

## **Crusty Bread and a “Crummy” Decision**

(Joshua 9)

4/5/17; Wed PM Pine Grove

### **Introduction**

As I worked in the restaurant business, it was more than learning to cook and serve food...

It was also about managing employees, controlling food costs and making sure labor costs were not cutting into profits too much...

But it was also about dealing with customers..

And Jack, the old man, who run the store always said we had two obligations when a customer walked in the door...

Serve them well but get their money...

Jack often said that if we dont get their money, we dont eat and the business goes away...

He would say, “Washington DC dont pay our bills, we do. So treat people right but make sure we get paid.”

And for that reason, Jack was never far from the cash register...

He said that was the main artery to the business...

It kept people moving, which kept them happy and coming back..

But it also kept the money moving which was necessary to keep the business afloat...

Now, like any business, we dealt with bad checks..

They were a constant source of aggravation..

There are clear mistakes of honest people to have insufficient funds...

But there are also thieves who steal with ink on paper...

The first need patience and kindness and you will get paid...

The second need the nerve of the person on the register to refuse to take their check...

Now, Jack's brother bill handled all the finances of the business and he would come down hard on any of us ever took a bad check from someone...

His rules were this...

If the check is a low number, and it is for a large amount don't take it...

We aren't a check cashing service...

The people can go to the bank for that...

Now, he would get fired up if we had any bad checks...

One Saturday morning, someone called in and asked for Bill personally...

Bill was a county councilman and very well known and liked in the county...

Bill picked up the phone and talked to the person, and it turns out it was someone who knew him and needed a check cashed...

Bill had no idea who it was, but told them to come on in and he would see what he could do..

Well, the check was for 319.00 and the number on the check was something like 116...

And the person came in and went straight to Bill and Bill didn't know who he who was but he knew all about Bill...

And voted for him in the past 3 elections...

Knew his wife and asked about her by name...

And guess what?

Bill cashed the check on Saturday and it returned to us on Tuesday by the bank..

The man who never took a bad check broke all of his rules...

And took a check that essentially cost the business \$300 + dollars....

After some time passed, I asked Bill why did he take it...

His reply, "He didn't seem like someone who would lie or do that."

The man who would have been raging mad if we had taken the check had broken his own rules by using his own judgment...

If he had only asked us our opinion, he never would have taken the check...

Yet, the flattery and the attention clouded his judgment and he made a bad decision..

In Joshua chapter 9, Joshua is going to make an equally bad decision...

Instead of consulting with the Lord, Joshua is going to use his own judgment and he is also going to make a bad mistake...

So, let's jump into Joshua 9 tonight by reviewing what we have seen so far in this incredible book of the Bible..

The year is 1405 BC....

Israel has grown into a nation of people under the leadership of Moses while they were slaves in Egypt...

Yet as God frees them from bondage in Egypt under Pharaoh, Israel is a nation without a land...

So, they leave Egypt and head northeast to a stretch of land on the eastern side of the Mediterranean Sea..

This land was known as the land of Canaan...

It was inhabited by a number of people who lived in it, but the land had been promised to Israel by God...

And as God led them out of Egypt and up to the Promised Land, there was going to be a fight to take the land from the people who lived there..

So, Moses prepared the people for the fight before they reached the land, but Moses died before Israel could enter the land...

And the leadership of the nation of Israel was given to Joshua...

And we have watched Joshua lead the people into the land ever since chapter 1...

He led them over the Jordan River on the east side of the Promised Land..

He led them to victory over their first foes as the walls of the city of Jericho fell before them...

He had led them to victory over the city of Ai, even though Israel lost the first time they tried to overtake Ai..

Joshua has led the people to renew their commitment to the Lord at the mountains of Gerizim and Ebal..

We saw that last week, but now there is still more land to take and more people to fight...

There are more enemies of God to be confronted and defeated, but this week, we take a little break from normal warfare...

You see, this week the enemies of Israel come waving a white flag of peace...

They aren't carrying swords and riding horses, they are sweet talking normal sounding people, but Joshua is going to find out that the enemy doesn't always come with swords drawn...

Sometimes, they come with the sword hidden behind their back but they want to kill you just the same, so you can never let your guard down in enemy territory..

So, let's look at these verses and learn how the enemy worked against Joshua so that we can keep our guard when the enemy comes to us...

The first thing we need to see about the enemy is that....

## **I. The Enemy is Deceptive (1-15)**

Let's read verse 1 of chapter 9..

*Now it came about when all the kings who were beyond the Jordan, in the hill country and in the lowland and on all the coast of the Great Sea toward Lebanon, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, heard of it, 2 that they gathered themselves together with [a]one accord to fight with Joshua and with Israel.*

As Israel marched into the Promised Land, the nightly news was filled with stories of their amazing defeats...

The Jordan River drying up...

The walls of Jericho fell down...

Ai won but then Ai was crushed in the second battle...

Well, all that news didn't set well with the other people who lived in the Promised Land...

So, they gathered together to join forces to fight against Israel...

Now, this would be a sensible response...



Though these people weren't especially friendly to one another, Israel was a threat to all of them...

And the enemy of my enemy is my friend...

So, all the kings of all these people groups got together to join arms and try to fight for their lives against Israel...

You can see on the map here that the Hittites were here..

The Amorites her, the Canaanites here, the Perzites here, the Hives here and the Jebusites here..

However, not everyone in the land was interested in join forces to fight against Israel....

Let's look at verse 3...

***3 When the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and to Ai, 4 they also acted craftily and [b]set out as envoys, and took worn-out sacks on their donkeys, and wineskins worn-out and torn and [c]mended, 5 and worn-out and patched sandals on their feet, and worn-out clothes on themselves; and all the bread of their provision was dry and had become crumbled.***

The Gibeonites must not have considered themselves warriors...

They were the thinker of their day...

They probably knew what many unbelievers know..

It is no use to try and fight against God.

You won't stand a chance..

So, they don't join with the armies of the area to fight with their lives...

They decide to fight Israel with their minds...

So, they sent out some of their residents to meet with Israel...

And they made sure to wear old looking clothes...

Worn out shoes, worn out wineskins for carrying their beverages..

And they took along some old dried out bread..

In you haven't figured out their plan with all of these odd looking props, let's read verses 6-13...

***6 They went to Joshua to the camp at Gilgal and said to him and to the men of Israel, "We have***

*come from a far country; now therefore, make a covenant with us.” 7 The men of Israel said to the Hivites, “Perhaps you are living [d]within our land; how then shall we make a covenant with you?” 8 But they said to Joshua, “We are your servants.” Then Joshua said to them, “Who are you and where do you come from?” 9 They said to him, “Your servants have come from a very far country because of the [e]fame of the Lord your God; for we have heard the report of Him and all that He did in Egypt, 10 and all that He did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshbon and to Og king of Bashan who was at Ashtaroth. 11 So our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spoke to us, saying, ‘Take provisions in your hand for the journey, and go to meet them and say to them, “We are your servants; now then, make a covenant with us.”’ 12 This our bread was warm when we took it for our provisions out of our houses on the day that we left to come to you; but now behold, it is dry and has become crumbled. 13 These wineskins which we filled were new, and behold, they are torn; and these our clothes and our sandals are worn out because of the very long journey.”*

So, the Gibeonites want to avoid annihilation like the rest of the people of the land...

But they aren't interested in forming a large army...

Instead, they seek peace to avoid annihilation...

They claim to have come from a far away land to make peace with Israel...

They had heard of Israel's power and might, and they want no part of it...

So they seek peace before war...

And they do it in the most creative of ways...

They knew that Israel was not making peace with anyone in the land of Canaan...

So they pose as people of a land that is far away...

Not, at first Joshua and Israel are suspicious...

So, they ask them in verse 7...

How do we know that you are living in the land that we are conquering...

Because if you are residents of this land, we can't make peace with you...

We must destroy you...

But they respond in verse 8 that they have simply come as servants to Joshua and the rest of Israel..

Well, Joshua still has his doubts, so he asks again...

Who are you and where did you come from?

So the Gibeonites begin to tell their story..

They are not residents of the Promised Land..

They are simply people that heard of the fame of Israel's God and they have come to serve the Israelites from this supposed far away land...

And so they set out to meet Israel and make a peace covenant with them to serve them and avoid being killed by them..

So the leaders of their town gave them some provisions and sent them to Joshua...

And the proof that they are from a far away land is their worn out shoes, clothes, and crusty bread...

So, here they are, and they aren't part of the land and they simply want to make peace with Israel...

They will offer their service to Israel if Israel will agree to spare their lives...

So, what will Joshua do?

Is this a legitimate offer?

Are these people simply coming to Israel out of the blue from a far away land to make peace?

Well, Joshua buys their story...

Look at verse 14...

***14 So the men of Israel took some of their provisions, and did not ask for the [f]counsel of the Lord. 15 Joshua made peace with them and made a covenant with them, to let them live; and the leaders of the congregation swore an oath to them.***

And here is where we get one the major lessons of the passage...

Joshua made a covenant with these people, but he did it without seeking the counsel of the Lord...

Joshua did what we all do at times...

He leaned on his own understanding, and this time it got him in real trouble...

At a time when Joshua seemed to be unsure, he trusted his instincts and his instincts were wrong...

At a time when Joshua needed the wisdom of God, Joshua trusted in the wisdom of man..

And right here, we learn something very important about the enemy....

The enemy doesn't always come with a sword drawn announcing that he is ready to devour you...

Sometimes the enemy comes disguised as an angel of light...

Sometimes, the enemy comes as a wolf in sheep's clothing...

Sometimes the enemy comes with an offer of peace but is ready to destroy you....

Joshua sees a people who are wolves but dressed in sheep clothing...

And look, when Satan or his demons come to tempt you, they are carrying a pitchfork and wearing a red suit with horns...

They come with deceptive words and deceptive evidence..

The enemy knows how to make the dangerous look innocent...

And that is exactly what happened here..

So be aware that our enemy is not a dummy.

He is clever and shrewd and able to temptation and sin in a big box with a really nice bow...

But when you open it, it explodes in your face and takes out you and everyone around you...

Which is what we see in verses 16-21...

Because not only is the enemy deceptive, the enemy is destructive...



## **II. The Enemy is Destructive (16-21)**

So, Joshua signs the peace treaty with these folks, and he gets back to the business of planning how to take the land..

However, while he is making preparations on where to attack next, news comes to Joshua about the people that he just made peace with....

Verse 16...

***16 It came about at the end of three days after they had made a covenant with them, that they heard that they were neighbors and that they were living [g]within their land.***

This is the point of the story where Joshua's heart drops...

This is where he takes the palm of his hand and slaps his forehead...

This is where Joshua thinks to himself, "why didn't I ask the Lord before I signed the covenant with them."

This is the point in our lives where we realize that following our gut instincts is not always a good idea...

I hear people all the time say, “Follow your heart,” but guess what the Bible says about your heart...

***The heart deceitful and desperately wicked, who can know it? (Jer 17:9)***

Joshua had followed his gut and his heart, and now he realizes that his instincts were wrong...

These people who came to him and asked for peace had lied...

They did live in the Promised Land...

They weren't from a far away land..

Their worn out clothes and shoes and crusty bread was all part of the deception...

I am sure that Joshua's anger rose within him...

It is time to send out the Israel's version of the Navy Seals and wipe these people out...

It is time to make them pay for their deception...

Verse 17...

***17 Then the sons of Israel set out and came to their cities on the third day. Now their cities were Gibeon and Chephirah and Beeroth and Kiriath-***

*jearim. 18 The sons of Israel did not strike them because the leaders of the congregation had sworn to them by the Lord the God of Israel. And the whole congregation grumbled against the leaders. 19 But all the leaders said to the whole congregation, "We have sworn to them by the Lord, the God of Israel, and now we cannot touch them. 20 This we will do to them, even let them live, so that wrath will not be upon us for the oath which we swore to them." 21 The leaders said to them, "Let them live." So they became hewers of wood and drawers of water for the whole congregation, just as the leaders had spoken to them.*

To our shock and to the shock of the majority of the people of Israel, Joshua does not call down fire from heaven to take out the Gibeonites...

But they lied, right?

Yes, they lied and decided, but the covenant had been made and it had been sworn on the name of Israel's God...

And though we break our word all the time, Joshua was not going to break the word of the Lord..

Israel was God's representative in the world...

And to break their covenant with the Gibeonites was to make God out to be a covenant breaker as well...

And Joshua was not about to let that happen..

So he heads down to the Gibeonites, and makes them servants to Israel...

They become the carpenters and water carriers for the people of Israel...

So, how is all this destructive to Israel?

Well we see one consequence of this covenant at the end of verse 18...

The people of Israel grumbled against their leadership...

The people did want the lives of the lying Gibeonites spared, but the leadership of Israel knew that was much better than breaking an oath sworn by the name of the Lord...

So the enemy often bring destruction by creating division...

But there is another problem here for Joshua...

They now have the enemy of God within the camp of Israel...

These Gibeonites are not believers in Israel's God...

They didn't come seeking peace with the Lord, they came seeking peace with the Lord's people...

And when you put people with different values sitting the midst of your people, there is going to be problems...

Israel is set apart as a people dedicated to the Lord, but now their purity has been compromised as enemies of the Lord have become part of their community...

The enemy is destructive because he creates division among the people of God and he contaminates the purity of the people of God...

That is why we must be aware of the temptations of the enemy...

Satan wants to divide families and churches...

Satan wants to taint the holiness of the people of God...

Satan wants to give the church a black eye by luring the people of the church into the blackness of sin...

We must be careful...

The enemy is deceptive, so that he can be destructive...

But a final characteristic of the enemy that we see here is...

### **III. The Enemy is Defeated (22-26)**

Verse 22...

*22 Then Joshua called for them and spoke to them, saying, "Why have you deceived us, saying, 'We are very far from you,' when you are living [h]within our land? 23 Now therefore, you are cursed, and [i]you shall never cease being slaves, both hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God." 24 So they answered Joshua and said, "Because it was certainly told your servants that the Lord your God had commanded His servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land before you; therefore we feared greatly for our lives because of you, and have done this thing. 25 Now behold, we are in your hands; do as it seems good and right in your sight to do to us." 26 Thus he did to them, and delivered them from the hands of the sons of Israel, and they did not kill them. 27 But Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation and for the altar of the Lord, to this day, in the place which He would choose.*

Though we learn much about the enemy of God in this chapter, we must not live our lives in fear of the enemy...

Satan may come to us deceptively...

Satan may come seeking to destroy...

But we must remember that greater is He that is in us that He that is in the world..

Though the enemy is powerful and has great resources at his disposal, he is a defeated foe..

He does not have power to take your salvation..

He does not have the power to separate you from the love of God..

He does not have the power to remove the Holy Spirit from your life...

When the enemy attacks, do not foolish and rebuke him in your own power...

Trust in the Spirit and lean on the Word of God to fight off the attacks of the enemy...

Joshua could not make the enemy go away...

He had signed an agreement with the Gibeonites...

So he honored his side of the covenant not to destroy them, but he made them honor their side as well..



They became servants to Israel...

If they had to live in the land, at least their influence could be limited...

Look, you can't escape the temptations of Satan and his demons...

He and they roam the earth always seeking someone to devour..

He is going to on the prowl for you as long as you live on this earth, but he is a defeated enemy...

His head has been crushed, and he will one day be tossed into a lake of fire...

Though we can't make Satan our servant like Joshua did with the Gibeonites, we do not have to submit to his temptations...

The Holy Spirit is our greatest weapon against our greatest enemy...

Make sure to be filled with the Spirit by reading the Word, being consistent in prayer, and walking in obedience to the Lord...

We often give too much credit to Satan, saying that we fell into sin because of him...

Yet, you possess Satan's kryptonite...

You possess the spirit of God...

So submit to it, and the devil will flee...

James 4:7...

***7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.***

I am so shocked at Christians who say that the devil just won't get off their back...

The truth is that they have him strapped on..

If you submit yourself to God and resist the devil, he has to go...

That is the promise of the word of God...

Joshua had invited the enemy in, but he didn't have to do what they said...

Instead, the Gibeonites had to obey Joshua...

Look, we have to live on the earth with the enemy,

## **Conclusion**

In Joshua 9, we learn the lessons of being too friendly with the enemy...

Sometimes, if it sounds too good to be true, it usually is...

I don't see myself as a pessimist, but I have learned this...

In a fallen world, all sorts of evil are possible...

That things that look pleasing to the eye are usually deadly to the soul...

Therefore, I must be careful of how I judge things...

Though my heart has been made new at salvation, it cannot be fully trusted, especially if it hasn't been on a consistent diet of the word of God..

Joshua trusted his heart about the Gibeonites, but his heart proved deceitful just like the Gibeonites..

Now, that doesn't mean we have to take every decision to the Lord...

Lord, should I buy the ribeye or the t-bones?

Some people take this idea to the extreme and can't make any decisions in life...

But it doesn't mean that we should never consult the Lord either...

Yes, we have the Spirit of God, but we can hinder the Spirit's work through our disobedience and neglect of the word and prayer..

So, if we find ourselves unsure of the right road to take, we must take it to the Lord before we take the next step...

Joshua 9 serves a reminder that trusting our gut can sometimes give us indigestion....

Let us pray.