

God Alone Rescues and Empowers

1 Samuel 11

1. The Holy Spirit Empowers Us in Difficult Times (Vs. 1-6)

The people of Jabesh Gilead were under threat of invasion by Nahash and having previously avoided supporting the rest of Israel in their conflict in Judges 19, the people of Jabesh Gilead had little hope of help from Israel. However, the Lord came to the rescue of these people by raising up Saul by the Holy Spirit.

It is through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ by faith that we receive the Holy Spirit. Living the Christian life in any sense, let alone during difficult times, is impossible apart from the power of the Holy Spirit. As with Saul at that time, we are empowered to live in obedience to God by the Holy Spirit.

2. The Fear of the Lord is Crucial to Obedience (Vs. 7-8)

The Israelites were stirred to action in order to defend the people of Jabesh Gilead from the invading Ammonites only after Saul threatened to kill the oxen of any who would not rally to him (11:7). It was through this that the fear of the Lord fell upon the Israelites, moving them to obedience, unity, and appropriate behaviour.

When cast in light of judgment, people are frightened of God. However, for the believer in Christ the fear of the Lord does not mean that we are frightened of God rather it means that we respect and be in awe of Him the way that we should be. Therefore, the godly fear of the Lord leads to repentance, right unity with other Christians, and righteous actions.

3. God Alone Rescues (Vs. 9-15)

Saul won a great victory against the Ammonites that day and was confirmed as king before the Israelites. Despite this, Saul did not claim the victory for himself rather he gave the glory to God (11:13). Saul is shown as the ideal king in his humility and self-sacrifice, and his desire to give all of the glory to the Lord.

With Saul in this chapter, we see similarities with Jesus. It is in the Person of Christ that we see most clearly humility, self-sacrifice and care for the oppressed. Just as it was truly God who rescued the Israelites from their enemies, so also it is only Jesus who saves us. We can claim nothing for our salvation, but rather like Saul, Samuel and the Israelites, we can celebrate and thank God for this rescue.

Questions:

- Since all Christians are called to minister and serve, what is the Holy Spirit specifically empowering me to do in service to the Lord?
- So often we fear people rather than fear the Lord. Had Saul and the Israelites not responded positively in obedience to the fear of God, Jabesh Gilead would have been invaded. As I reflect, how might my life change if I were to live in the fear of the Lord? Do I fear people more than I fear the Lord?
- There is a time for “righteous anger.” In what situations in the world today is it appropriate to feel and express righteous anger by the Holy Spirit? When is anger an appropriate and even pleasing feeling before God?

- When I am confronted with people in need, do I have a heart and concern for them that moves me to righteous action? Who is there around me in my life now that is in need?
- Though we have come to faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour, we still struggle with sin and with many circumstances in our lives, and we can feel utterly hopeless. In what areas of my life now do I need to trust God for deliverance?