

[spirit-filled]

:: 1 samuel 11.1-11 ::

As we saw this past Sunday in our study of 1 Corinthians chapter 10, the accounts of the Old Testament (*and of course the New Testament as well*) are given to us as examples of how to live, how to follow after God and how to avoid the pitfalls that others before us have fallen into.

The battles of the Old Testament can give us unique insights into overcoming the flesh, withstanding trials and living the Christian life victoriously.

In 1 Samuel chapter 11 we read about the battle at Jabesh-Gilead and we find that the key to victory is to be Spirit-filled.

In his book *Calvary Chapel Distinctives*, Pastor Chuck Smith writes this:

"The model that we find in the book of Acts is a church filled with the Holy Spirit, led by the Holy Spirit, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. It was a church where the Holy Spirit was the one directing its operation and ministry."

- *Chuck Smith Calvary Chapel Distinctives (pg. 11)*

Your life **must** be Spirit-filled and Spirit-led. As we're fond of reminding you on Wednesday mornings, your life is all about choices. You can choose to follow the Spirit, or you can choose to ignore the Spirit, grieve the Spirit or quench the Spirit. From this moment on you are making the choice.

Jesus was clear that the Holy Spirit is given to us as an indwelling Helper, carrying with Him the full power and strength and wisdom and direction from God.

Men, He is within you right now, but He will not force Himself and His will upon you at any time. But, if we want any kind of victory or power or effectiveness or purpose in our lives, then we must be men who are filled with the Spirit and led by Him, as King Saul was in 1 Samuel chapter 11.

Look at verse 1:

1 Samuel 11.1a - Then Nahash the Ammonite went up and besieged Jabesh-Gilead.

The Ammonites were the descendants of Lot's incest with his daughters. Here we find a very practical reminder that our past sins or mistakes can come back to haunt us in very serious ways.

This is why, spiritually speaking, our goal is deliverance, not reform. We need to be transformed by God, so that we can enjoy His provision and His protection. We all make mistakes, but when we do we need to seek God's deliverance, not just some temporal, human fix to our situation.

The Ammonites were back to destroy and here's how God's people responded:

1 Samuel 11.1b-3 - ...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 to you."

Now this is almost surreal to me. While I understand that no one wants to be killed, the terms of this treaty are just ridiculous!

Nahash is plain about his desire to destroy Israel. His desire is to hurt them and shame them and maim them. His desire is to gouge out their eyes and mutilate them. And, on the one hand, the men of Jabesh don't seem to be all that bothered by this.

Obviously they didn't *want* this to happen. They didn't want to die, they didn't want to be disfigured, but we can see that they were absolutely resigned to defeat and they were immediately ready to compromise with the enemy.

God doesn't compromise with sin. God's plan for the people of Israel was to utterly destroy the inhabitants of Canaan. They failed to do so for a lot of reasons, and now they had to spend the rest of their time there fighting off all these enemies they hadn't taken care of.

All the time they were facing difficulty and raids and attacks and hurts because they were willing to compromise in the time of the Joshua, and, we can see, they were willing to compromise here.

When you compromise with sin you lose. Because, at it's fundamental level, compromise is a rejection of God's will for your life. It is to embrace sin instead of God. However, you don't become partners with sin, you become it's slave. You become like Samson whose eyes were plucked out, blind and turning the mill of the flesh.

I say this because I think we have a tendency to think that there are degrees of compromise. There are little compromises and GREAT compromises. And the truth is that any concession to sin is like losing an eye. Losing your freedom. Losing your very life to the power of evil.

What we find in the Bible, even in this passage, is that Spirit-filled men don't compromise. One Spirit-filled man can bring down a giant. One Spirit-filled man can fend off armies. One Spirit-filled man can rally his entire country to follow after God. Spirit-filled men don't compromise. And so if we find ourselves compromising, then we've found ourselves without the Spirit of God influencing us. And, as we always point out in these studies, the spiritual enemies that we face are **not interested** in coexisting with you, they want to hurt you and blind you and destroy you. They will not show us mercy, so we must not show mercy to them, speaking of the Devil, the influence of the world and the old sin nature which still lurks within our hearts.

1 Samuel 11.4 - When messengers came to Gibeah of Saul, they reported that matter in the ears of the people, and all the people wept aloud.

So we see the first group of Israelites were ready to compromise. That was a wrong response.

Now we see this second group, who really didn't care about their fellow countrymen. I mean, they lifted up their voices and wept, but the truth is **nothing had happened yet!** These messengers were

coming and *asking for help* and the response was, "Oh how sad...they're done for...they're gonna be dead soon."

And this is a terrible display of apathy. Oh how sad. Too bad no one can save them. I'm so glad it's not me. What kind of a response is this? How could you sit there, knowing your friends and countrymen to the north were facing this destruction, and do nothing?

The more I think about this the more angry it makes me, because this was the Israel who still had the Ark of the Covenant! This was the Israel that had seen the judges and Joshua and the great miracles of the conquest. Though these individuals may not have seen those things themselves, it wasn't like they were thousands of years removed from that which God had done.

So what was the problem?

The problem was the attitude of the people. You have Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel. The last line of Judges reads this way:

Judges 21.25 - In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

What was right in his own eyes. Not God's eyes.

Now, Saul had been anointed king and proclaimed king, but he hadn't started reigning. There was no unified government at this point. And the people were still under this attitude of Judges 21.

Essentially, they heard the news and they said, "Well, that's a shame, but it's not my problem."

Men, the suffering of your fellow believers is your problem. The sin of your fellow believers is your problem. If you see your friend, your brother in Christ, one for whom Jesus suffered and died, if you see that person falling into sin or being oppressed or struggling in a trial, **it is your problem**.

Our apathy causes huge problems. If you're feeling apathetic in your faith, if you're not feeling stirred up about the Lord, then you **must** get in front of your God and figure out what needs to change because right now there are people all around you who need help and ministry and wisdom and assistance and the Gospel.

Saul is not a great hero of the faith, he made a lot of bad decisions and is usually an example of what *not* to do, but let's see what he does here:

1 Samuel 11.5-9 - 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 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 deliverance. When the messengers came and told the men of Jabesh, they were glad.

We see here very clearly that Saul was filled with the Holy Spirit during this situation. His response was action. You and I are not called to a passive lifestyle. We are not meant to be armchair observers of the things that are going on around us. God has called us to action. Judea, Samaria, the ends of the earth. That's our territory. The Gospel of grace. That's our message. The example of Christ. That's our method.

God expects you to be advancing on His behalf throughout the days of your life. He expects you to serve Him and steward what He has given you and to love others with the love that He has shown you.

Because of these expectations, He has gifted us and provided us the Spirit, to fill us and embolden us and give us wisdom. This is who you are men! But, like the Israelites, we are free to choose compromise. We're free to choose apathy. Or, we can choose to fuel our lives with the Spirit of God who desires to grant us favor and victory and purpose and strength.

Saul rallied the people to help their countrymen. He butchered down his oxen, I believe, as a rebuke to them. It was a visual way to say, "What are you doing? We have enemies out there and they are seeking to destroy us. AND we have a God who expects us to live in a way that pleases Him!"

Apathy and compromise don't please God. More importantly, they *displease* God. The verse there says that Saul's anger was greatly kindled. And in the language that is a serious phrase. He was angry. White hot, burning anger. Of course he was angry at the Ammonites, but I think that we might say he was also angry at the state of the people, who were living individualistic lives, caring only about themselves and really not caring about the suffering of others, even their kinsmen.

One way to determine if we are living a Spirit-filled life is to evaluate what we are passionate about. There's nothing wrong with hobbies. Nothing wrong with relaxation or any of that. We always say that. But, if we have no passion for others in our lives, how can we identify ourselves with a Christ who lived His life *only* for others?

Jesus was burdened for people. He had incredible care for them. He had a passion to share the Good News of salvation and to bring God's power into their lives.

If you want a life of victory and meaning you must be Spirit-filled.

Saul had the Spirit of God rush upon him and he instantly was drawn to action on behalf of those who were in need.

He rallied his troops up in the city of Bezek and there numbered 330,000 soldiers who were united to fight the Ammonites.

To give you some perspective, wikipedia lists the United States Navy as having 332,000 personnel, so this was quite a fighting force.

The stage was set.

1 Samuel 11.10-11 -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.

They attacked in the morning watch, before dawn, perhaps having the advantage of darkness, or perhaps simply having the advantage of overwhelming numbers. The Ammonite army was utterly routed, and what few survivors escaped were left to flee on their own. Complete victory.

A quick note here. Sometimes as conservative Christians we get a little uncomfortable talking about the Holy Spirit and His control over our lives. But in this passage we find some very interesting points.

First, though the relationship to the Holy Spirit was different for Old Testament saints than it is for us today, we can still learn things about His nature and His ministry to us.

The passage says that the Holy Spirit rushed upon Saul. In those words there is found a definition of taking charge of. It's not that we're possessed by God's Spirit, but He should have charge of our lives. He should be our resource for decisions and leading and endurance and strength and even the words we speak, He should be the source of those things. He should have the charge of our hearts, leading us and controlling our activity. Each of us must ask ourselves what rank we've given God's Spirit in our lives, and what rank we've given ourselves.

Second, though the Spirit rushed upon Saul, we still find that the battle strategy was both planned and orderly. Saul divided the company, they had a plan and a implementation. It wasn't just a crazy melee, but a thoughtful, inspired and ordered response to the situation.

The Spirit isn't going to possess us like a demon. He doesn't influence us to do all those things that we see as abuses in other traditions. The Spirit of God carries the same nature and character as God the Father and God the Son.

I say this because we shouldn't be afraid to grow in our relationship to spiritual gifts or steps of faith. That is why the Spirit indwells us, so that we might have that supernatural connection to God and live above the temporal, live in the heavenly mindset, power and plan.

Men, we have to deal with compromise. We have to deal with apathy. The answer to those problems and to the problems of sin, trial and oppression is to be Spirit-filled, ready to go where we need to go, do what we need to do and find the deliverance that God has offered us by His power, through His Spirit.