughout all of Israel.

That's when most of Israel then goes to battle against the tribe of Benjamin for what the people in the town of Gibeah did.⁴ *[pause]*

Well now they are gathered, not to go against one of their own tribes, but gathered around their king, going to war against an enemy of Israel.

This seems to indicate that the time of the division and chaos of the judges is now officially over, and the time of the people's unity under the kingship has arrived. *[pauseeee]*

So Saul gets everyone's attention and they are fearful of not answering the call, and they come out to fight.

That's when they tell the people of Jabesh-gilead that they are coming to save them, and the people are glad.

Saul divides the army up into three parts, they attack in the wee hours of the morning, and strike them down so much that no two Ammonite soldiers run away together. *[pauseeee]*

This was a great victory.

Saul had officially won his first battle, and in a decisive fashion.

He had courageously led the people to unify and defeat the enemy. *[pauseeee]*

But what was the key difference maker? The Spirit.

It was the Spirit that rushes upon Saul and stirs him up to courageously go to battle. *[pause]*

Think about how different Saul was before the Spirit came upon him.

He was a fearful, insecure, and unconfident man, who was hiding in the baggage when his name was chosen to be the leader of Israel.

But now he is a brave, unifying leader, leading Israel into battle.

⁴ See Judges 19-21.

That's the power of the Spirit! *[pause]*

God was showing them that all they really needed was God's empowering Spirit.

It's the Spirit that changes people.

It's the Spirit that empowers people.

It's the Spirit that brings victory.

And it's the Spirit that empowers and changes *us*, too. *[pause]*

We must always remember this - we are nothing without God's Spirit working within us. *[pause]*

Without Him, we are unable to do anything.

Without Him, we are fearful, weak people hiding in the baggage.

But through the Spirit, he empowers us, comforts us, and helps us in our weaknesses. *[pauseeee]*

Have you ever been fearful of speaking the truth in love to someone?

But you keep praying to God to help you, and then God through the Spirit gives you the words to speak and the boldness to speak up.

That's what God can do. *[pause]*

There are so many times that before I preach, I feel so unworthy, so fearful, so incompetent, but when I call out to God, His Spirit gives me boldness.

That's what God's Spirit can do. *[pause]*

He gives us each a spiritual gift.

He changes us to be made more into the image of Christ.

He encourages us and comforts us in our fears.

He leads us to serve others, and minister for Him in the world. *[pauseeeee]*

In what ways are you relying too much on yourself, and not the Spirit?

Maybe you need to be more open to the working of the Spirit, relying upon Him. *[pause]*

So often we think that we can do it in our own power, only to experience a lack of power.

And then we are once again humbled and reminded that God's Spirit is where the true power lies. *[pause]*

Imagine our church dependent on the Spirit's leading and power, and not our own creativity, wisdom, and power.

Imagine all of us as individuals letting the Spirit lead in our lives, and not simply rolling up our sleeves, trusting ourselves.

May we be people, who consistently believe and live out the truth: "apart from Christ, I can do nothing!"⁵ [pauseeeee]

There's an epitaph in the church of London, where John Newton was pastor, and he wrote it for himself and it says this...

"Sacred to the memory of John Newton, once a libertine and blasphemer and slave of slaves in Africa, but renewed, purified, pardoned, and appointed to preach that Gospel which he had labored to destroy!"⁶ [pauseeeee]

God can change and empower *anyone*.

God empowered a fearful and hesitant man and made him into a Samson-like hero.

And he used a man from Gibeah, no less. [pause]

Gibeah, the town full of wickedness that brought disgrace in the time of Judges, and who the rest of Israel attacked, now has a man come out of it that saves all of Israel from disgrace.

That's God, turning the most unlikely of people into his vessels, and turning the places of disgrace into places of victory. [pauseeee]

Who would have thought that a man out of Nazareth would bring salvation, for even Nathaniel said, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"⁷

Yet that was Jesus.

And the place of shame was the Cross, yet it's through the Cross that shame is reversed and turned into salvation and victory. [pauseeee]

A Spirit-empowered king brought deliverance to those who were in a hopeless situation.

Sounds like Christ, doesn't it?

Even here at the beginning of the kingship in Israel, we are starting to see how the kingship points forward to the ultimate king.

⁵ See John 15:5.

⁶ *Quiet Hour Stories*. <https://www.family-times.net/illustration/Deliverance/201037/>.

⁷ John 1:46.

For the perfect, ultimate King would also have the Spirit, for we find the Spirit descend and remain upon Jesus.⁸ *[pause]*

This Spirit-empowered King brought us deliverance through the Cross and in the Grave.

For we were slaves to sin, bound for Hell, incapable of saving ourselves, and estranged from God...

...But Christ made the way through the sacrifice of His own blood.

He became our substitute, paying the debt we owed, and rose again, conquering sin and death.

We were delivered out of our hopeless situation by the great, Spirit-empowered King. *[pauseee]*

That's how God works.

He works in grace to save His people from slavery and death.

Even though Israel sinned in asking for a king, God in grace, would save them.

No situation would place them out of the reach of grace, as even in this new kingship, victory would still come from the Lord. *[pauseeee]*

There are no truly hopeless situations with God at the helm.

Even us being slaves to sin, dead in our sin, and without hope in this world - we were set free, made alive, and given hope without measure.

And no person is out of the reach of God's grace, if only they would look outside of themselves for salvation like the people of Jabesh-gilead did.

And God makes a way. *[pause]*

He made a way through empowering king Saul to deliver the people, and he made a way for us through sending His only Son to deliver us from sin and death.

And just like the people of Jabesh only had to reach out for help, wait, and trust - so we simply trust in the work of God in Christ.

Our seemingly "hopeless" situation is reversed through the work of God, and the work of God alone. *[pause]*

And just like King Saul crushed the head of Nahash which means 'serpent', so Christ crushed the head of Satan, that old serpent, when he died and rose again.

What great deliverance that God gives!

⁸ See John 1:33.

All praise goes to Him!

That leads me to the third part of the story, and the truth that emanates out of it...

III. Grace to Sinners, Glory and Praise to God (12-15)

Let's READ VERSES 12-15 to see these things...

“Then the people said to Samuel, ‘Who is it that said, ‘Shall Saul reign over us?’ Bring the men, that we may put them to death.’

But Saul said, ‘Not a man shall be put to death this day, for today the Lord has worked salvation in Israel.’

Then Samuel said to the people, ‘Come, let us go to Gilgal and there renew the kingdom.’

So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the Lord in Gilgal. There they sacrificed peace offerings before the Lord, and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.” *[pauseeee]*

This great, pleasant, and joyous ending to the story is all the result of God's great deliverance of His people.

There's *grace to sinners*. *[pause]*

If you remember from last week, there was a group who despised Saul and doubted his ability to save Israel.

And people didn't forget about them, and after Saul's victory, the people wanted them put to death.

But did you notice what Saul did? *[pause]*

As the king, he had the right of judgment, and he chose to extend grace to them, and to not put them to death.

That is, he essentially forgives them.

He shows grace and forgiveness, and bases it on the salvation that God gave. *[pause]*

This is what happens at the Cross!

Based on the salvation that God gives in Christ, people are forgiven, even though they deserved death. *[pause]*

We are such people!

We were people in rebellion, but through the victory of Christ, we are extended forgiveness and grace, for God has worked salvation for *us*.

And look at the result of this forgiveness in the king: unity! *[pause]*

Because of the victory and forgiveness that Saul gives, the people are unified under his kingship.

That's what Jesus has done.

His victory and forgiveness brings people together under His Kingship in unity. *[pause]*

How can people with such different backgrounds, ethnicities, and personalities come together in the church and have unity?

Because we are united in Christ!

His work has broken down the barriers, and brought us all into the same kingdom, but deeper than that, into a family. *[pauseeee]*

There's deliverance. There's forgiveness. There's unity.

And all the glory goes to God, for even Saul points this out...

He says, "for today *the Lord* has worked salvation for Israel." *[pause]*

He doesn't boast in his ability to get everyone to go to battle, he doesn't boast in his courage, his military strategy of dividing up the army into three parts, or his strength...

...He points the glory up to the Lord, and that's where all glory should go, the rightful place. *[pauseeee]*

God's work of salvation shows off his glory, and he should get glory for it alone.

He did it, not us.

He did the work, he did the miraculous, he showed grace and power and wisdom. *[pause]*

Do you give God glory for His salvation or do you boast in your wisdom to receive the gospel?

Do you give God glory for His salvation or do you boast in your ability to believe and do good works?

The Lord is the one who gives salvation. *[pauseeee]*

The story also finishes out with rededication and renewal.

This is the response of sinners to God's salvific work.

We respond with dedication to our Lord Jesus as King.

We follow Him as our Lord and Master, forsaking sin and forsaking a life living for ourselves.
[pauseeee]

So often people see turning to Christ as something they just add to their lives.

Like a nice little “add on” that they tack onto their already good life.

And it shows in their day-to-day life, where their walk with the Lord barely changes anything in their day.

In almost every area of their life, they look like an unbeliever, except they pop in and out of church services here and there. *[pause]*

But that’s not what Scripture shows us.

Scripture shows us that turning to Christ is a complete life change, where we turn from living for self, and turn to Christ alone.

We are now followers, disciples, life-long learners of Jesus, obeying and serving Him.

Our whole lives are to be dedicated to His service, for he has delivered us out of the domain of darkness and we are now transferred into His kingdom.⁹ *[pauseeee]*

Is your life dedicated to following Christ?

Is He truly King of your life?

I’m not talking about what you simply say, for we could all just say that, but does His Kingship change how you live? *[pause]*

In how you treat your family, does it display a life under Jesus’ authority?

Does His Kingship mold how you serve others throughout the week? *[pause]*

What about being on mission and using opportunities to speak to others about Him?

Or is your week all about you, your comforts, your wants, your desires? *[pauseeeee]*

At the end of this story, the people also respond to God’s deliverance with praise and joy.

They sacrifice peace offerings, which were basically offerings of gratitude to God.

So they were worshipping God with thankfulness in their hearts towards Him. *[pause]*

This grateful worship is what God desires and deserves.

He is the God of all grace, and we should worship him with thankfulness.

⁹ See Colossians 1:13.

We give Him thanks at all times, we give back to Him, and we serve Him in gratitude.

And we are to do it with joy. *[pause]*

What else can we do but have joy for what He has done on the Cross for us?

We should be filled with exceeding joy towards Him.

Is that your mentality? Will you praise Him for His great grace? *[pauseeee]*

This story is an important one showing us how God works through His king to bring deliverance, and it points forward to how...

The Lord works through King Jesus to bring deliverance to helpless sinners!

The people of Jabesh-gilead were surrounded, and felt like they were in a hopeless state.

As a result, they looked outside of themselves for salvation, and God worked through his anointed king to bring deliverance.

This is a beautiful picture, that we can't help but see, of what Christ would do.

For we were in a seemingly hopeless state, as we were dead in our sins, slaves to our sins, and incapable of saving ourselves.

So we had to look outside of ourselves for salvation, and thankfully God made a way!

He worked through King Jesus to bring us deliverance from slavery, sin, and death.

And now we can't but respond with dedication, gratitude, praise, and joy to our great God and King for His grace. *[pause]*

We, his enemies, are now forgiven and brought into unity with others by His blood. *[pauseeee]*

What's your response to God's work through King Jesus?

If you have never turned from your sin and turned in faith to Christ, then turn in faith today.

Realize that you are in a helpless condition, unable to save yourself because of your sin.

And trust that Christ can save you from your sins by His death on the Cross, paying the penalty for your sin. *[pauseeeee]*

For those who have trusted in Christ's saving work on the Cross, what's our response to his deliverance?

We respond in dedication, gratitude, praise, and joy.

We follow our Lord Jesus.

We are life-long learners of Him, following in His footsteps, and obeying His commands.

We serve Him out of love and gratitude.

We give thanks always in our hearts to Him, praising Him while we have breath.

And we live in joy. *[pause]*

In what areas do you still need to surrender to King Jesus?

Your finances? Your time? Your energy?

Think through each area of your life and consider what it looks like.

Is all of your money simply used and hoarded for yourself?

Is your work life simply about getting through the day and getting a paycheck, or is it used to demonstrate and share Christ with those who need Him?

Is your time used only for leisure and comfort, or is it used to serve others?

Like that well-known hymn says, “I surrender all to Jesus, to him I freely give.”¹⁰
[pauseeee]

What a joy it is to have Jesus Christ as our King!

What a King to follow! There is none like Him.

Through Him, the Lord has worked salvation for *you*.

¹⁰ “I Surrender All,” by Judson W. Van De Venter.