**Saul Rescues the City of Jabesh**

In 1775, Benjamin Franklin wrote “Those who would give up *essential* Liberty, *to* purchase *a* *little temporary* Safety, *deserve* neither Liberty nor Safety.” He wrote these words in the lead up to the Revolutionary War as a rebuke to those colonists who would prefer to submit to the onerous rule of England to avoid conflict. He further wrote that the colonies should suffer the hazards of war rather than allow their right of self governance to be violated. In chapter 11 of 1st Samuel, we see a town besieged by an army ready to give up freedom in exchange for safety. The chapter begins with Nahash, king of the Ammonites surrounding the city of Jabesh Gilead with his army. It is not known how large an army he had but it was sufficient that the residents of the city were ready to surrender. They offered to serve Nahash in return for their safety. Nahash’s terms of peace were harsh, he required that the men submit to having their right eyes gouged out which would render them useless as soldiers while maintaining their value as slaves. They asked for 7 days to seek help from the other tribes of Israel, telling him they would agree to his terms if no help came for them. Surprisingly, Nahash agreed, perhaps thinking that he would strike fear into all of Israel. Messengers were sent to Gibeah in Benjamin which was the home of Saul who had been named king. Jabesh Gilead had some history with the tribe of Benjamin which was recorded in Judges chapter 21. Jabesh Gilead was the only city that did not respond to the call to fight against the tribe of Benjamin which had refused to give up the men who had raped and murdered a woman. The city was of the half tribe of Manasseh which had settled east of the Jordan so they may have not have felt a strong allegiance to the western tribes. That decision cost them dearly as all the men and married women of the city were killed. The virgin women of the city were given as brides to the remnant of Benjamite soldiers who survived. Some speculate that Saul felt a connection to Jabesh Gilead since he would have been descended from the virgins of that town.

When told of the demand of Nahash, the people of Gibeah wept but did not go to the defense of their brothers in Manasseh. When Saul was told of the threat of Nahash, the Spirit of God came upon him and he cut up oxen and sent their parts throughout Israel with the message that the oxen of anyone who did not respond to the call to arms would be killed as well. It was reminiscent of the Levite sending the body parts of his concubine throughout Israel demanding justice (see Judges chapter 19). The terror of the Lord fell upon the tribes and they sent 330,000 men to go into battle against the Ammonites. They instructed the residents of Jabesh Gilead to feign surrender so that the Ammonites would be vulnerable to attack. Saul and his army broke into their camp and slaughtered them.

While the Israelites were in a killing mood, some proposed that they put to death those who had not professed their loyalty to Saul (see the last verse of chapter 10). Saul acted properly by saying that no one would be put to death since God had rescued Israel. The chapter ends with Samuel calling for another ceremony in Gilead to affirm the kingship of Saul.

I fear that Christianity is under assault today and that the secular world demands that we give up our rights to speak the truth of the Gospel. If we would just be quiet, they would leave us alone. Several countries in Europe have prosecuted Christians for their speech. For those who believe that this problem will not come to our shores, I’ll close with the following quote by a German pastor after World War II:

First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.