

# Deliverance from Oppression

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[ 0 : 00 ] When the sun is hot, you shall have salvation. And then verse 13, it's all said, Not a man shall be put to death this day, for today the Lord has worked salvation in Israel.

Around 2,000 years ago, the Apostle Paul wrote what many Christians, even today, know as common experience. He wrote these words, We're afflicted in every way, but not crushed. Perplexed, but not driven to despair. Persecuted, but not forsaken. Struck down, but not destroyed. And I know that's a theme that we've covered on a number of occasions, certainly last little while. Well, because the reality is there. The reality, the ongoing increase in reality of the surrounding of hostility against God's people, against the church, against Christians. We might call that surrounding hostility. The world that would seek to silence the gospel and silence those who proclaim the gospel.

[ 1 : 12 ] And whether those who are, as it were, surrounding the church be secular humanists or liberal so-called Christians. Those of other religions who will not tolerate the Bible or Bible-believing Christians in their midst.

All around, there's the force of enmity towards Christians because, of course, ultimately that enmity is directed against the Lord Jesus. And for this new kingdom in Israel that we're reading off here in 1 Samuel 11, and this kingdom under the, well, with King Saul, the first king, still the enmity was all around.

Pagan tribes who hated Israel. Pagan tribes who hated Israel's God, the one true God. To the north, you have the Arameans. To the south-west, the Philistines.

To the south-east, Moabites and Edomites. And then from the east, the people reading off here, the Ammonites who come to attack that Israelite town in Jabesh Gilead.

These Ammonites, in fact, this isn't the first time that Ammonites have tried to attack and overthrow Israel. You go back to Judges 11, some 40-plus years before this incident, and you see the same warrior people threatening Israel.

[ 2 : 33 ] So, they were defeated then. But here they're attacking another time. There's no shame in their arrogance. There's no humility.

And, you know, once more trying to discredit the people of Israel and discredit the God of Israel. Isn't that a feature so much of, well, the nature of hostility to God's church today?

As we see, those who seek to undermine and attack the truth will continue to do so. And do so in what we might say is breathtaking arrogance.

There's no let-up in the spiritual warfare against God and His people. There's no let-up in those who hurl abuse and insult. These insults are hurled again.

And those who challenge God's law through the abuse of God's people, they don't relent. And, of course, unless the Lord intervenes and quells that vitriol.

[ 3 : 35 ] Many of you know, of course, what's happening in Lewis at the moment. The ongoing attack against a culture based in God's Word. We might see a relentless attack against God's truth, God's Word.

Or whether we look at the media. Every day we see a media at war with the Gospel and Biblical truth. Or lands where the church is severely persecuted by absolute dictators.

What did Jesus say? Jesus said of these times we're living in, these end times. He said in Matthew 10, Brother will deliver brother over today, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents of them put today.

And you will be hated by all men for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. Because Christians have choices.

You've got a choice in this ongoing battle. You have the choice to resist. To resist with the weapons that God has given His people. Spiritual weapons, weapons of righteousness, that God gives you to resist the evil one.

[ 4 : 44 ] That's what Paul wrote in, for example, 2 Corinthians 6, 6-7, when he spoke of the weapons of purity, and knowledge, and patience, and kindness.

The Holy Spirit. Genuine love. Truthful speech. The power of God. The weapons of the Christian soldier that are rooted in the Word of God, and sourced in the God of battles.

And it's for you, it's for me, to be equipped to be armed with the armour that God gives you to engage in that warfare. There's that choice.

Resist. But of course the other choice is do nothing. Do nothing. In fact, maybe compromise. Be resigned to what appears to be a lost cause. Give in. Make peace with the world that's assaulting you and your faith.

Because that's what we read off at the start of chapter 11 here in 1 Samuel 11. The people in Israel, that's exactly what they were faced with. They were faced either with the choice of resisting the oppressor, doing so through the strength of God, or giving in without a fight.

[ 5 : 50 ] And notice what they do at first. They give in without any recourse to calling on God.

There's no desire, as we see, to resist their pagan enemies. Look at verse 1.

Make a treaty with us. And we'll serve you. They haven't called on God in this decision. They haven't shown any inclination to engage with the enemy, even though their history had shown that the Israelites had defeated the same enemy just four decades before.

They'd done so when the name of the Lord was invoked. They'd done so when a leader was chosen from among the people to defeat the enemy. What do we see now? We see a resigned submission to serve a pagan people.

And they don't even know what the treaty conditions are going to be. And you know, bring this to today's context. Because the church needs to learn from the mistakes of the past.

You know, even the mistakes that we find God's people making in Scripture. You know, there's the people here of Jabesh Gilead. These Israelites from this eastern territory.

[ 6 : 59 ] They've committed a serious error. They've preferred the easy way out, or so they seem.

They've preferred the line of least resistance. But it happens. It happens in church life.

You see it through church history. This little compromise with the world here and another compromise with the world there. And before you know it, the church becomes almost indistinguishable from the world that it's supposed to seek to save and not be part of.

Because you see, whenever the church enters the mindset and values of the world, the world and its values will enter the church. And when that happens, there's spiritual carnage.

Because the world is no friend of the church. Just as the Ammonites here were no friend of the Israelites. So, what were the treaty conditions that the Ammonites were prepared to make with Israel?

Well, they were vicious. They were cruel. Every inhabitant of that Israelite town would have an eye gouged out. This apparently was their practice at this time.

[ 8 : 05 ] King Nabesh would make a treaty with the people. But it would be that most horrendous condition that he gouged out the right eye of each and every inhabitant.

Why? Well, there's one reason, of course, would be the men wouldn't be able to fight. But probably the more realistic reason would be that this would be humiliation. This would be disgrace on Israel. This would be national humiliation. And, of course, behind that humiliation of the people of Jabesh would be this message that our God or our gods are greater than the God of Israel.

And, of course, the methods used by the enemies of the gospel today and the enemies of the church are vicious. Vicious words. You read some of the things that are written at the moment against those who are seeking to stand for truth.

Vicious. Sometimes vicious actions. But actions were intended to show hatred and despising of God, despising of his people, despising of his world, seeking to humiliate God's people, to somehow prove that the God who is worshipped by you Christians is powerless.

[ 9 : 21 ] this sort of God is dead attitude that seeks to make out that man is superior, that man is dominant. But God will not be mocked.

God's people, you are not to cave in to these kind of threats and abuses and, you know, this sort of threat of humiliation that we're seeing all too frequently today.

No, we remember that God is sovereign and that those who are opposed to God, well, what does God's Word tell us? Psalm 2, for example. He who sits in the heavens laughs, the Lord holds them in derision.

Then he will speak to them in his wrath and terrify them in his fury. And surely then we've got this timely reminder that you who love the Lord are not to be discouraged.

Remember what John wrote to the early church, Apostle John? He said, He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. So in the face of all that surrounds God's church with antagonism to the Gospel, it's for you, it's for me, not to fear the venom of man, but to stand strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

[10:37] And to face up to those who do or seek to attack as we see happen here in the case of King Saul, we see a spiritual response.

Because at first there seemed to be no answer to the cruel conditions that the king of the Ammonites was going to pose upon the people of Jabesh Gilead.

And in a kind of arrogance, almost the arrogant, perverted pride, this king allows the people of that town seven days, seven days to find somebody to save them.

I mean, in that king's pride, he reckons that nobody's going to come. No one's going to be strong enough to take on the might of the Ammonite army. And we see the initial response of the people to that, to the news, you know, of the treaty condition.

they don't think there is anybody who's going to be able to stand up to these Ammonites. And you see in verse 4, there's loud weeping, they're crying, very much echoing the attitude of the leaders of the people you see in verse 1 who seem to be resigned to serving these pagan enemies.

[11:47] And the attitude of the people there, you know, is a response to the cruel conditions of peace. It seems they've accepted that this is about to happen to them.

But that surely mustn't be the response of the church when we're attacked by those who hate the Lord and His people. When, as we said, when we see all that's happening in these attacks against the church and the Word of God, it's not for you and I to be resigned and somehow weep as if there's no helper.

Don't cower on any kind of defeatist attitude that tells the world your will be done. No. The onslaught even in our own nation in the past decade, it's fearsome.

But, as we said, we're not to be defeatist. But it's for you and I to be, to hope in God, to trust in Him, to be soldiers of the Gospel and to be prepared to fight that great fight of faith with the spiritual armours we said that God has given His people through His Word.

And what do we find here? we find that Saul is endued with the Spirit of God to fight the enemy. You see that in verses 5 to 7. You read these verses quietly to yourself because what we see is that, well, it almost seems that, in one sense, an anticlimax because Saul's obviously just been working in the field.

[13:23] You know, there's a man who's been declared king and he's working in the field behind his oxen. In fact, he's about, we can reckon, something like 80 miles away from where the town of Jabesh is, the town that's been besieged.

Well, obviously, news has reached the part of Israel where Saul is. We don't know why as king, he wasn't informed, first of all, by the people about this crisis.

But he becomes aware of this catastrophic situation. He's hearing the people make this loud cry.

He's king. He's got to act in response. And he's empowered by the Holy Spirit to do something.

He's going to act. He's not going to be silent. He's going to go in God's strength. He's going to deliver the people from the cruel enemies. And we're told he's angry. He's angry.

But what's he angry at? Maybe it's anger against the Ammonites for their pride and their arrogance against God and His people. But surely Saul's more angry at the reticence, the passive surrender of the people of Israel in the face of the enemy of God and His people.

[14:37] Yes, Saul's going to act against a cruel tyrant. But first, he's got to ensure that he's got that support of the people against that enemy. And you see this very powerful picture of this in Saul issuing the warning to his people.

He's saying, if you don't support me as king and don't support Samuel as God's prophet and of course by association if you don't follow the one true God in that support then look what's going to happen.

You know, he cuts his oxen up, he sends the pieces around Israel. He says, this is what's going to happen to you. Your cattle are going to be destroyed. Your livelihood is going to be threatened. You have to remember Saul's anger here. It's been driven by the Holy Spirit. This is righteous anger. Because this is anger that's achieving a purpose.

It's stirring up the people to action in a righteous cause. It's not unrestrained anger. But here's anger stemming from a God-directed motive to shake the people from the spiritual lethargy to do it, to get them into action.

[ 15 : 49 ] Why? For the sake of the name of God and for the cause of God. And surely it's for you and for me to have that righteous anger.

You know, when we're so prone to capitulate to the evil around us. And where should that anger be directed? Surely first and foremost to self. You know, surely I should be angry at myself, at my sin and my shortcomings and holding back when I ought to take that stand for truth.

Surely it should be for you and for me to direct anger towards ourselves and our failure to stand alongside those who are far into enemy territory and taking that word of truth, the truth of God when they face so much venom for their stance for the truth of God's word.

and yes, anger at the wider church when compromise seems to happen so often. Compromise in word, compromise in practice.

But surely the anger that we seek to have surely should be that anger that seeks to honour God and to do so in action. Well certainly Saul here, he has, at this point anyway, he has righteous anger, anger that stirs the people to action.

[ 17 : 14 ] And notice what happens, the people come together so that Israel is delivered, so that Israel is saved. That's the third point that we see here, salvation in Israel.

And notice the impact of the action of Saul. It's transforming. The people respond in unity because the fear of God has come upon them. And the whole nation responds as one.

And you see as we read in these verses, the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom, or northern part of the kingdom, the southern part of the kingdom, the north, the Israel part, the south, the Judah part, they come together.

And there's this vast number of fighting men and they're galvanised into action. Just a short time before there was this, you know, surrender, capitulation, weeping.

And now you see the transforming power of the Holy Spirit enabling one man to lead a people into action for the sake of the name of God and for the protection of God's people.

[ 18 : 21 ] And you see as we move on we see the impact of that occurrence. When the battle comes, the Israelites are utterly victorious and the threat from the Ammonites is dealt with decisively.

What lessons can we learn from certainly this part of the section here? Well, surely firstly we see the value of the unity of God's people, the unity of God's church.

I mean, there's, as we said, the northern tribes, the southern tribes, they're acting as one to help the tribe to the east of River Jordan. Okay, there were tribal differences.

I mean, later on, of course, immediately after the reign of King Solomon, about a hundred years later, the two parts of the kingdom were divided because of rebellion.

But here's an example of unity and community in the fight against God's enemies. And surely this is a lesson for the church today.

[ 19 : 25 ] We're faced with a formidable enemy. We're faced with formidable enemies. Enemies of God, enemies of His people. As we said, at the start, the church is surrounded by those who want nothing more than to eliminate God's word from this land, from every aspect of society.

God's people are to be united as one in that fight as Jesus prayed. Prayed to His Father for the unity of His people that they may be one as we are one. God's people are to strive for that unity in word, unity through the word of God, in the word of God, for the sake of His glory, for the sake of His name.

And we may well have non-essential differences with brothers and sisters in Christ in different denominations, for example. But we're to be as one in Christ for His sake and for His glory.

One of the great blessings that I've had in these last three months in being involved at ETS is teaching students from different denominations.

But knowing that we are brothers and sisters in Christ with that one desire for the furtherance of the gospel in this land and beyond. I know some of you here attend Christian conferences, for example.

[ 20 : 51 ] You can testify to that same fact that you have fellow believers with you sitting beside you from different denominations with these non-essential differences. But you're joining in fellowship to proclaim the unity of the Spirit as you speak of being united in Christ.

The same applies in a congregation. We're engaged in spiritual warfare. Be as one in that battle. You know, in military life, army discipline or navy discipline, air force, discipline, whatever. Military discipline is essential for the unity of purpose in the fight. And for the church to maintain that unity in Christ through the discipline that God gives to you to engage in that warfare. The discipline of prayer. The discipline of worship. The discipline of fellowship. The discipline of discipleship. The discipline of faith in action through works that glorify God. And it follows then in that application that it's for you, for me, to give God the glory, to give him the honour that's due to his name in that fight.

[ 22 : 09 ] Why? Because as we're told here, the battle is the Lord's. As Saul acknowledged. You see that in verses 12 to 15. Because certainly at this point in Saul's life, we see Saul in a very positive light, just in the aftermath of this victory.

Because if you remember at the end of chapter 10, there were people who'd actually despised Saul, you know, asking, how can this man save us? And now that Saul, with God's help, has won the victory, some people are saying, put these troublemakers today.

But Saul shows forgiveness to them. And he says, that would be utterly wrong. Because it's God, not Saul, but God who must have the glory.

Why? Because through God's grace and God's forgiveness, Israel has known salvation. And therefore, it's for Israel, the whole of Israel, to respond by grace and forgiveness.

Or in grace and forgiveness. As within the church. You know, there are times when differences have boiled over into serious dispute. But brother still has to show grace and forgiveness to other brothers for the glory of God's name.

[ 23 : 29 ] For the glory of the one who's shown grace and forgiveness to everyone who's his. But it's all saying, not a man shall be put to death this day, for today the Lord has worked salvation in Israel.

Now, put that in today's context. Put that in this aspect of death in the context of a church. Now, that can mean many things. You know, the murdering of a reputation, the gossip or ill-conceived slander, the hating of a brother in Christ.

God has done. You know, if we truly recognize that God the Lord has won that victory for his people, victory over sin, victory over Satan, victory over death itself and the work of the Lord Jesus, that work for the sake of his church, then none of us would ever even have that inkling to seek to murder another's reputation through word or action.

salvation. Because if the Lord has worked salvation in the Israel of God and in his church, who is anybody in the church to hate a brother for whom God has sent his son to win salvation for that person?

So be those, let's be those who are as one man, united in Christ, loving one another in the Lord and him who loved us first, who loved us so much, that he sent his one and only son to win salvation for his own and be strong in the Lord and seek to be strong in the Lord.

[ 25 : 06 ] Yes, when you're facing the opposition of others and stand strong as one, one with another, as you stand strong in him who promises to be with you always.

Amen. Let us pray. Lord our God, we give you praise and thanks for your goodness to us for your promise to be with your people. May we not be those who cower in defeat, but may we know that we are to be strong in the Lord who has won that victory for us.

We thank you, Lord Jesus, for that victory that you won on the cross. Help us, Lord, we pray, to go in strength, in the strength of God the Lord, to do your will, to do that will that we take delight in, for your praise and for your glory.

So bless, we pray, the remainder of the service go before us, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.