

## 1 Samuel 11:1-15 – “Saul Takes Command”

(Pew Bible Page: 233)

**Intro:** When last we left the story of Saul, we found him cowering in the baggage, and remaining silent in the face of contempt for his kingship, person, and selection by God. *“How can this man save us?”* the people asked. How could such a man as Saul save Israel? It was a fair question! Tonight, we get the answer: Saul couldn’t save Israel, but Saul empowered by the Spirit could. Everything changes when the Spirit takes command.

**Proposition:** “Everything is broken until God puts it right.” (Tozer)

Billboard:	(vv.1-4)	Beaten Men
	(vv.5-11)	Saul Takes Command
	(vv.12-15)	Saul Accepted as King

(vv.1-4) Beaten Men – The people were obviously living in hopelessness. Watch their reaction to Nahash’s aggression, beginning in verse one: **1 Samuel 11:1 - 1** *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.”* The people of Jabesh-gilead “folded like a two-dollar suitcase” in the face of Nahash’s challenge. There was no real effort to “push back” at all – no attempt to defend themselves. They were resigned to their powerlessness in the face of the threat. They were beaten men. Note as well Nahash’s reaction in verse two: **1 Samuel 11:2 - 2** *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.”* Nahash was determined to dominate them, either through victory or through humiliation. He was completely uninterested in a negotiated settlement. His jaim was domination of Israel. Verse three give us another insight: Listen to the helplessness of the men of Jabesh-gilead as they stall for time – **1 Samuel 11:3 - 3** *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.”* Note their words, *“If there is no one to save us...”* They were going to send for help, but it is clear that they had no confidence that help would eventually arrive. Note finally the reaction of the people in Gibeah of Saul when the cry for help came: **1 Samuel 11:4 - 4** *When the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul, they reported the matter in the ears of the people, and all the people wept aloud.* Their reaction was not indignation, but resignation – they sought tears rather than Saul. No one bothered to call the king! Obviously, these too are beaten people. The men of Jabesh-gilead didn’t call Saul; the people of Gibeah felt the same. Saul may have been proclaimed as king, but no one seemed to think that fact made any difference.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] Beaten people live in hopelessness, seeing no way out of their situation.

[ILLUSTRATION] “I absolutely refuse to gratify the devil by becoming discouraged!” said a wise man of God.

[APPLICATION] Nothing is more debilitating to the cause of God on earth than when His people become discouraged. When we are discouraged, we fail to receive the good gifts God has given for our help. God may have showered us with many precious manifestations of His presence, power, and love in the past, but when we are discouraged all those blessings seem distant and far behind us if we even think about them at all! The devil loves to discourage God’s people! The people had forgotten that they belonged to YHWY. Believer don’t forget that you belong to the only King that matters: King Jesus. Even today all power and authority belong to our King. If we forget this precious truth, we too will live in

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(Pew Bible Page: 233)

hopelessness, as the people of Jabesh-gilead and Gibeon did. Take yourself in hand. Refuse to gratify the devil by becoming discouraged.

(VV.5-11) Saul Takes Command – King Saul was inspiring no confidence in the people. Rather than acting like a king, Saul continued to behave like a farmer: **1 Samuel 11:5 - 5** *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.* How could Saul’s detachment from leadership inspire any confidence in the hearts of his people? But everything was about to change. **1 Samuel 11:6-7 - 6** *And the Spirit of God rushed upon Saul when he heard these words, and his anger was greatly kindled. 7 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.* Suddenly, the guy who had been hiding in the baggage, the man who had kept silent in the face of disrespect for himself and his office, took command! What happened that made the difference? When the Spirit took command of Saul, Saul took command of the nation. Not only did the Spirit take charge of Saul, He also took charge of the people, and they answered Saul’s call to assemble in droves: *Then the dread of the LORD fell upon the people, and they came out as one man.* Notice how everything changed from that moment onward. Verse eight tells us that the people responded massively. Verse nine shows us that even the men of Jabesh-gilead seem to have had no doubt that victory was on the way. **1 Samuel 11:8-10 - 8** *When he mustered them at Bezek, the people of Israel were three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty thousand. 9 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.* The men of Jabesh-gilead even sent Nahash a message feigning their surrender, and they did this doubtlessly with their tongues firmly in their cheeks! **10** *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 victory was achieved as verse 11 tells us. **1 Samuel 11:11 - 11** *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.* Let no one doubt that this too was the work of God’s Spirit through Israel’s new king.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] When the Spirit takes command everything changes.

[ILLUSTRATION] The story is told of General George Patton taking command of a demoralized and badly beaten American army in North Africa. Within a few weeks, Patton had so turned the army around that they won a crucial victory over Erwin Rommel’s fabled Africa Corp. What was the difference? Patton had taken command.

[APPLICATION] In just that same way, when the Spirit of God takes command, everything changes for God’s people. When the Spirit takes command in a believer’s life, everything changes. The Word of God comes to life in personal study. Prayer becomes a delight. Willingness to obey God’s leading springs up in a new and more powerful way. The pastor’s messages become richer, more insightful, more encouraging. Christian friendships become sweeter. Everything changes when the Spirit takes command. Have you been feeling a bit discouraged lately? Lackluster in your walk with Jesus? Seek to be filled with His Spirit! Ask, seek, and knock until you find! Everything changes when the Spirit of Jesus takes command.

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(vv.12-15) Saul Accepted as King – On the strength of this victory, everyone’s attitude changed about Saul. The farmer became the king that day in the eyes of his people. The first thing that happened was that the people sought to execute the doubters among them, forgetting that only a few days before, they too had been doubters! **1 Samuel 11:12 - 12** *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.”* Someone has quipped that “Victory has a thousand fathers; defeat is an orphan.” Flush with the thrill of victory the people demanded the death of those who had questioned Saul’s kingship. How would Saul respond? Here was an excellent opportunity for getting even if ever there was one! But Saul refused the temptation and now for the first time acted as a king ought to act – magnanimously. **1 Samuel 11:13 - 13** *But Saul said, “Not a man shall be put to death this day, for today the LORD has worked salvation in Israel.”* Notice how Saul struck just the right note: “today the LORD has worked salvation in Israel.” Helped by God’s Spirit Saul acted gracefully toward his enemies, and gratefully toward the Lord. Saul’s first coronation had been something of a dud. Samuel now called the people to renew the kingship, acknowledging Saul as king, and the people responded readily: **1 Samuel 11:14–15 - 14** *Then Samuel said to the people, “Come, let us go to Gilgal and there renew the kingdom.”* **15** *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.* It’s interesting that “peace offerings” were sacrificed. The “peace offering” or “fellowship offering” was an offering of gratitude to God in which the people were invited to share in eating some of the meat they sacrificed. The symbolism of this offering is one of healing between God and His people. The nation was brought together under their new leader by the coming of God’s Spirit to the king.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] God heals His beaten people through the blessing of His Spirit’s leadership.

[ILLUSTRATION] On the Day of Pentecost, God the Father responded to Jesus’ request and poured out the Holy Spirit on the Church. The believers present received an amazing baptism of the Spirit as He came upon the church in an initial filling. Later in Acts four we find the Spirit once again filling God’s people – a refilling that refreshed, strengthened, and emboldened the believers. This is a normal pattern for the Spirit’s work among God’s people – an initial filling at the moment of conversion, then repeated fillings over the course of a lifetime. It is important to note the connection between believer’s prayers and these outpouring of the Spirit. Both examples noted in Acts followed times of earnest corporate prayer by the Church. The ministry of the Spirit among God’s people is intimately connected to the prayer-life of the people.

[APPLICATION] Spirit-filled leadership is a crucial necessity for any group of God’s people. Unless the Spirit of God is in command of a church, a family, a mission, or a small group Bible study, nothing wonderful can happen. What a tragedy it would be for God to earnestly desire to fill His people, His Church, His mission, or His small group Bible study with His Spirit’s power – but have no one ask. Don’t let that happen, dear one! “Ask and it will be given to you,” promised the Savior. Let’s take Him up on His offer.

**Conclusion:** Everything changes when the Spirit takes command. It happened in ancient Israel, and it still happens today.