

'The Rise of the Kings Series'

Sermons in the Book of 1 Samuel

Message 19 - 'Iron Deficiency - What the Church Lacks!' 1 Samuel 13:15 - 23



Saul had failed terribly in this whole situation, his lack of faith had been revealed, and he had disregarded the leading of the Lord, and followed his own way. This had seen the beginning of his ruin. We consider here the remainder of the verses following Saul's failure, and how they describe the sad situation of the army of Israel. This reveals the poor and unspiritual leadership of Saul. Saul had walked by sight, displayed little faith, but Jonathan will walk by faith, and how the Lord will use Him! Saul's poor leadership had led the army to be placed in a difficult and divided situation. A loss of key principles, had left the army facing a number of problems. We can see the following:

1. Falling in Number (v15-16) - When Saul had taken the army to face the Ammonites at Jabesh Gilead, he had gathered together 300,000 men and had the luxury of reducing the army to 3000. However, now the numbers had fallen to 600 and he was desperate to keep hold of them. In comparison, the Philistine army was 'as the sand which is on the seashore in multitude'. Saul had gathered that vast army in 1 Samuel 11:7, we see that he did so through the means of fear. The problem was, that when men began to fear the enemy more so than the king, then they would run from him. Certainly as a church, and the churches of Christ across this land, we face an enemy that is as the sand which is on the seashore in multitude. Saul's leadership was part of the major problem, he had moved away from trusting in the Lord without compromise. He had sought to do things in his own strength and this was doomed to failure. Saul had gathered a great following by employing means of fear, and the crowd gathered until the mood altered, until there was a greater influence bearing upon them. A loyal and faithful company, however small, with strong spiritual leadership, clear God-centred principles and objectives, is sometimes in a better position to be used than the large company that has been quickly gathered by man's means.

2. Frozen by Fear (v17-18) - The Philistines were very active, and they were repeatedly sending out raiding parties. These raiders would protect the roads and passes that the Jews would need to use should they seek to attack. With all these Philistine soldiers moving about in the area, was there any hope for the Jews? No matter what Israel did, or whichever way they turned, they would meet the enemy, waiting for them. It is clear that for many churches, it seems as though the enemy is ever present, and wherever they turn he waits to strike, to divide, to harm. The enemy is clever and works to subdue and hamstring. We need to be careful that we do not become defeatist in this day and age. For although the enemy seems to be strong, we serve a God who is greater, and love a Saviour who has won the victory. The enemy we face is a defeated foe, and our God is the God of the impossible. Trust in the Lord, be still, know that He is God, and He can appear for His people in wonderful ways.

3. Failing in Resources (v19-22) - The situation seems to be dire. The Philistines would make the Jews pay exorbitant prices to have their implements sharpened. The Jewish army was small in number and had small supplies too, but the reality was this, they had a great God, and they needed to cast themselves upon Him, and trust Him! The Philistines were seeking to keep Israel disarmed and ineffective. It would seem to all around, that Israel was in trouble, that it was finished. However, this was not the case, God was and is faithful to His people, and throughout God's Word, and the history of His church, the total helplessness of the Lord's people proves to be the backdrop to God's wonderful deliverance. That is why the faithful remnant must not lose heart. Of course, very often the Lord's people, do not enjoy the helplessness of their situation, but we know and have a confidence in the Lord that He has, and can create deliverance out of nothing. That is why we must not give ourselves to total despair, because it is in the desperation and vulnerability of His people that He works.



Penzance Baptist Church

'Upholding the Ordinary Means of Grace'

Pastor Jonathan Stobbs