

Lesson from Gibeon

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[0:00] We turn to Joshua chapter 9. Continue to see Joshua leading the people into the promised land to claim that which God was given the promised land.

! We see more of the challenges, more of the battles, more of the obstacles, more of the obstacles. Joshua 9.

Joshua 9.

We are your servants, they said to Joshua.

But Joshua asked, Who are you and where do you come from? They answered, Your servants have come from a very distant country because of the fame of the Lord your God. For we have heard reports of him, all that he did in Egypt and all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, Sihon, king of Heshbon and Og, king of Bashan, who reigned in Ashtoreth.

[2:05] And our elders and all those living in our country said to us, Take provisions for your journey. Go and meet them and say to them, We are your servants.

Make a treaty with us. This bread of ours was warm when we packed it at home on the day we left to come to you. But now see how dry and moldy it is.

And these wineskins that we filled were new, but see how cracked they are. And our clothes and sandals are worn out by the very long journey.

The men of Israel sampled their provisions, but did not inquire of the Lord. Then Joshua made a treaty of peace with them to let them live, and the leaders of the assembly ratified it by an oath.

Three days after they made the treaty with the Gibeonites, the Israelites heard that they were neighbors living near them. So the Israelites set out and on the third day came to their cities, Gibeon, Kephira, Beeroth, and Kiriath-Jerim.

[3:10] But the Israelites did not attack them because the leaders of the assembly had sworn an oath to them by the Lord, the God of Israel. The whole assembly grumbled against the leaders.

But all the leaders answered, We've given them our oath by the Lord, the God of Israel, and we cannot touch them now. This is what we will do to them. We will let them live so that the wrath will not fall on us for breaking the oath we swore to them.

They continued, Let them live, but let them be woodcutters and water carriers for the entire community. So the leaders' promise to them was kept. Then Joshua summoned the Gibeonites and said, Why did you deceive us by saying, We live a long way from you while actually you live near us?

You are now under a curse. You will never cease to serve as woodcutters and water carriers for the house of my God. They answered Joshua, Your servants were clearly told how the Lord your God had commanded his servant Moses to give you the whole land and to wipe out all its inhabitants from before you.

So we feared for our lives because of you, and that is why we did this. We are now in your hands. Do to us whatever seems good and right to you. So Joshua saved them from the Israelites, and they did not kill them.

[4:33] That day he made the Gibeonites woodcutters and water carriers for the community and for the altar of the Lord at the place the Lord would choose. And that's what they are to this day.

What do you make of the Gibeonites? It's hard in a certain way not to admire them.

Yes, they were deceitful, but their very lives were on the line. So what would you have done? Put yourself in their shoes.

Jericho, the gateway city to Canaan, is destroyed, completely burned down, flattened, totally destroyed. Ai has been plundered and burned.

No one left alive. And you're next in line. The Israelite juggernaut is getting ready to come to your town.

[5:35] So what are you going to do? It seems that somehow the Gibeonites knew two things. The first thing they knew was that everyone in Canaan proper, everyone in the land of Canaan is doomed.

We just read about that. But then in Deuteronomy chapter 20, Moses speaks for the Lord and says, In the cities of the nations of the Lord, your God is giving you as an inheritance.

Do not leave alive anything that breathes. And so somehow the Gibeonites knew that. They were doomed if things just kept going the way they were going to go.

The cities of Canaan didn't get a chance to surrender. There's no olive branch before destruction came. Wrath without mercy was coming to the cities of Canaan for their sin.

That's the first thing they knew. But they also knew a second thing. In Deuteronomy 20, in the same chapter, in the same speech that Moses gave concerning what do you do about these cities in Canaan proper, he also said that the cities that were far away, the cities that were at a distance, were to be given a chance to make peace.

[6:54] They were to be given a chance to make a treaty. And so if that's the situation, and you're 20 miles away, you're next on the menu, what do you do?

Well, it seems like you can do one of two things. You can either fight or you can do what they did.

You aren't going to get a chance to surrender. Judgment without mercy has come. And so what do you do? You either fight or you trick your way out of it. In verses 1 and 2, it shows the kings, the rest of the kings of the cities of Canaan, they decided to fight.

They banded together and said, now we're going to go to war. You know, Jericho by themselves, Ai by themselves, they weren't able to stand against Israel. Maybe if we join together.

We sang that song. The kings of the earth are joining together. And so all these kings from the hill country and the western foothills and the coastline, they come together and said, we're going to fight.

[8:02] But Gibeon says, not us. Not us. We've heard. We've seen what Israel has done. We've seen what the God of Israel is doing.

So they had seen what God had done to Sihon and the king of the Amorites. They had seen what he had done in rolling back the Jordan River.

They had seen Jericho fall without even a battle. They seen Ai destroyed. And they knew they weren't dealing with some sort of ordinary situation. They knew that this great divine being was fighting for Israel and that there's no way that they're going to be able to stand against them.

And so they said, we can't fight. That's pointless. They won't let us surrender. So all we can do is to pretend that we're from far away and hopefully we can make a treaty with them.

Hopefully we can make peace. And so it's hard not to admire them. It reminds me of that parable that Jesus told of the shrewd manager. Do you remember that parable?

[9:09] That he was getting ready to be thrown out. He was going to be thrown out under the streets, turned out. He's going to be left all to himself.

And so he shrewdly discounts all of his master's debts. He goes in one by one, talks to his master's debtors and discounts them all. And so that his master's debtors would take him in when he was thrown out.

And Jesus says that the master commended him. It's like, yes, I was duped, but you were very shrewd about it. You did what you needed to do.

And you see something like that with the Gibeonites. And of course, we don't commend or cover over their deceptions. But nevertheless, we do.

We should commend their shrewdness and their wisdom. They saved their own skin when their life was on the line. And that's the first lesson I want you to hear.

[10:12] First lesson I want you to see in this passage. It's a lesson about how salvation works. Because the Gibeonites, you notice, were saved. They were saved from Israel.

You can read that in verse 26. And so Joshua saved them from the Israelites. In some ways, this is a story about salvation. So how does salvation work?

This passage shows us this. And I want to talk especially for those who aren't saved. You're not saved.

And you know you're not saved. So how does salvation work? Well, you can learn from this passage because if you're lost, you're in the very same predicament that Gibeon was in.

They're doomed for destruction. Wrath without mercy is coming. And the Gibeonites have lived their whole lives as idolaters.

[11:21] They have lived their whole lives without saying thank you to God one time. They were godless. The Lord didn't weigh anything on their heart. For although they knew him, and they did know him, they didn't glorify him.

They didn't worship him. He wasn't big in their hearts. He didn't mean anything to them. They instinctively knew that the gods that they were worshiping weren't really god.

There was something greater. And yet they didn't worship that god. And they didn't give thanks to him. God had filled Gibeon with blessing. I don't know anything about the city, but I do know that there was dads and moms with children there.

And there were people that had work to do. And there was rain. And there was sunshine. And there was crops. There was food. There were children laughing and playing in the streets. There were gifts and blessings everywhere.

And the people of Gibeon never said thank you. Never once did it cross their mind to say thank you.

[12:28] They took all of their blessings like they deserved it. Like they earned it. It was their right. It was their due. They had it coming. And they took it all in.

And Gibeon, the city of Gibeon, never said thank you. And that was them. And if you're lost, that's you. There's two things that mark all of us in our sin.

Idolatry and ingratitude, Romans 1 tells us. Idolatry. We don't love God. We love other things more than him. And ingratitude we take.

And we never say thank you. And that was Gibeon. And that's you. And that was me. And because of that, God's rightful anger was coming. It was coming on all of the cities of Canaan.

And it's coming on you. Judgment without mercy is coming. It was coming for giving. And it's coming to you. And we can never feel sorry for the cities of Canaan.

[13:28] It can be easy for us to think that they're just sort of innocent people going about their business. And here Israel is coming and making war on them.

We need to remember that this was not just a war between people. This was a war that God had said, I am going to now judge them.

I've waited 400 years. Their iniquity is now piled up. And destruction is now at hand. We can't feel sorry for these cities because verses 1 and 2 show us the heart of all the cities in Canaan.

They're going to go and fight. They're going to join together. It's Psalm 2. All the kings of the earth joining together against God and his anointed one.

This is, you need to see this as part of a broader and a bigger story. This conflict between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. It's a conflict that starts all the way back in Genesis 3 with God saying, I will put enmity, hostility, between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent.

[14:38] And there's going to be war in the people of Canaan, the people of this world, and all of us as we are born into it. We naturally take Satan's side. We all fought on the devil's side.

No one is an innocent victim in Joshua, in the whole book of Joshua. No one is an innocent victim of God's wrath. And you aren't either.

If you're lost, God's wrath is rightfully on you. And so Gibeon was right next to total destruction. They're 20 miles away.

They're next in line. They're right next to total destruction. It's days, it's weeks ahead. You saw how long it took for them to march from Gilgal to where these cities were. It took three days.

Three days. They're three days away from destruction. And my lost friend, you're right next door to total destruction too. We all were.

[15:42] Psalm 73 says that God has placed them on slippery ground. On ice. If you're walking on ice, it's not a matter of if you're going to fall.

It's just a matter of when you're going to fall. If you go far enough. How easy it is to slip on ice. And then Deuteronomy 32 says, The Lord says, In due time, their foot will slip. So God has put the wicked on slippery ice.

And then says, In due time, their foot will slip. Their day of disaster is near. Their doom rushes upon them. That was Gibeon. They are in desperate, dangerous trouble.

Their lives, their total existence is on the line. And the same is true for all of us outside of Christ. It's true for you if you're lost.

You're right next door to disaster. God has put you on slippery ground and has said, In due time, your foot will slip. So you're a car ride away.

[16:49] You're one cell going haywire away and going haywire and turning to cancer. One accident. One sickness. One crazy man in a store.

Away from judgment. Every bit of ground is your enemy. Every rock. Every tree.

Could be your downfall. Your next door to destruction. The wrath of God is being revealed. And that was Gibeon.

But Gibeon found a way to make peace. And yes, it involved deceit. And we're going to talk about that. And there's no, but I want to say, It involved deceit on their part.

But that doesn't mean, There's no need for that for you. It meant losing everything they had. They lost their cities. They lost their livelihoods. They lost their freedom. And at the end of the chapter, Joshua says to them from now on, Basically, you're going to be slaves to God's house.

[17:52] You're going to be slaves to the people of God. You will belong to the Lord and you will serve him and his people every day of your life. And what did they say to them?

Joshua says, because you did this, because you lied to us, you are going to be slaves for the rest of your lives. You and your children after you. What did they say?

Look at verse 25. And again, I'm trying to show you how salvation works. Because they were saved. How does it work? Verse 25 says, We are in your hands.

We're in your hands. Do to us whatever seems good and right to you. And so they were saved. So they made peace. They were in great danger.

But in total surrender. They lost everything, but they saved their lives. And that's a picture of faith. Faith is the full surrender of yourself to God.

[18:57] Sometimes people say, I've prayed. I've sought the Lord, but I'm not saved. And he says, if I seek him, I'll be saved. But the word is as if you seek him with all of your heart.

And if you say, well, I've sought him with all my heart and I'm not saved. Then I can say, you know what? You haven't sought him with all of your heart. They gave up everything.

And that's faith. To say to God, I am in your hands. I give myself entirely to you. That's repentance. Do whatever seems right to you.

And you stop going your own way. And you stop that independent life. And you bring yourself into conformity to his will. And faith and repentance. So faith is not just believing in God.

It's putting yourself into his hands. The Gibeonites put themselves into Joshua's hands. It's laying down all of your rights. This was not a negotiation.

[20:03] It was not a negotiation. It was laying down of all their rights, their agenda, to do whatever he says. And that's what faith is. That's what real repentance is.

It's total surrender. It's seeking him with all of your heart. And so that's the one thing I want you to hear at the very beginning. Look at Gibeon.

And if you're not saved, do what they did. They saw their danger. They found a way to make peace. They laid down their lives. And they made peace with God.

We're going to talk about other things. But look at Gibeon and say to them, say with them, my life is in your hands. Say that to God.

That's the first lesson. The second is, we see here the error of sight. The error of sight. We've sort of been looking at the story from the Gibeonites perspective.

[21:03] And what we can learn there. But from their side of things. But from the Israelite side. Looking at this chapter from an Israelite perspective. What do we see here? Well, the whole story hinges on verse 14, doesn't it?

From the Israelites perspective. Look at verse 14. The whole story, everything swings on this verse. And it's this interesting narrative aside.

The narrator, the story, the person who's telling the story, tells us exactly why this event happened. The men of Israel sampled their provisions, but did not inquire of the Lord.

Why was Israel duped? Why was Israel confused? Why was Israel to blame in this situation?

Well, they didn't ask the Lord for direction. They didn't ask the Lord the way forward. They didn't ask the Lord what to do. They saw with their eyes. They felt with their hands.

[22:09] Everything checked out. But they were deceived. James Montgomery Boyce, the late preacher from Philadelphia's 10th Presbyterian Church, makes some really good points on this.

He says, in one sense, what Israel did makes sense, doesn't it? I mean, God has given us brains. He's given us senses. In order that we can make decisions upon those.

And it's right to make decisions based on your senses. On what you see, what you hear, what you touch. The world is a material place. And so we make material evaluations and material decisions about it.

And our senses generally give us good information about this world. And we can figure out a lot of things based on observation, on what we see and what we touch and what we experience. And we can figure out a lot of things based on logic and science.

And aren't you glad that's true? Our lives are immensely improved over what they were 300 years ago because of logic and science and careful observation.

[23:16] I mean, if it was back then, we'd still be going to the doctor. And for every disease, they'd be taking more of our blood and giving us things to make us throw up and do all sorts of nasty things.

But God has given us eyes and ears and hands to explore this world that he's created. And so we don't need special wisdom.

We don't need special divine revelation from God about everything. So if you go to your refrigerator and you pull out a piece of meat and it smells bad and it kind of has a greenish color to it, please, you don't have to get down on your knees and pray, God, should I throw out this meat?

You don't go to your Bible and find out what does the Bible say about smelly green meat. And you don't call the pastors. Please don't call the pastors. What do you think of what should I do?

God gave us senses. He gave you a brain and so you throw it out. You get what I'm saying? It's not that senses and thinking and observation are altogether bad.

[24:26] Science is preeminently a Christian discipline. That's why most of the earliest and the best scientists, the ones that made massive breakthroughs, were Christians.

They weren't living in a superstitious, mystical world. They were living in an orderly world with an orderly God who had given them senses and he made them in his image so that they could understand that world.

You don't see great voodoo scientists and you don't see great animistic, mystical scientists. Science depends on an orderly God who's given men the ability to learn about that world.

But science is very different from actually what we see here in Joshua. It's very different from scientific materialism.

Science is different than the belief that everything, the only thing, all there is, is material things. And all that we have are our five senses.

[25:33] And in this chapter, Joshua and the leaders of Israelites, of the Israelites, lived like materialists.

They had five senses. They didn't inquire of the Lord. They just said, this is what we see. This is what we can touch. This is what we've heard.

And they did not inquire of the Lord. There's more to reality than material things.

There's more to reality than what we can see and hear. There is a spiritual world. And there is a spiritual being who is a liar and is a cheat, who hides in the shadows, who lives by deceit.

And he can look like a very angel from heaven if it suits his purpose. And you can't touch and you can't smell his devices.

[26 : 40] But they're real. And he's cunning. I wonder why you don't see the devil on every corner. Why doesn't he parade himself?

Why doesn't he parade himself? Why doesn't he parade himself? Because he's far better served by hiding in the shadows. He's far more dangerous in the shadows. When the whole world is saying, where is he, where is he?

That's when he does his best work. So kids, maybe if you watch Star Wars, you know that Senator Palpatine is evil. He pretends to be good.

And everyone thinks he's on their side. But in reality, he's Lord Sidious. And he's tricking people. And he's lying. And he clouds everything. And he hides in the shadows. And only rarely does he show his true colors.

Because he's better served behind the scenes. It's much easier for him to do this work when he's hiding in the shadows. When people think he's good.

[27 : 46] When people don't realize he's at work. And that's the devil. And brothers and sisters, we are at war with him. We are at war with him.

And the devil can attack openly. He can persecute. He can go to war. And you see that device in verse 1 and 2 with these other kings. But he can also trick and deceive and lie.

And that's what we see him doing with the Gibeonites. There's more than the obvious. There's more than nature. There's more than what meets the eye. The Israelites were deceived and they shouldn't have been. The Israelites were deceived and they didn't have to be.

The temple or the tabernacle was right there. They could go and inquire of the Lord. And he would have told them exactly what was going on.

They didn't slow down and find out what God wanted. They rushed ahead. And they rushed into an alliance. They rushed into a covenant with people they hardly knew.

[28 : 50] With strangers they didn't know. And it nearly cost them dearly. And so what's the lesson here? It's just this. It's very natural. It's very easy to just live by sight.

It's very easy to say this is what I see. This is what I hear. This is what is right in front of me. So let's just go. Let's just go on.

And we need to learn that in all of our ways to acknowledge him. In all of our ways to acknowledge him. To lead not on our own understanding. But in all of our ways.

Big ways. Little ways. Things we've done a hundred times. Isn't it easy to do those things that we've done a hundred times that we do every day and we never bring the Lord into it?

Proverbs 3 says, Wisdom, though, is to in all your ways acknowledge him. And so acknowledging someone means that you recognize his presence. Right?

[29 : 52] If I come into this room and I acknowledge you, I recognize that you're there. So we, in all of our ways, do acknowledge his presence, his sovereignty, that he has an agenda, that he has a desire, that his word is speaking.

And so we say, You're the Lord. Lord. And I am your servant. So in all your ways. The giving nights show us what to do.

The Israelites, in this case, show us what not to do. To live just by sight. And finally, I want to end with a lesson about consequences. About consequences.

The Israelites quickly made a treaty. They quickly tied themselves to these people. We don't know how long actually it took.

It doesn't seem like it took very long at all for them to decide, let's just go ahead and make this treaty. They rushed into it. And how long afterwards did it take for them to find out the truth?

[31:01] Three days. Three days. You know, lies don't last. Lies don't last. Lies are pretty shabby things.

Lies are pretty, you know, they don't hold up. Three days. And then the truth came out. That's the way it is. Lies, whether long or short, they eventually just wear out and the truth comes out.

It's sort of like Laban's trick on Jacob. And in the morning, behold, it was Leah. It didn't take very long for the lie to come out.

So it took three days to find their error, but how long did they have to live with it? They're, to this day, their whole lives.

God forgives us of our sin. God does forgive us of our sin, but he doesn't necessarily take away all the consequences of our sin.

[32:09] And I wish sometimes that he did. God forgives our sin, but he doesn't always take away the consequences. He'll use those consequences for good.

And I think maybe years later, looking back on those things, you could say, oh, it was for my good. But that doesn't mean that all of those decisions and all of those consequences are not painful.

They had made a promise, and now they had to live with it. And they were stuck with the Gibeonites now. And an obvious parallel in this case, an obvious example, or a way to apply this, is to marriage.

And young people, and high schoolers, and singles, the greatest, most important earthly decision that you will ever make is the person who you're going to marry.

And an error, and a mistake, on this point, is a mistake with consequences that will last you for the rest of your life.

[33:25] And the world says, oh, you just get a divorce. You just, I'm not happy, so I'm done. Get a divorce. And my question is, does that really take away the consequences?

I think it moves them, maybe. It moves them onto your children, I suppose. And it fills your own life. You suffer financially, you suffer emotionally, you suffer doubt, you suffer grief, you suffer uncertainty.

That will have consequences on your life for the rest of your life. And so young people and single people, don't rush into a covenant.

Don't rush into taking an oath before the Lord. The Israelites did, and then they had to live with it forever. They were stuck with it. And it's easy to feel desperate.

It's easy to feel like that person's going to save me, that person's going to make me forever happy, and you know, maybe they aren't a believer, but it will work itself out. We love each other, it will work itself out.

[34:33] And maybe they don't walk that closely to the Lord, but it will turn out. All I can say is, no. God will make you taste the consequences.

He might rule over them, he might use them for your good in some way, but that doesn't mean that the misery isn't going to be real. The loneliness, the pain, it won't disappear.

God doesn't wave a magical wand and make it go away. And if you've already made a mistake like that, or maybe in God's providence you find yourself in that position, maybe by no choice of your own, Psalm 15 says that one of the characteristics of the godly man, one of the characteristics of the man who will live with God, is that he keeps his oath even when it hurts.

even when it hurts. And the Israelites kept their oath to the Gibeonites even when it hurt. Psalm 15 says that men who do that, those are the men that will live with God.

Psalm 15 in some ways is ultimately a picture of Jesus Christ. And you can read it when you get home. It's ultimately this picture of Jesus.

[36:04] Jesus. And did he keep his covenant with us even when it hurt? Think about that.

Did he hold you so fast that even when the price came, even when the bitterness came and the gall came, did he hold on?

he swore himself to his people. And in marriage, you take on your spouse's debts. Not only their assets, but their debts.

And maybe you've heard of those bad stories of people who have gotten married and it turns out that maybe the husband or the wife is really \$200,000 in debt and was just hiding it the whole time.

that's one side of the story. I also saw a guy on an online forum who was really good with his money.

[37:09] And, you know, he had everything all lined up. He was a very responsible person. But he loved a girl with like \$200,000 in debt.

And everyone in this forum was saying, don't get married to her. Don't get married to her. shouldn't get married. But he said, I love her.

I love her. And he walked into that marriage with his eyes wide open to her debts. And he was like, that's our problem and we're going to fix it. He made his promise with his eyes wide open.

And it was going to be a promise that hurt. It was going to be a promise that had teeth. And it was going to be a promise that had knives in it that was going to hurt. hurt. And yet he was at least he says he was going to do it.

And that's a picture of Jesus. He made a promise to you. And he kept it for you and to you. And even though it hurt, he went to the cross bearing all of that huge debt.

[38:17] He took it all upon himself and he says, I'm now going to pay that debt. And that was the time when this oath hurt to keep it. And so for you, if that is your situation, my word is go and do likewise.

You see what your Savior is doing. You see how he has loved you. You see how he has so clung to you. Well, my word is go and do likewise to that spouse of yours. And may God bless you as you do it.

And may you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ as you're doing it. Because in some way you're walking the path that he walked. There's grace and there's joy in just being where Jesus is.

There's grace and joy in him to help you as you walk the same road that he walked. So we've seen three things.

We've seen how is it that we're saved? full surrender. We saw the error of living by sight and how in all of our ways we need to acknowledge him.

[39:28] Lean not on your own understanding. And then the third, we see this truth about consequences and how carefully we need to be about making those big decisions, about signing ourselves and sealing ourselves to people.

will may God give us help as we do them. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we do thank you. Thank you for this word.

We thank you for these lessons and I pray that you would go on teaching us more and more of the application of these things. that we would not live by sight, but we would live by faith.

And for those who are lost here, I pray that you would show them and shine a light upon the path of salvation.

This full surrender, full faith, seeking you with all of their heart. And I pray that you would give grace into that. and for our brothers and sisters who are in this room and who are away, who are unequally yoked.

[40 : 46] Pray, Lord, that you would bless them and that you would help them to love and to be faithful to their word even when it hurts and give them grace upon grace for that.

Please do us all good. In this coming week, we thank you that we have so many good things to look forward to, our friends and our family and fun things. We thank you for your gifts to us.

And I pray that in all of these things we would acknowledge you and recognize that every good and perfect gift comes from your hand. Pray that we would do it to your glory and your honor.

Pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.