

## Yes, He Can!

### Text: 1 Samuel 11

**Introduction:** Last week we asked the question: “Can this man save us?” The question came from the worthless fellows seen in verse 27 of 1 Samuel 10. Talking about Saul, they asked, “How can this man save us?” We saw that their question was really a rejection of God and His plan for His people.

You remember that back in chapter 8 of 1 Samuel, the people of Israel demanded a king. They wanted a king because Samuel was old, and his sons were evil. But they also wanted a king because they wanted to be like all the other nations.

Through Samuel, God warned His people of the troubles that having a king would bring their way. But the people were insistent. They wanted a king. So, God determined to give them what they asked for.

In chapter 9, we saw that Saul, the son of Kish, was the one that God chose to be Israel’s king. And last week in chapter 10, we saw Saul anointed and confirmed as king. The problem is that Saul hasn’t yet looked like we might expect a king to look. Sure, he was really tall. In fact, he was apparently a head taller than anyone else in Israel. We know that he was very handsome. The text says, “There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he” (9:2).

But everything else about Saul leaves us wondering if this man can really save Israel. That’s what the people wanted. They wanted a king to “go out before [them] and fight [their] battles” (8:20). And God said to Saul, “You shall reign over the people of the LORD and you will save them from the hand of their surrounding enemies” (10:1).

But that hasn’t happened yet. So, we’re still left wondering, “Can this man save Israel?” We’re going to see in our text this morning that, at least for now, the answer is “Yes, he can!”

Turn in your Bible to 1 Samuel 11. We are making our way through 1 Samuel. And we’re seeing the purposes of God unfold in the lives of His people.

(Read 1 Samuel 11...Pray)

As chapter 11 begins, the question on our minds concerning Saul is “Can this man save Israel?” We’ll see the initial answer to that question as we make our way through three main stages of progression in the salvation narrative of 1 Samuel 11.

The first stage of progression is that...

#### I. **There is no one to save Israel – “if there is no one to save us, we will give ourselves up to you” (1 Samuel 11:1-4).**

##### A. **Look at the situation (vs. 1-4).**

##### 1. **Verse 1 says, “Then Nahash the Ammonite went up and besieged Jabesh-gilead” (vs. 1a).**

- a. **This should capture our attention. Israel wanted a king to “go out before [them] and fight [their] battles” (8:20).**
- b. **God raised up Saul. God told Saul, “You will save them from the hand of their surrounding enemies” (10:1).**
- c. **But as chapter 11 begins, Saul is nowhere to be found. We saw in verse 26 of chapter 10 that after being confirmed as king, “Saul...went to his home at Gibeah” (10:26).**
- d. **Now, I don’t want to be too hard on Saul. The text doesn’t state that he was being disobedient to God by going home. There was no palace in Israel for him to go to.**
- e. **But his going home does mean that when Nahash the Ammonite went up and besieged Jabesh-gilead, Saul, the newly anointed king, was nowhere to be found.**

##### 2. **This becomes even clearer as we consider the response of the men of Jabesh in the second half of verse 1.**

- a. The text says, “And all the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, ‘Make a treaty with us, and we will serve you’” (vs. 1b).
  - b. Again, the people of Israel wanted a king to “go out before [them] and fight [their] battles” (8:20).
  - c. God gave them a king who was to “save them from the hand of their surrounding enemies” (vs. 10:1).
  - d. Now, the enemy has come. The king God gave them is nowhere to be found. And the men of Jabesh want to make a treaty with the enemy.
  - e. And by offering to make a treaty with Nahash, they were in effect asking Nahash to become their king.
  - f. Not only would they have a king like all the other nations, they would have one of the other nations’ king!
  - g. I wonder what would have happened if Nahash had just said, “Okay, that sounds good. Let’s make a treaty. You serve me, and I’ll stop fighting against you.”
  - h. Of course, that’s not what happened. God is more sovereign than that. God hadn’t fully turned His people over to an Israelite king, much less a pagan Ammonite king.
3. So, verse 2... (Read vs. 2)
- a. There are likely at least two reasons why Nahash wants to gouge out all their right eyes.
  - b. The first is likely that he wants to make sure that the people of Jabesh will never be able to rise up against the Ammonites in battle. If they had only one eye, they would still be able to work the fields as slaves, but they wouldn’t be much good on the battlefield.
  - c. Nahash makes clear the other reason for gouging out all their right eyes. He wants to bring disgrace on all Israel.
4. Then in verse 3, we see that the elders of Jabesh offered a compromise.
- a. They said, “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” (vs. 3).
  - b. How pathetic! They don’t seem very hopeful, do they?
  - c. There’s no crying out to God. There’s no indication that they believe God can or will save them.
  - d. In fact, God had given them the king they had asked for. The king who was supposed to “go out before [them] and fight [their] battles.” Yet no one thought, “Let’s call for the king!”
5. Their offer was apparently acceptable to Nahash. He apparently agreed to give them the seven days.
- a. As I was studying this chapter this week, I asked myself, “Why?” Why does Nahash agree to the reprieve? Why doesn’t he just overtake the people of Jabesh and make them his slaves?
  - b. I think the answer is that he is after max humiliation for Israel. The Ammonites had been previously defeated by Israel during the judgeship of Jephthah in Judges 11. So, for Nahash, it wasn’t enough to just defeat Israel. He wanted to humiliate them.
  - c. In fact, I don’t think Nahash thought the people of Jabesh would be able to find anyone to come and fight against the Ammonites on their behalf. And if they came back after seven days with no one to save them, that would be even more humiliating than just having their right eyes gouged out and becoming Nahash’s slaves. In fact, all of Israel would be humiliated in that situation. Not just the people of Jabesh.
  - d. But, on the off chance that they were able to find someone to fight against the Ammonites on their behalf, Nahash felt confident that the Ammonites would win, and that too would add to the humiliation of Jabesh and all Israel.

- e. So, Nahash agrees to this compromise that is suggested by the elders of Jabesh. They have seven days to find someone to save them before they have their right eyes gouged out and they are taken into slavery by Nahash and the Ammonites.
6. The narrative moves right along in verse 4 with the messengers in Gibeah of Saul.
- a. We can assume that Gibeah probably wasn't the first place the messengers visited looking for someone to save them.
  - b. There's no indication in the text that they intentionally went to Gibeah looking for Saul.
  - c. They "just happened" to arrive in Gibeah of Saul. Of course, if you've been with us through this study of 1 Samuel, you know better. They didn't "just happen" to arrive in Gibeah of Saul. God sovereignly brought them to Gibeah of Saul.
  - d. In fact, the mention of Saul makes our ears perk up. He's the king. He's supposed to be the one to save Israel from their enemies. But he's not even the first one the messengers speak to in Gibeah.
  - e. Look at verse 4. (Read vs. 4)
  - f. Can you feel their despair? The messengers report the situation. And ALL the people wept aloud.
  - g. There's no hope. Who will save Jabesh? And if no one saves Jabesh, it will likely be only a matter of time before the Ammonites press into the rest of Israel, including Gibeah. Especially once they know that there is no savior in Israel.
- B. The despair here in verse 4 is real. There is no one to save Israel. All the people wept aloud.
1. Have you ever found yourself in what appeared to be an impossible situation? How did you feel? Overwhelmed? Filled with despair?
  2. That's how the people of Gibeah felt when they heard the report of the messengers from Jabesh.
3. We know that the second king of Israel, David, knew something of this kind of despair. The Psalms are filled with David crying out to the Lord in prayer amidst his despair.
  4. I think of Psalm 22 where David cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry day by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest" (Ps. 22:1-2).
  5. We don't know the exact situation that David faced that caused him to write the words that we find in Psalm 22. We do know that he experienced intense feelings of despair both when fleeing from Saul and when fleeing from his son Absalom. We also know that David's own sin caused him great pain and grief.
  6. You see, pain, suffering, and despair are all a part of life in a fallen world. Things are not as they should be. This world is broken by sin.
  7. So, I imagine that many of us gathered in this room this morning have at times in our lives been able to relate to David's cry in Psalm 22: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"
  8. We also know that our Lord Jesus quoted those words on the cross. Matthew tells us in his Gospel that Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46).
  9. Goshen, I want you to know this morning that while your circumstances may be somewhat unique to you, your feeling of despair is not unique.
  10. 1 Samuel 11 begins with despair among God's people. The enemy is pressing in on them, and there is no one to save Israel.
- But that brings us to the second stage of progression in the salvation narrative of 1 Samuel 11.
- II. Saul is empowered to save Israel – "Tomorrow, by the time the sun is hot, you shall have salvation" (1 Samuel 11:5-11).

**A. Now, it doesn't start out that way in verse 5. (Read vs. 5)**

1. **This is the king of Israel. And he's out in the field following behind the oxen.**
2. **We were first introduced to Saul when he was sent to follow after and find his father's donkeys. Now, he's in the field following behind the oxen.**
3. **He's the king of Israel, but not a lot seems to have changed for Saul.**
4. **Including the fact that the people still are not looking to him for salvation from their enemies. Saul emerges from the field, and no one comes up to him as if he's the answer to their despair.**
5. **He had to ask what was going on! The text says that Saul asked, "What is wrong with the people, that they are weeping?" (vs. 5b).**
6. **And still, no one sees Saul as the answer to their despair. The text simply says that the people "told him the news of the men of Jabesh" (vs. 5c).**

**B. But things are getting ready to change.**

1. **But notice that it's not at the initiative of the people. It's not even at the initiative of Saul.**
2. **It's at the initiative of God. Look at verse 6. (Read vs. 6)**
3. **We saw the Spirit of God rush on Saul back in chapter 10. I argued there that the Spirit of God rushing on him should have led to Saul defending God's people against the Philistines. But it didn't. Saul did nothing.**
4. **Now God's people are dealing with the Ammonites, and things are different this time. The Bible says that Saul's "anger was greatly kindled" (vs. 6b).**
5. **Which led him to rally the troops. Look at verse 7. (Read vs. 7).**
  - a. **Seems kind of morbid, huh?**
  - b. **It's a bit difficult for us to fully wrap our minds around what Saul does here.**

- c. **This doesn't immediately strike us as the best way to gather an army for battle. But it works. The text says, "The dread of the LORD fell upon the people, and they came out as one man" (vs. 7b).**
- d. **Saul's instructions here also remind us of Judges 19-21. We don't have time to get into the details of that passage, but the point is that there is now a king in Israel. The people are not free to do what is right in their own eyes. They must submit themselves to the summons of the king who was God's emissary.**
- e. **You'll notice that Saul calls the people to "come out after Saul AND Samuel." Which again reminds us that Saul was not on his own. He was Israel's king, but he was under God's authority through God's prophet Samuel.**

**6. Verse 8 tells us the size of the army that came out after Saul. 300,000 people of Israel. 30,000 men of Judah.**

- a. **This is really something, isn't it?**
- b. **Saul was just in the field following behind the oxen. Now he's commanding a massive army that is going to come against the Ammonites to defend Jabesh and all Israel.**
- c. **How is this possible? Look back at verse 6. Only by the power of God. The Spirit of God rushed upon Saul.**

**7. The messengers were then sent to the men of Jabesh. They were to say, "Tomorrow, by the time the sun is hot, you shall have deliverance" (vs. 9b).**

- a. **This is a big deal. The messengers had left Jabesh with the news of Ammonite invasion and that there was no one to save Jabesh.**
- b. **But now they are returning to Jabesh with the news of salvation. They will not be overtaken by the Ammonites. There is hope! Their savior is coming!**

- c. **And what was the response of the men of Jabesh? The text says that they were glad (vs. 9c). That's probably and understatement, huh?**
- 8. Now look at what the men of Jabesh said to Nahash the Ammonite: "Tomorrow we will give ourselves up to you, and you may do to us whatever seems good to you" (vs. 10).**
- a. **The men of Jabesh gave Nahash and the Ammonites the impression that their search for a savior had failed.**
  - b. **Since this was what Nahash expected would happen, he thought nothing of it.**
- 9. But verse 11 tells us what happened. (Read vs. 11)**
- a. **The morning watch would have been between 2am and 6am. It was a surprise attack. The Ammonites were not expecting it.**
  - b. **And the Bible says that the Israelites struck down the Ammonites until the heat of the day.**
  - c. **Many were killed. But those who did survive were scattered. The people of Israel had come out as one man. And the Ammonites left scattered. All because of the power of God.**
- C. This is remarkable. Saul has finally lived up to his identity as Israel's king. He has defeated the Ammonites. And in doing so, he has provided salvation for Jabesh and all Israel.**
- 1. **I asked you before if you've ever found yourself in an impossible situation. I asked if you've ever felt overwhelmed or filled with despair.**
  - 2. **I wonder now if you've ever experienced God's deliverance in your life. You found yourself in an impossible situation. You couldn't see any way out. But God intervened on your behalf and brought you through that impossible situation.**

- 3. **This account of Jabesh's deliverance from the hand of the Ammonites is a reminder to us this morning of the power of our God. In the midst of impossible situations, God is at work. He is often at work in ways that we do not fully see or understand. But He is at work.**
- 4. **We can trust Him. We can rely upon Him. And in due time, we can receive the deliverance that He provides.**
- 5. **Sometimes that deliverance comes through another person as it did for the people of Jabesh. God raised up Saul. He gave Saul command of a massive army. Then He gave Saul and his army victory over the Ammonites.**

All of that brings us to the third stage of progression in the salvation narrative of 1 Samuel 11.

### **III. The Lord is praised as the true Savior of Israel – "today the LORD has worked salvation in Israel" (1 Samuel 11:12-15).**

#### **A. The people want to praise Saul as Israel's savior.**

- 1. **Isn't that how it always works? When God uses someone to bring about some kind of deliverance or salvation, people are quick to praise that person rather than God.**
- 2. **That's what happens here. In fact, not only do they want to praise Saul, but they also want to put to death those who questioned Saul. Look at verse 12. (Read vs. 12)**
  - a. **You remember the worthless fellows from the end of chapter 10. They asked, "How can this man save us?" (10:27).**
  - b. **But now that Saul has raised up an army and defeated the Ammonites, the answer is clear. How can this man save us? Like this!**
  - c. **Now, the response of the people is interesting. Because prior to verse 6 when the Spirit of God rushed upon Saul, no one was expecting him to save Israel. They didn't even call for him.**

- d. The only way Saul found out about what was going on was that he came in from the field at the right time and heard all the weeping.
- e. But now the people are acting as if they knew all along that Saul would save them. And they want to put Saul's enemies to death.

**B. But Saul isn't interested in that.**

- 1. In fact, verse 13 could be considered the high-water mark of Saul's entire reign as king of Israel. Look at what he says there in verse 13. (Read vs. 13)
- 2. It was the Lord who had worked salvation in Israel. Yes, the Lord had used Saul. But salvation belongs to the Lord.
- 3. Saul's grace here is impressive. Saul wouldn't always be so gracious and humble. But here he is gracious to his enemies. He directs attention off of himself and directs it to the Lord where it belongs.

**C. And the chapter ends with the renewal of the kingdom.**

- 1. Look at verse 14. (Read vs. 14)
- 2. Whose kingdom is Samuel talking about here?
  - a. The most obvious answer is Saul's kingdom.
  - b. Saul had been anointed and proclaimed as king. But there were still a lot of questions concerning Saul's reign as king until his defeat of the Ammonites.
  - c. Now that Saul has shown himself to be able to fulfill this important role, it is good for Israel to renew the kingdom by reaffirming Saul as king.
  - d. However, it seems likely that there is more going on here than just reaffirming Saul as king.
  - e. You'll remember that Israel had demanded a king like all the other nations. Their desire for a king like all the other nations was really a rejection of God as their king.
  - f. So, more than reaffirming Saul as king, the people of God needed to reaffirm the Lord as their king.

- g. Saul would be their earthly king, but the only way this arrangement would work would be if Saul and the people recognized the Lord as their true king.

**3. Verse 15 lends credence to the idea that this was as much about renewing the kingdom of God as it was renewing the kingdom of Saul. (Read vs. 15)**

- a. You'll notice that the text says that they "made Saul king BEFORE THE LORD." Not ahead of the Lord. But in the presence of the Lord.
- b. Saul's kingdom was set in its proper relationship to the Lord's kingdom.
- c. Saul was to rule Israel under the authority of the sovereign Lord.
- d. The people offered sacrifices before the Lord.
- e. And you'll notice the last two words of chapter 11. They "rejoiced greatly." They rejoiced in the Lord.

**D. Isn't this how we too should respond when we experience the Lord's salvation in our lives?**

- 1. The chapter started out looking pretty bleak with God's people under attack from the Ammonites. But it ends with the Ammonites defeated and God's people rejoicing in the Lord.
- 2. Their despair had turned to rejoicing. Their sorrow had turned to joy. They had experienced the salvation of the Lord.
- 3. JD Greear says that the people's rejoicing in the Lord is as much a victory as anything else in the story and that it is a strong reminder for God's people. He asks:
  - a. When good things happen in our lives, to whom do we give the credit?
  - b. When others praise you for your work, do you point them to God's grace?
  - c. When others want to make much of you, do you make much of God?

- 4. Those are good questions for us to consider, aren't they? It's so easy for us to take credit when good things happen in our lives. When others praise us, we might become puffed up with pride. Or with false humility, we may suggest that the thing someone is praising us for is no big deal. What we really should do is point the one who is praising us to God's grace in our lives. When people want to make much of us, we should make much of God and encourage others to do the same.**

**Conclusion:** There's so much that we can learn from Saul's defeat of the Ammonites and the kingdom renewal that followed.

Saul is presented in this passage as Israel's savior. And in acting as Israel's savior in battle against the Ammonites, he serves as a picture of Jesus who is our Savior in battle against sin and death.

The Ammonites are not pressing in on us to kill us or make us their slaves. But we do have a very real enemy. And he comes to steal, kill, and destroy. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the rules, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Let's not be afraid. May we never despair. May we never fail to look to the one whom God has raised up to be our King, our Savior, our Deliverer, the Lord Jesus Christ. May we be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.