

Joshua 8:30-35

¹ As soon as all the kings who were beyond the Jordan in the hill country and in the low-land all along the coast of the Great Sea toward Lebanon, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, heard of this, ² they gathered together as one to fight against Joshua and Israel. ³ But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and to Ai, ⁴ they on their part acted with cunning and went and made ready provisions and took worn-out sacks for their donkeys, and wineskins, worn-out and torn and mended, ⁵ with worn-out, patched sandals on their feet, and worn-out clothes. And all their provisions were dry and crumbly. ⁶ And they went to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal and said to him and to the men of Israel, "We have come from a distant country, so now make a covenant with us." ⁷ But the men of Israel said to the Hivites, "Perhaps you live among us; then how can we make a covenant with you?" ⁸ They said to Joshua, "We are your servants." And Joshua said to them, "Who are you? And where do you come from?" ⁹ They said to him, "From a very distant country your servants have come, because of the name of the LORD your God. For we have heard a 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 the king of Heshbon, and to Og king of Bashan, who lived in Ashtaroth. ¹¹ So our elders and all the inhabitants of our country said to us, 'Take provisions in your hand for the journey and go to meet them and say to them, "We are your servants. Come now, make a covenant with us."' ¹² Here is our bread. It was still warm when we took it from our houses as our food for the journey on the day we set out to come to you, but now, behold, it is dry and crumbly. ¹³ These wineskins were new when we filled them, and behold, they have burst. And these garments and sandals of ours are worn out from the very long journey." ¹⁴ So the men took some of their provisions, but did not ask counsel from the LORD. ¹⁵ And Joshua made peace with them and made a covenant with them, to let them live, and the leaders of the congregation swore to them.

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Please read Joshua 9. Blind spots. We all have them in our lives. Like cars and trucks, what is just out of our awareness we are ignorant of. Blind spots are those areas that we are not aware of but almost everybody around is. They are no less dangerous because of our ignorance though! We will suffer consequences even if God doesn't stay His hand of mercy.

Jericho is in ruin. Ai is defeated. Another group of people who inhabited the Promised Land were the Gibeonites. They resided not too far away from where Israel just finished rehearsing the Covenant together, just 25 miles away from Gilgal.

The Gibeonites, filled with fear of defeat, masked their identity and met with Joshua and his leaders seeking a diplomatic pre-emptive meeting. As an ingredient in the deception they brought old bread and old wine to the

table of diplomacy to support their story that they had travelled from far away. Joshua and his leaders sat down and ate of the moldy bread and old wine. Even in the wilderness of God's judgment they ate fresh bread! This was the ultimate humiliation of denial of God's wisdom and resources. They had let down their guard. More importantly, Joshua and his leaders had failed to obey God's command. There was to be no diplomacy in this dramatic takeover of the Promised Land.

Dependence upon God creates access to prudence, wisdom, contentment, and foresight which pierce through deception. In this tragic meeting Israel acted independently of God's instructions. Instead of enjoying the sumptuous food of the land to further stiff-arm God Joshua and his leaders ate the Gibeonites putrid bread and wine! How often does our ignorance and independence look like that? How often do we settle for

the rottenness of our independence rather than the feasting of the riches of God's grace made available to us within a prayer's reach? You can't be dependent upon God and discontent. You can't be content and be independent from God. We need the wisdom of God to detect our subtle enemies, and the power of God to overwhelm them.

Disobedience is never the solution to correct bad consequences. However, obedience sometimes is the total solution, or at the very least, creates conditions for grace to be imparted and received to alleviate some of the effects of the bad consequences. **God's mercy does not cease because we have done what's wrong.** Sometimes we need the courage in a dilemma to begin to seek God in the unravelling of what is wrong. Whether the motives were pure, or impure, whether we were complicit or innocent, we must take courage that God makes available peace, reconciliation and wisdom for these things. The messes of our lives can become opportunities for grace-living to thrive.

Our problems do not give excuse for us to live wrongly. The messes of our lives do not contradict the mercies of God. The messes of our lives do not complicate the plan of God for our lives moving forward. Just because we have failed to obey God doesn't mean that we should continue forward in disobedience because "all is lost." **God's mercy and grace can meet us in the most relevant places of our complicated problems.** And God's mercy and grace is available for everyone around us too!

The Gibeonites were now permitted "co-inhabitants" of the Promised Land, and because of that, they now were drawn near to much needed revelation of the God of Israel is. They became servants of the altar, Nethinim (1 Chron. 9:2, Ezra 2:43, 58; 8:20; Neh. 3:26). Before the Temple of God was built in Jerusalem, the tabernacle rested in Gibeon (2 Chron. 1:3). It's like God blessed them with a nearness to His worship! One wonders how many were truly transformed by saving faith versus how many just basked in the religiosity of it. **The Drawing of God often includes the acknowledgement of the emptiness of religion and the compelling simplicity and sincerity of the grace of the truth of the Gospel.**

More than 400 years later, Gibeon was the meeting place of God w/ Solomon to ask what he would desire (1 Kings 3:5) The Gibeonites are like Rahab. They were "foreigners" to the Covenant, but brought near by the mercy of God, able to enjoy some of His blessings more fully. Later they would still be with Israel when Israel returned from the Babylonian captivity to rebuild the Temple. No other national people group is included in the Nehemiah genealogy of the return from Babylon!

LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. **What is a blind spot?**
2. **Why are we so aware of other's blind spots and not our own?**
3. **What rewards for every-day living are found in depending upon God?**
4. **Is God's mercy and grace enough to help us through our deepest problems?**
5. **Consider the parallels between Joshua's independent thinking and how you might live so often. What lessons have you learned today about your need for God's help?**
6. **What have you learned about God in this lesson?**

If you have any questions or want to discuss anything in these weekly lessons, please be sure to contact me! Brad.Jury@Capitol.Com.org

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