

Dealing With The Devil

Joshua 9

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You know, we've all made bad decisions from time to time. You make bad decisions, I make some bad decisions. And you know, it ranges from real, real crucial ones to ones that aren't that important. I think sometimes, I'll go to buy a pair of pants and try my pants on. They're a little tight, you know. But I'll think, you know, I like these pants, so my goal is to, I plan on losing weight. I'm going to buy them anyway, even though they're tight, because my goal is to fit into these pants. You know how that goes, right? And a year later, I'm giving them to the Goodwill or Salvation Army, and I've done that more than once, okay? I'm going to fit into these pants if it kills me, you know? And then I don't fit into these pants. I mean, it's just, what's the deal? Or you buy a new car. You ever had buyer's remorse? You buy a brand new car and you pull off the lot and you go, what have I just done? And you go, not only that, I have to tell my wife when I get home. (Congregation Laughing) We all make decisions that we have to live with the rest of our lives. An anonymous wit once reminded us that "a dentist's decisions are pulled out," or "mistakes are pulled out," excuse me, "a lawyer's mistakes are imprisoned, a teacher's mistakes are failed, a printer's mistakes are corrected, a pharmacist's mistakes are buried, a postman's mistakes are forwarded, and an electrician's mistakes can be shocking." I have a brother-in-law that does all my electrical and one time I couldn't get him to work for me and so I had to change the little electrical box and I just had to kind of rewire the little box. (Imitates Electrician) It was shocking. That was the end of my electrician career. We make decisions that we have to live with. That's the case in Joshua chapter nine.

We find the leadership of the nation of Israel is making a bad decision that they will have to live with for the rest of their lives. Now how could this happen? It was a result of two things. And these are my two main points this morning. The subtlety of the enemy and the folly of God's people. The subtlety of the enemy and the folly of God's people. I actually first had the stupidity of God's people, but I thought that was a little harsh. I'd be a little nicer this morning. But I was going to alliterate that, the subtlety of Satan and the stupidity of the saints. How fitting that is. They should have prayed, they should have waited, they should have trusted the Lord, they should have looked to God's counsel, and they were deceived by the Gibeonites, and they made a league with them in their stupidity.

Look at first with me, verses 1 to 13, subtlety of the enemy. "And it came to pass that when all the kings which were on this side of the Jordan...", that would be the west side of Jordan, the land of promise, "in the hills and the valleys and all the coasts of the great sea, the Mediterranean and against Lebanon, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, the Jebusites." And sometimes we say the "up-tights" and the "out-of-sights" and the "men-in-tights." "They gathered themselves together...", verse two, "...to fight with Joshua and with Israel with one accord."

After a blessing always comes the attack of the enemy, amen. You've had this great

thanksgiving and you're giving thanks to the Lord. You can bet that after a high point of spiritual victory in your life, Be on the lookout, Satan will attack. That's always our most vulnerable times. So all these nations form this league and they are going to come against Israel, but there's a contrast in verse three. "When the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done into Jericho and to Ai, that they did work wilily...", or subtly, "...and they went and made as if they had been ambassadors. They took old sacks upon their donkeys, the wine bottles old and rent upon them. And...", it says, "...their shoes...", verse five, "...were clotted upon their feet and old garments upon them and all the bread of their provision was dry and mouldy."

Now the Gibeonites are going to try to get the Israelites to sign a pact with them. And they do this through trickery, through deceit. They put on an act. They could have won an Oscar for this. They put on this act. They feigned as though they had traveled and journeyed a long way. They put all beat up wine skin sacks upon their donkeys. They had all beat up torn up clothes. They had shoes where the soles were flapping on the bottom. There were holes in them. They had bread that was moldy, trying to feign as though they had traveled a great long distance to get to them, not so. The city of Gibeon was six miles west of Jerusalem, only about 30 miles or so away from the camp of the Israelites where they were next going to attack. The Gibeonites were the next city that Joshua was going to conquer. Started with Jericho, went to Ai, and then went to Gibeon. So the Gibeonites were trying to deceive Israelites into thinking that they lived a long ways away from them. Now you remember Jericho represented the world, Ai represented the flesh, but the third enemy of the child of God is the devil. And we have this symbolized in Gibeon. Now I'm not saying that these weren't actual cities, that this wasn't a historic event, this is a historic narrative. It actually happened. But there is a reminder, in picture, to us that the three great enemies of the Christian are the world, the flesh, and the devil. The world, lust to the eyes, lust to the flesh, pride of life, all that is of the world, not of the Father. The world's system apart from God, the prince and the power of the air is ruling over so we can become worldly as God's people when we're to be heavenly minded and spiritual. So we need to be careful that we don't get trapped by the lure of the world.

Then there's also our own flesh, Ai. We don't want to be self-dependent, we don't want to trust in ourself, we all have this endemic nature, the sinful nature we inherited from Adam, and we need to crucify the flesh and the affections and lust thereof. But none of those would be a problem with me if it wasn't for the devil. The devil uses the world, the devil uses my flesh, and he tries to get me in league with him. Now once you've been born again, once you become a Christian, he knows he can't get you. But he can sterilize you. He can nullify your witness. He can keep you from going too far and being a blessing and serving the Lord and God using you for the furtherance of his kingdom. In 1 Peter chapter 5 verse 8, Peter says, "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about seeking whom he may devour." Peter knew from experience how subtle the enemy could be. He denied the Lord three times. I don't know him, I don't know him, I don't know him. And he heard the rooster crow and he went out and wept bitter tears. Satan wants us to fall. He comes against us as a roaring lion. It speaks of his ferocity and his power, but he also comes as a subtle serpent. And I believe that Satan poses his greatest problem and danger to the believer when he comes as the subtlety of a serpent.

Now I want you to note what the Gibeonites did in verses 3 to 5, they worked wildly, verse 4. And they feigned bread that was moldy, they feigned shoes that were beat up, they had duct tape on their water bottles, I think the Gibeonites invented duct tape here. They went to Salvation Army and they got beat up old clothes and they wore this ragtag kind of hippie look, and they had duct tape all over everything. And they go, "We came from a long ways away. So we want to know if you'll make a league with us." So they came and they came with subtlety. Notice in verse 4, "they did work wilily" or they made as if. In Ephesians 6 verse 11, Paul tells us to put on the whole armor of God that we may be able to stand against what? The wiles of the devil. So though Satan has strategies, he has wiles. I wonder how long it took the Gibeonites to figure this thing out. "Okay, what are we going to do? How are we going to spare ourselves? Okay, this is what we'll do. This is the plan. We'll put on our own clothes, moldy bread, cracked old dry wine skins, and we'll feign as though we came from a long ways away." Satan has a strategy. In Genesis 3, verse one, it says, "The serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field." And Revelation chapter 12, Satan, which deceives the whole world. Satan is an imitator, he is a counterfeiter, and he comes undercover. He comes through Christian education sometimes, or the public education system. He comes through philosophies of men. Sometimes even the movies and the music that we watch is very subtly Satan programming people's minds, promulgating the world of flesh and the devil.

I believe that Satan's greatest tactic and his most wily work is that of false religion. People often ask me, "Pastor John, why are there so many religions in the world?" And one of my answers to the question is because there really is a devil. And Satan has created all these false religious systems whereby people think by being good or doing good or by punishing yourself that you can attain heaven or favor with God. Religion is one of Satan's greatest tactics. In 2nd Corinthians 11, verse 13 and 14, Paul said, "They are false apostles. They are deceitful workers. They masquerade as angels of light." This speaks of the subtlety of Satan. He doesn't just knock on your door, dressed in a red costume with horns and a pitchfork, say, "Hi, I'm the devil. Follow me and we'll go to hell together." He doesn't do that. "Hi, I'm the devil. I've come to steal, kill, and destroy." "Oh, thank you, devil. I was waiting for you." He comes with subtly. Sometimes he has a little white shirt on, a skinny tie, rides up on a bicycle. He says, "Hi, I'm from the church of the Latter-day Saints." Now I'm not saying... (Congregation Laughing) Believe me. I'm not saying that every Mormon that comes to your doorstep is a bad person. You can be sincere, you can be honest, you can be devoted, you can be committed to what you believe, but you can be sincerely wrong. You can be sincerely deceived. You can think you're doing God's work when in reality you're not doing God's work. So a lot of precious people are being drawn in by the subtlety of Satan.

Let me give you a little chip. Same vocabulary, different dictionary. We believe the Bible, we believe in Jesus, we believe we're saved by grace, yeah, we believe that there's one God. All the right words will come out of their mouth dictionary, same vocabulary, different dictionaries. This goes for evangelical preachers. One of my great concerns today is in the church, evangelical church, we have men in the pulpits that are preaching things that are unscriptural and unbiblical and are not true. But they're doing it in the name of God. They're reading from the Bible. I have people say, "Well, he read from the Bible." That doesn't matter. Even the devil

quoted Scripture to Jesus when he tempted him in the wilderness. It is written, he said, and he quoted from the Bible. The question is, is it in context? Has it been added to? Has it, have you taken away? Have you omitted? Have you twisted and changed what God actually said? We need to make sure that we rightly divide the word of truth. Just because a man is a pastor and he preaches from pulpit or they show up on your doorstep, whatever group they're from, you need to make sure that it's truly what God's words teaches. [It's] not just what it says in the Bible, but is that what the Bible teaches? Comparing Scripture with Scripture, taking it in context, knowing God's Word will help you to defeat the tactics and the subtlety of the devil.

I'm convinced that many religions have as their origin Satan himself, that he robes himself and clothes himself as a very angel of light. He comes with subtlety. Notice what the Gibeonites said. They lied about coming from afar, verse 6 and verse 9. Twice they said, "We come from a faraway country." Liar, liar, pants on fire, hanging from a telephone wire. (Congregation Laughs) I don't know where we ever got that, you know. Satan is a liar and the father of lies, right? Isn't that what the Bible says? Satan is a liar and the father of lies. That "father" there is a figure of speech that means he's the source of all lies. So you show me a religious lie and I'll show you the source of that lie is demonic. To keep people from the truth. The Bible says, "In the last days, men will not give heed to sound doctrine, but after their own lust, their own desires, they'll heap to themselves teachers having itching ears, and they will listen carefully, turn away their ears from the truth, and be given unto fables." Just because a church is large and a preacher is popular doesn't mean he's speaking the true word of God. We need to be careful, we need to be wise. Don't be foolish. Don't be stupid as it were, and just believe what everyone says to be truth. They lied that they were from a faraway country.

Also notice verse nine, they lied by using the very name of the Lord. Think it's interesting, they said, "We come from a very far away country, thy servants are come." Why? "Because of the name of the Lord, thy God. Jehovah thy God or Yahweh thy God." So they name drop the name of God, the covenant name of God. Jesus said, not everyone who says Lord, Lord will enter into the kingdom of God, but only those who do the will of my father. A lot of people can say the right things, but they don't have a relationship with the Lord. Jesus said on that day, that final day of judgment, that the Lord will say, "Depart from me, I never knew you. I never knew you. I never had a relationship with you." So they say, "Oh, well, we heard about your God. We heard about the Lord." Jesus also said in the church that there would be tares sown among the weak. You know, I don't take it for granted everyone that comes to this church is born again. You don't get born again by coming to church. You don't get to go to heaven because you come to church. You got to have Him because you've trusted Jesus Christ as your savior and the spirit of God has come into your heart and you've been regenerated; you've been given new life. Jesus told Nicodemus, "You have to be born again to see the kingdom of God." Wherever there's a work of God, Satan sows tares among the wheat, and you can't really tell the difference. Look like a Christian, talk like a Christian, walk like a Christian, smell like a Christian, but they're not really a Christian. Only God knows the heart. It's not for me to determine, not for me to judge. God knows a person's heart, but you need to make sure this morning that you are a child of God, that you have been born again.

Then they lied thoroughly about their bread, about their bottles, and about their shoes, verses 12 and 13, "Our bread we took for our provision out of our houses on the day we came forth...", verse 12, "...We came unto you, but now it is dry and moldy." Notice verse 13, "These bottles of wine, which were filled, they were filled brand new when we left. Now behold, they are ripped and our garments and our shoes are become old by reason of our very long journey."

So we heard what you did to all those other kings and we came a long, long way. We've been traveling for months. Our bread is moldy, our shoes are worn out, our clothes are all rag-tagged. All we want you to do is just make a covenant with us. We trust in your God. They were deceiving Joshua and God's people. Make a league with us. Verse six, "make a league with us," and verse 11. Do you know that Satan wants you to make a league with him? This is illustrated when Israel was coming out of Egypt in the Exodus and God was raining plagues upon Pharaoh and the nation of Egypt. You remember the process there when Pharaoh kind of halfway through said, "Okay, you want to go? Go, but don't take your children with you. Go but don't take your cattle with you." And then Pharaoh said this to Moses, "Go, but don't go too far." You know that's what Satan will say to you. "Okay, become a Christian but don't take your kids with you. Let them get old enough to make a decision on how they want to live their lives. Okay, go but don't take your possessions with you. Don't become one of those Christians actually gives to God or serves God or lives for God. Go but don't go too far." I mean, you know, "Go to church Christmas and Easter maybe a few times a month, but for any, by any means, don't go on Wednesday nights. And certainly don't go to prayer meetings. And what kind of Christian does that? Goes to church three times a week. Are you crazy? You know, you're saved now, you're a Christian. You know, go but don't go too far. And certainly, don't witness. Go to church but don't tell anybody else about Jesus. Don't share your faith. Keep it quiet. Christ of the secret order is your group. Go but don't go too far." That's Satan's league that he wants to make with you, and he comes with subtlety. He brings complacency and apathy. Don't listen to the devil. Don't be influenced by the world or the flesh or the devil. He wants you to enter into a league.

This leads me to my second point here of the folly or the stupidity of God's people, two verses, verse 14 and 15. It says, "At this point the men of Israel took stock of their supplies and asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord." There's the mistake. "And Joshua made peace with them...", verse 15, "...made a league with them to let them live, and the princes of the congregation swore unto them." We see here the leaders of Israel making a very bad decision, and a decision that would have dire consequences. They'd have to live with.

What happened? Well, number one, they failed to pray. Notice in verse 14, "they ask not counsel of the mouth of the Lord." They ask not counsel of the mouth of the Lord. How important is that? When you make decisions, guess what you ought to do? Pray about it, right? Duh! They didn't pray. When I read that I'm thinking, "Joshua, Joshua, oh, Joshua, what a Dumbo." That's the word I use, Dumbo. What a colossal mistake you make. It was the last thing we want is spiritual leaders who don't pray, spiritual leaders who don't pray about God's work, done God's way for God's glory. "God, what is your will? What is your plan?" So they didn't even take time to pray and to seek God. I believe that as Christians, that we make decisions many times foolishly because we don't pray and seek God's wisdom and counsel. We don't open the

Bible and say, "Speak to me, word of God, speak to me. God speak to me and help me to know Your will and your purpose and plan." Prayerlessness always brings failure.

Now why did they not pray? Well, number one, because the Gibeonites looked authentic. Why pray about it? That's moldy bread. Those are worn out shoes. Those are tattered old clothes. Those wine skins are cracked and broken, duct taped. So why do I need to pray? They were looking by sight. Notice in verse 14, "they took of the victuals, or the food or the supplies of the people of Gibeon," but they stopped and didn't ask God in prayer for wisdom. So they looked at them. Here's the problem, they were walking by sight and not by faith. You got that? They were walking by sight and not by faith. They looked at the moldy bread, maybe they even broke off a little piece, tasted, "Ooh, yeah, that is bad." It was fresh when we left. "Let me see your shoes." He holds up his shoe and the bottom's flapping off, the sole's flapping, you know, and his toes are sticking through. "Yeah, those are pretty messed up." They were checking them out.

Now there is a time to open your eyes and be wise. When I was a bachelor, I was famous for letting food sit in my refrigerator way too long. I had to get in the habit of making sure I looked at it first. I had this jar of jelly one time, been in there for a couple of years, you know. (Congregation Laughing) I go, "Oh, I want peanut butter and jelly there." I pulled that sucker out. I didn't know jelly could turn that many different shades of blue and grow fur. (Congregation Laughing) And I was like, "Oh man, this is bad news." And because of what I saw and because of what I smelled, I made a decision not to eat the jelly. Gave it to my roommate. (Congregation Laughing) Now I'm just kidding. I had a cake one time; I lived on [it] for a whole week. By the end of the week it started growing a little fuzz all over it, you know. And you know, there's good time to open your eyes, but in the spiritual realm, we walk by faith and not by sight. Well, it looks good, everything looks okay. He's reading from the Bible, he's preaching the Word, wow, you know, this looks really a nice building. Wow, you know, he's on TV, he's on the radio, wow, that looks really good. Those things are all fine, but you got to be careful that you don't get sucked in by simply looking. They didn't ask counsel of the Lord because they looked authentic.

Then secondly, because the things were going so well for them. Another reason they didn't pray, they didn't wait on the Lord, is because listen carefully, things were going good. They'd taken Jericho, they'd taken Ai, everybody's happy, they'd pronounced the blessing and the cursing, Mount Gerizim, and they worship. Everybody is like on high, this is great, praise the Lord, isn't life wonderful? Yeah, you give me, yeah, that's messed up bread, yeah okay, we'll sign a league with you. They didn't realize because things were going good that you need to pray, let me give you a tip. Even when things are going smooth, get on your knees and pray. I know that when everything's going good, sometimes we don't know what to pray for. I pray for my job, no way, my job's great. I need to pray for that. I pray that you'll just provide for us. No, we've got plenty of money right now. I need to pray for that. Lord, I just pray that you'll bless my marriage. Oh, my marriage is going great. I need to pray for my marriage. I just pray for my kids. Oh, my kids are doing great right now. Let him who thinks he stands take heed. Lest he fall. Why is it that we have such a hard time praying when everything's going smooth? When everything goes bad, "Oh God, oh God! Oh Lord's like, oh good to hear from you. Haven't heard from you since the last tragedy." I thank God for the bitter things. They've been a friend to grace. They've driven me

from the path of ease to storm, the secret place. I thank God that He allows into my life those situations that drive me to my knees. Because I'm so foolish and so stubborn that, man, when things are going good, I don't pray the way that I should. I've actually had people say, "Why is there always trials in my life?" And sometimes I've told them, "Well, maybe God knows that's the only time you pray." And He just wants you to pray. Learn to pray when things are good. Learn to pray when things are bad. And you'll stay close to the Lord. Someone said "a full cup requires a steady hand." I like that. If God has blessed your life, it requires a steady hand and a steady hand can only come as we trust and pray and depend upon God.

So why didn't they pray? Because the Gibeonites looked authentic and secondly because they were doing so well and thirdly it was no big deal. What's the big deal? Just a group of ragtag people from Gibeon. They live a long way away. And they didn't know, by the way, they were from Gibeon. They just said they were from a long way away. And you know, it seemed like no big deal. Here's another problem we have. We don't pray about little things. I think it's no big deal. And we don't pray about little things. God wants you to bring all to Him. Bible says, "Cast your cares upon Him, for He cares for you." Pray for everything. My wife prays when she goes shopping, "Lord give us a good parking spot." I'm thinking, "What?" And he answers the prayer, I'm thinking, "This is insane." I lose my keys, I lose my keys, and I'm tearing doors off the walls, and I'm ripping cabinets out, and I'm totally losing my sanctification, and my wife will go, "Have you prayed about it?" No! (Congregation Laughing) So mad I can't pray, so you pray. She goes, "Lord, just help John find his keys." Open my eyes, there they are, right on the counter. (Congregation Laughing) Makes me so mad. (Congregation Laughing) What's the deal with that? Pray for a parking spot, pray for keys. Our dog would eat his food, and she used to pray, "Lord, just bless this Hunter's body right now." I'm going, "You're praying for dog food?" (Congregation Laughing) But you know, it's a habit of prayer that we need to learn about. Lord, give me wisdom as I talk to this room. Lord, help me to be the husband today. Help me to work. Lord, help me on the job. Lord, help me to control my emotions on the freeway. Lord, help me to be wise about my money. Lord, everything, you're just constantly, the Bible says, "Pray without..." what? —"Ceasing." That's not talking about the act of prayer, it's not about the attitude of prayer. If we learned to get in the habit of praying without ceasing, and I think that we would not be as deceived by the devil and make so many bad decisions.

So verse 15 was a bad decision, a very bad decision. Don't give Satan an inch. You can live with a lifetime of regret. One bad decision can mean a lifetime of regret. Now God redeemed this decision. Joshua kept his word and didn't destroy the Gibeonites. I want you to notice in verse 16. It says, "It came to pass at the end of three days, after they had made a league with them, that they heard that they were their neighbors and that they dwelt among them." And I'm sure Joshua's going, "Oh, I can't believe that. We were totally deceived. They totally snowed us." Now Joshua could have said, you know, you lied to us, so we're going to wipe you out. Then annul this covenant we've made with you. But Joshua then did the right thing, he kept his word. You know, I think it's important that when you make a bad decision, that you admit it, but then you immediately commit yourself to doing the right thing. If you've done something that's foolish, confess it to God, He'll forgive your sins. Then say to God, "Lord, I'm sorry, help me to do the right thing, and whatever the consequences might be, I will do the right thing." What Joshua did

says, what he did was, he said, "because you deceived us, you're going to cut our wood, you're going to carry our water, and you, as long as you live, are going to be servants unto us." Notice the last verse of chapter nine, verse 27. "Joshua made them that day hewers of wood, drawers of water for the congregation for the altar of the Lord, even unto this day in the place which he should choose." So he made them serve the nation of Israel.

Now, what responsibility do we have as saints and what defense do we have against the subtle tactics of the enemy? Number one, it is the word of God in prayer, the word of God in prayer. Put on the whole armor of God. Take up the sword of the spirit, which is what? The word of God. Praying always with all prayer and supplication. A person that is in the Bible, knows their Bible, knows the word of God, will not be deceived by the subtlety of Satan. And a Christian that prays about everything, tells God his needs, doesn't forget to thank Him for his answers, will not be deceived by the devil. So prayer and God's word, prayer and God's word.

Then we need to make sure we don't love the world. John, 1 John 2, verse 15, we need to make sure that we walk in the light as he is in the light. We need to make sure that we have surrendered our lives, Ephesians 5:18, to the Holy Spirit that we're filled with the Spirit. We need to make sure that we are abiding in Christ, John 15.

Last but not least, James chapter 4, verse 7, "Submit yourselves therefore to God, resist the devil and he will...", what? Submit yourselves to God, resist the devil and he will flee. Have you submitted yourself to God? Are you a child of God? Are you deceived in thinking, "Well, I go to church. Well, I've been baptized. Well, I've taken communion. I believe in God." Believing God is not enough. It's a commitment. See, becoming a Christian isn't just believing in God or going to church or doing religious things. It's entrusting your life to God. It's believing that when Jesus died on that cross, he died for your sins. So when Jesus rose from the dead, he rose for your justification. Then only by your faith or trust or belief in Jesus, which means that you commit your life to Him, you entrust your life to Him. You invite him to come into your life and be your Lord and Savior. Only by doing that can you inherit the kingdom of God. You will be born again of the Holy Spirit. Now, you might be saying, "Well, I thought if I just believed, that's enough." It's not enough. The demons believe, tremble. That's the demonic fate. I sometimes illustrate that by say you went to the airport and you stood on the tarmac or the runway right up next to an airplane and you looked at airplane. You go, "I believe that airplane can fly. I believe that if I get in that airplane I can fly with that airplane. I believe that airplane can take off and land, and I believe in that airplane," but you refuse to get on the airplane. You can believe God, you can believe all about God, but you refuse to trust God.

Now if there's anyone here this morning that has been coming to church or you've been hearing about Christ, but you don't know for sure in your heart that you're saved, you need to make sure today. You need to get in the plane, so to speak. You can say, "I believe Jesus died on the cross." Have you trusted Jesus who died on that cross. Except you are born again, you can't enter into the kingdom of God. The Bible says that we're saved by grace through faith. It's not of ourself, that it's a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. So if you're here today and you say, "Pastor John, I don't know whether or not I'm really saved. I don't really know that

if I died today, I would go to heaven. I don't know that my sins have really been forgiven. I don't know that I've trusted Christ, but I'm ready to make that commitment today." You can leave here forgiven. You can leave here a new creation in Christ. The Bible says if anyone be in Christ, he's a new creation. Old things pass away, all things become brand new. I want to give you an opportunity before we close the service today to say Jesus come into my heart, Forgive my sins and be my savior. Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer.